

## IN THE TRADE, LIVING WITH HIV AND CHOOSING LIFE OVER FEAR



*Khabo's hard road home to Swaziland leads to acceptance, commitment to her health and a newly developed desire to help her peers.*

Khabonina Dlamini (Khabo) had a rough landing when she returned to Swaziland after working in South Africa. But eventually she found herself in the mountain logging town of Pigg's Peak where an opportunity arose. Through peer networks, Khabo learned of the KaMhlaba mobile clinic for sex workers and other key populations (KPs).

The KaMhlaba mobile clinic is implemented by Family Life Association of Swaziland (FLAS) a sub-partner under the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3) funded by PEPFAR through USAID. The mobile clinic is an intervention for KPs given that HIV prevalence among sex workers is 70.3%.

"The mobile clinic has been of great help because in hospitals we often knew the people so we were scared," Khabo said of the KaMhlaba mobile clinic. "The mobile clinic is convenient and we know our information is private."

Through KaMhlaba, Khabo was invited to an HIV care and health training workshop with other women in the sex trade. She was also asked to attend follow-up monthly peer support meetings facilitated by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with HC3. Through the support, guidance and education provided by the mobile clinic and monthly peer support meetings, Khabo discovered her inner strength and will to live.

"I have been HIV positive since 2000 but was afraid to take ARVs. I used to think ARVs would make me have a shapeless body and I thought when you take ARVs others would laugh at you and everyone would know because they see you in the pharmacy line," Khabo said. "At the workshop I learned that I can contact Nurse Nkambule at the hospital and get information on how I can manage HIV and I also know about TB and how to prevent it. The monthly health talks help us get reminded on the importance of getting healthy."

Khabo has now made some crucial health and lifestyle changes. "When I was in South Africa, sometimes I would use a condom and sometimes I would not use a condom and I used to tell myself that I will not seek treatment for STIs," she said. "Now I still need money, but I use a condom and if there's no condom then there's no play."

The trainings help Khabo gain courage and she has now started antiretroviral therapy. She has accepted her HIV-positive status and knows this is her life and that she needs to take care of her children. Khabo now tries to help other girls in the sex trade, talking with them about how they can improve their health while also distributing condoms.

