Taking Back My Future

An HIV-positive mother on delivering her second HIV-negative child.

May 7, 2015 By Fortunata Kasege

Fortunata Kasege

HIV can take so much from a person. It can steal people's hope for the future, for health, and for family.

Looking back on my own life, I thought this disease would take those things from me as well. There are many things that HIV did take from me in these past 18 years, and many more it has taken from millions of women like me. But with the incredible progress in treatment and the work of organizations like the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), there are also many things that I have taken back, one at a time. And I want to show the girls, women, and mothers of the world that they can take back their lives from HIV too.

One of these things is my desire to extend my family, and to have a sibling for my lovely daughter Florida. Last Mother's Day I was on my way to realizing this dream, pregnant with my second daughter. This Mother's Day I am so proud to say that I delivered a healthy eight pound three ounce baby girl. And she is HIV-free just like her older sister Florida! I am enjoying every second of being a mother again.

If you would have told me when I was diagnosed with HIV that I would one day be the mother of two daughters and that they would be completely HIV free, I couldn't even have imagined it. Now I can't imagine a life without them.

I was only 22 when I received the news: I was a young woman living with HIV. Despite all the progress in the years in between, this is a story that is tragically still far too common. Globally, young women ages 15 to 24 account for 22 percent of new HIV infections, and suffer from infection rates twice as high as young men. For mothers and mothers-to-be there is nothing more deadly: HIV is the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age.

During both my pregnancies, I took my medicine as prescribed, and never missed a dose. I knew that if I did my part, the treatment would do its part, and my children would be born HIV-negative.

This Mother’s Day more than 1,000 young women and adolescent girls will become newly infected with HIV and their stories will be forever rewritten. But living with HIV does not mean living a life without hope, health, love, and family. My life, my story, and most importantly my two beautiful daughters are proof of that. This is why I share it every chance I get, and why I became an ambassador for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

This is not just my fight; this is a global fight to achieve an AIDS-free future. I want those 1,000 women and girls to read this and know that despite today’s bad news, they are essential to creating that future and to creating a world where no child has AIDS.

Fortunata Kasege is an EGPAF ambassador and a mother of two. She shared the cover of the October 2007 issue of POZ. Click here to read her cover story.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/fortunata-kasege-27182-9423