

Funeka-

Funeka was born in the Eastern Cape and left home in 1989 to set out for the Western Cape in search of a job. Upon arriving, she was able to make arrangements to stay with some family members. She set up a life for herself in the Western Cape and was happy with her decision until suddenly falling ill with tuberculosis (TB) in 1998. She headed to a clinic to receive treatment for the TB and the doctor recommended that she get tested for HIV, so she complied. When she found out she was HIV+ she felt awful and only knew that “HIV was a killer.” Funeka felt lost until hearing about Wola Nani and started to attend support groups with other HIV+ women. With the support from Wola Nani, she disclosed her status to her family. Although she did not know what kind of reaction to expect, as many people are often disowned and ridiculed when they open up about their HIV, Funeka’s family saw that she was healthy and comfortable with her status; thus, they accepted her and her HIV as well.

Funeka continues to attend support groups on a weekly basis where she can talk about her problems and feel comforted. She joined the income generation programme in 2001 and makes papier maché bowls, which she crafts during the week in the comfort of her home. The money she earns from the bowls enables her to buy groceries. This, for her is a huge improvement from before joining the programme when she could not even afford to buy food. In addition to supporting herself, Funeka is able to send money back to the Eastern Cape, where her 21 year old daughter now lives.

Made possible by donor partners, Wola Nani facilitated an opportunity for Funeka in order for her to participate in an HIV conference in Thailand. It was her first time leaving South Africa, and despite being scared of flying and being so far away from home, she is happy she made the journey. While at the conference, she attended seminars and taught HIV+ mothers about using formula instead of breast milk and also trained others in how to make papier maché crafts. Funeka is proud of the fact that she has been able to make a difference in the lives of others and that she has not let HIV debilitate her motivation.