

Thobeka-

Thobeka is originally from a town called Colesberg, near Johannesburg. She moved to Cape Town “too many years back to remember” in order to finish school and find a job. It wasn’t until 1998 that she discovered she was HIV+. Thobeka had been feeling ill with flu-like symptoms and a whole range of maladies, so she went to visit a doctor. The doctor gave her an HIV test and reported back to her that she was, in fact, infected with the virus. When Thobeka first heard the news she recalls feeling hurt and confused, as she knew about the negativity surrounding the virus in the townships, but knew very little about how it actually affected the body.

She kept her HIV status secret for two months before disclosing to her mother. Her mother was not supportive at first and had quite a negative reaction. However, going to Wola Nani’s support groups and receiving counselling has helped Thobeka accept being HIV+, which in turn has helped her explain more about the virus to her mother. Because of the counselling, Thobeka and her mother now enjoy a healthy relationship.

Thobeka was married in 2005 and currently lives in Khayelitsha, with her husband and two children, aged 10 and 2. She works in Wola Nani’s income generation programme, crafting papier maché products for a living and is able to buy food for her children. Sometimes her daughter helps her cut out the paper for the different papier maché crafts, as she is quite fond of drawing and other art activities. She says that the winter months are particularly hard and cold but the money she earns helps make the hardships a little easier, and life a little more comfortable.