

Unathi-

Unathi moved to the Western Cape from the Eastern Cape to pursue a higher degree and attended Cape College. She had to drop out, however, due to financial constraints. At first she had tried to study and work at the same time, but it was too much and she was completely exhausted so she left school and focused on working full time.

Unathi first discovered she was HIV+ after giving birth in July 2002. Her daughter was incredibly sick, so she brought her to the Red Cross Hospital. She recalls praying to God to give her child life and keep her alive no matter what disease she had. She said that she would accept the HIV as long as her child would stay alive. She had wanted her husband to go along with her and their daughter to the Red Cross Hospital so they could get tested as a family, but he refused to go so she went alone. After receiving the results of the test, she also began administering antiretroviral treatment to her daughter under the guidance of the team at Red Cross Hospital. Her daughter continues to take the ARVs twice a day, and although still does not know about the virus, takes the medicine as part of a routine and does not give her mother any difficulty over it. Unathi also disclosed her status to her mother and brother after she found out the results. She says that they were both very hurt upon hearing the news and did not want to speak with her. But as time has passed, they have realized that the HIV is only in her blood and she is well and happy, so they have accepted her again.

Unathi joined Wola Nani in 2002 after hearing about the organisation from the Red Cross clinic. She attends the support groups and finds them to be a great help because she shares a lot of the same concerns as the other women in the group. She started to make papier maché products shortly after joining Wola Nani. A staff member noticed how often she attended group sessions and offered to have her trained in the craft, so Unathi gladly accepted. The money she now earns from craft production allows her to buy everything that her family needs. Her eldest daughter, who is 16, lives in Johannesburg where she attends school. The money enables Unathi to pay for her daughter to come visit on her school holidays. She loves when her whole family can be together and enjoy each other's company. She has not gotten a chance to talk to her eldest daughter about HIV yet, but plans to talk to her about it in the near future. She wants to make sure that she is safe and uses condoms. Since joining Wola Nani, Unathi now feels stronger and tries to embody living positively with HIV.