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I come from São Vicente, Brazil. By the time I was 16, I was not only taking cannabis and hallucinogens, I was also injecting drugs. This lifestyle led me to drug trafficking, and I went to prison from 1985 to 1993. While imprisoned, I was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Prisoners received no guidance or preventive care, and we didn't really know what HIV or AIDS were. So we continued to use drugs and share needles.

Tuberculosis was the first manifestation of AIDS I experienced. While I was eventually given anti-retroviral medicines, I continued to use drugs, and therefore reacted badly to the medication. I restarted the treatment in earnest after abandoning drugs for good in 1999. I then joined a support group in my hometown and thus grew close to other HIV-positive people. We decided to establish a non-governmental organization called Hipupiara to promote a sense of unity among people living with HIV and to improve their quality of life.

Unfortunately, I suffered a lot of prejudice for being HIV-positive, including from my own family. I was also denied jobs. In 2001, however, I started working as a fisherman, until my retirement earlier this year, at age 50, because of poor health.

Today, I am free of drugs and sticking to the treatment. I work as a volunteer for Hipupiara, contacting drug users and referring them to treatment and assistance services. Thanks to all the knowledge I have about HIV and AIDS, I can now face and beat prejudice. People infected with HIV and drug users should not close up or avoid talking about their problems.

HIV +



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