

## *A Personal Message from a Seropositive UN Staff Member*

Dear UN Friends,

I have been working for UNAIDS since 1997 and have been living with the HIV virus for the past 12 years. How have I managed to survive? What is my life like before and after the UN. How do I continue fighting? These are questions which I like to share with you today.

I got tested voluntary in Australia after my partner was down with AIDS in the late eighties and while shaken and depressed triggered by the diagnosis, I sat across the Sydney Harbor Bridge bargaining with God as to how long I will live. I asked for 8 and he has already given me 12 years. That's the time, I decided to change my life. The first thing I did was to start writing my book followed by leaving the private advertising sector which I was trained and start doing non-governmental work on AIDS.

In 1995, I felt rather ill when I started mono-therapy and my immune system was also totally damaged but God was on my side and in 1996, the triple cocktail therapy appeared and I was one of those few in Asia that has access to it, my health regained back and within 3 months, I was up and running like a normal person. I continue my NGO work on AIDS , started the first network of people living with HIV/AIDS in the Asia Pacific region named APN+ (Asia Pacific Network of PWAs)and later joint the UN in 1997 in Bangkok

I jointed the UN as an SSA Contract worker mainly working on Information Development and after one year with UNAIDS, they promoted me to a P3, 11 month STP which I am holding at the moment. I am currently the Intercountry Programme Development Advisor with UNAIDS South-East-Asia/Pacific Intercountry Team.

I had a very supportive environment within the workplace at UNAIDS. This is one employer where I do not feel discriminated to hide my status The UN currently pays 80% of my triple drug therapy and my work gives job satisfaction as I am working in an area that affects my infection greatly.

There is one other practice that I strongly believe in . I do not want to pass my virus to my partner or anyone I love and encourage anyone else who knows of their status to be responsible and practice safer sex.

If you think you have been exposed to unsafe sex, get tested voluntarily and take your health into your own hands now. HIV has taught me the reason for living and the excuse for dying. If you are found HIV+ , it's not the ending but the beginning of a new way of living life and that has kept me going for the past 12 years.

Should you want to share and discuss with me personally , I would be happy to talk with you confidentially. Please e-mail me at [toh.unescap@un.org](mailto:toh.unescap@un.org) or call me at 662-2882186 anytime you feel comfortable. As colleagues with the UN system, I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation for what the system has done for me and wish to be able to contribute back to the system.

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