

Yaliyopita Si Ndwele (*Life goes on*) Living positively with HIV and AIDS in Tanzania

Foreword by Major General Lupogo, Head of Tanzania Commission for AIDS (TACAIDS)

It is now more than 23 years since the first HIV case was detected in the country. In December 1999, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa announced AIDS to be a national disaster.

Lack of knowledge about HIV and AIDS in our communities has caused stigma to people living with the virus. While they need our loving care and support, they don't always feel this. Instead they are met by discrimination by people in their own communities, as people are afraid and therefore turn away from them.

However, information about HIV and AIDS is slowly spreading to every corner of our country. It is highlighting that living with HIV does not mean you will die tomorrow; people living with HIV can live positively for many years and in good health, while contributing to production, the community and the nation at large. We can care for people infected with HIV, and protect ourselves if we know how it is transmitted. Education is clearly a key tool in the fight against AIDS.

It is a ray of hope and light, in the darkness that the HIV epidemic has cast upon us.

Yaliyopita Si Ndwele (*Life goes on*) is a book of testimonials of young and old living with HIV; it is a book of hope to all Tanzanians. It shows that anyone can be living with HIV, it does not discriminate against young or old, rich or poor.

When I'm reading the book, I'm impressed with the bravery of all who have broken the silence, by sharing their stories. They have faced their situation and express glimmers of hope and commitment to move on in life. They constitute a community and by coming out and openly disclosing their true status, they have gained new strength, they have found new ground for mutual support among themselves and in the society. They give strength and understanding to other citizens who will now understand their situation with empathy and humility.

I hope that Tanzanians will make effort to protect themselves from HIV, and will go to test in order to know their HIV status. Young people must remember that they have a potentially long life ahead which they should defend! Parents should remember that they are supposed to take care of and educate their children, and we as a nation should remember that we should follow our cultural morals in our families and communities, and give help to those who need it.

I congratulate EADCF/FEMINA HIP and UNAIDS for facilitating the making of this book involving the interest organizations for people living with HIV in Tanzania. It is also imperative to thank with deep appreciation those who have shared their stories, your voices will make a profound impression on your fellow citizens all over the country!