

Spotlight on Abosede Olotu: Women Making a Difference ^[1]

Submitted on Nov 30, 2015



The Well Project interviews Abosede (Bose) Olotu, Global Ambassador, Community Advisory Board member and A Girl Like Me blogger, for the newest in our "Spotlight: Women Making a Difference" series.

What is the goal of your advocacy work? Do you have a specific focus?

The goal of my advocacy is to create a global network for women and to bring help and hope to women and children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and related diseases in different communities.

Why is it important to you to reach out to women specifically?

We need to reduce the number of new HIV and other STI infections among women and young girls and to help more women and girls break the silence about HIV/AIDS. I also want to put a smile on the faces of orphans and vulnerable children around me.

It is important because women and children are the most vulnerable groups with increased levels of socioeconomic, political, and civil unrest. It is also important because women are the fundamental agents of change globally.

Do you think women living with HIV face unique challenges? What are they?

Women do have unique challenges including social, economic, emotional, and psycho-social issues. Most women living with HIV are still not ready to disclose their HIV status and this puts them into a challenging situation, both mentally and emotionally.

What is the thing you are most proud of, professionally or personally?

Professionally, I am proud of my level of involvement and communication with other women and my work both locally and globally. Personally, I am proud of my passion for what I do; bringing hope to people and putting smiles on their faces. I love seeing and helping people around me happy, and I love my relationship with other women that share the same health challenges as me.

If you could visit one place in the world, where would it be?

The one place I would love to see in this life time of mine is South Korea.

What advice or information would you offer a woman newly diagnosed with HIV?

My advice for the newly diagnosed woman is not to give up on themselves, because life begins even with HIV. They must never allow the so-called HIV stigma to take their dignity and pride away from them. In addition, they should not see it as a death sentence but as (H-health I- In- V- Victory). They must have a better understanding of the virus so that they can defeat it at all levels of their life. They need to have more knowledge about the virus, get up-to-date information about it and understand what HIV can and cannot do.

Can you share a story that illustrates how you've been successful in working with women living with HIV?

I was able to be of help to a newly diagnosed pregnant woman through our blog (*A Girl Like Me*); today she is a proud mother of a sweet baby girl who is HIV negative. By sharing my experience with Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT), I was able to help her make an informed decision about PMTCT. Visiting her and her husband at their home in

another state from where I live gave me overwhelming joy and happiness. The couple is currently accessing free treatment at another organization I linked them with.

How do you use The Well Project personally? In your work?

The Well Project has made a great difference in my life and has impacted me personally in so many ways, both at the global and local level of my career, that I do not know how to put into writing. Personally, I have wonderful relationships I could never have dreamed of with people far across the Atlantic. I am able to share my pains and heart troubles with other women on the blog which gives me great relief of some of the emotional and psycho-social challenges I have been going through as a woman living with HIV.

What difference has The Well Project made in your life and work?

I have built my career using The Well Project's online tools. It has helped me even with my current job as an HIV Call Centre Counselor at the national level for my country Nigeria. Reading about other women's challenges and experiences on *A Girl Like Me* has also helped me pull through many difficult challenges I have personally faced as a mother, woman and a wife.

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