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of the Global Fund

## A Message of Optimism and Confidence in the Future

This article contains the text of an address by Jaqueline Lima at the opening plenary of the Global Fund 4<sup>th</sup> Partnership Forum held in São Paulo, Brazil on 28-30 June 2011. Jaqueline, a young Brazilian, shares her story as an HIV-positive mother who gave birth to a HIV-negative boy. The address was given in Portuguese; this text is a translation.

I am speaking for myself and for someone who is not yet able to. My name is Jaqueline, I am 21 years old and I am living with HIV/AIDS. I was born in Campinas, in the state of São Paulo, in December of 1989. I was born homeless, the fourth child of the third companion of my alcoholic mother, Irinèia, who was 21 years old at the time. Until I was seven, she, my younger brother and I survived for seven years on the streets of Campinas.

We were adopted by my aunt, Anatilde, an evangelist and manager of a rehabilitation centre for women alcoholics and drug addicts. I was diagnosed HIV-positive; the virus was transmitted by my mother. I went for treatment at the pediatric clinic, AMI, in Jundiaí with Dr. Eduardo Palandri, who has been my physician up to now.

Then, I began to wonder, "Will I never stop taking these medications? Why am I being treated? For what?" When I was ten years old, I asked those who were taking care of me, "Why so much medication? Am I going to have to take them forever?" Lurdes, my psychologist, and Edilaine, my social worker, explained to me the reasons and that, yes, it would be for my whole life. I reacted, "How could I have gotten this sickness?" It was my aunt who explained to me that my mother got it from one of her lovers. I disregarded my rage, sadness and aversion to the remedy. They still make me damn sick.

I did not go to school until I was 10, where I learned to read and write very quickly. I couldn't tell anyone that I was on medication. I couldn't study at the homes of my classmates because they might suspect

something. And stay over there? Out of the question. Until I told one of my friends. I didn't tell anyone else. The next day everyone knew I had AIDS. But, I was lucky. The teachers, psychologist and social worker helped me confront the situation. It was the first battle that I won.

To facilitate discussion at school, the science teacher asked me to do a report on STDs. I loved it. I threw myself into it and felt confident in presenting it to everyone. My classmates needed to learn about STDs and AIDS; they needed to know for the sake of dispelling prejudice and disinformation.

With the encouragement of health centre professionals, I also started to participate in meetings of the GIV (Grupo de Incentivo a Vida = Life Encouragement Group, an NGO) with other HIV-positive young people. I discovered that I was not alone. I met several HIV-positive persons who became my friends. I felt empowered. Today I am active in the National Network of Teenagers and Young Adults Living with HIV.

When I was in high school I started working as a waitress in a restaurant. I left work at night accompanied by a co-worker. One day we remained together and exchanged our first kiss at the bus stop. In tears, I told him that I had to tell him something. I said, "I have a disease. I have AIDS." I heard him say, laughing: "I love you, Jacky! I love you!" Hearing this, it was like a big bunch of fireworks going off around me. From then on, I told everyone.

Though frightened and apprehensive, we went together for two years. Without living together, we lived like a couple which included a fairly active sex life. But one worry was always present: "What if the condom bursts?" Soon after, he left me and became involved with another woman. The romance with her did not last long. A month later he asked me to take him back.

Finally, we got together again. He wanted to have children. How could I, having AIDS, become pregnant by someone who was HIV-negative? Having a child had never occurred to me. He insisted that we have a child. I did not want to, and didn't consent to it. I was afraid he would become infected, but one day I gave in. I got pregnant and returned to the doctor. Dr. Eduardo was a gem, as always. He changed my treatment, adjusted the cocktail and sent me to pre-natal and to my psychologist, Lurdes. The father of my child had not been infected, thank God.

With all this support, I began to lose fear that my baby would be born HIV-positive. I was certain that my pregnancy would be safe and that my child would turn out to be negative.

Heitor was born on March 10, 2010. He is proof of my victory! A victory for my whole family, for Dr. Eduardo, and the entire health team that assisted me. A victory for science.

And, now, Heitor has totally changed my life story. I am lifted up by his little hands. His life is changing and guiding my outlook on life. He was negative; because of Heitor, I think ahead 10 times – no, 10 times is not enough! – to when I can quit taking the medications that continue to nauseate me.

I am thankful to share my victory with other people. To show people that it is I, not HIV, that is in charge of my life. For this, I continue being active in the National Network of Teenagers and Young People Living with HIV and AIDS. As a young adult, a mother and a woman I would like to make a request and leave a message. The request is that this Forum makes the maximum effort possible so that the Global Fund will help change the story of millions of teenagers and young people living with HIV/AIDS, young adults like me all over the world.

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And the message I leave is one of optimism, of confidence in the future, presenting you with the person that I said was not able to speak yet: my son, Heitor, HIV-negative.

My hope is that children like Heitor will not cease to be born. Thank you!

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