Everyone has a role in the response to HIV: The story of Lopo Ingles Martins

Lopo Ingles Martins, a tall 28-year-old Angolan, works as a driver for the USAID-funded Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa Project (BLC), implemented by Management Sciences for Health 1. He completed high school but lacked funds to attend university. Lopo worked as a fashion model for three years but realized that future opportunities in the field were limited and believed he could do something more meaningful with his life.

Lopo subsequently completed several short courses of study, including a nine-month flight attendant course and a two-month public relations and human resource management course. He then worked at a rental car company before being hired to work as a driver for BLC in 2013.

At BLC, Lopo and other staff members watched Inside Story: The Science of HIV and AIDS, a film BLC is using as an HIV prevention tool in Angola and other countries. He enjoyed it, learning what happens when the body is infected by HIV, as well as different methods of prevention. “In Angola, the film really helps young people, because many people discriminate against those living with HIV. It describes how people are affected by HIV and corrects myths that people have about how it spreads,” Lopo says.

Lopo’s sister was diagnosed as living with HIV when she was 19 years old. He shares, “It was a shock in the beginning, because we [Lopo’s family] did not have much information about HIV, and we thought she would soon die. We were surprised when she was determined to live. Although she is infected with HIV, she is very positive. She lives like anyone else, but becomes sad when she sees other people depressed because they are HIV-positive.”

Lopo’s sister is now 31 years old and on antiretroviral therapy. He reflects, “She would have a different point of view and maybe not have been infected if she had received information like that provided in Inside Story.”

Lopo believes his role as a driver makes a difference: “I consider that I am helping the fight against HIV.

1 BLC’s Angola office is based in the capital, Luanda.
Sometimes when we have workshops, I participate in them, advising people how to prevent HIV. This may seem small, but I am trying to help people with the knowledge I have gained at BLC. I have learned so much, and continue to learn. For example, I have learned to respect people infected with HIV: they are still people. Anyone can be infected with HIV if they do not use prevention.”

Lopo is engaged to be married and will soon be a first-time father. He is considering attending university to study law: “When you study law, you can fight injustice. I would like to fight for human rights.”

*All quotes translated from Portuguese

Inside Story is a feature-length film created for an African audience, combining the best of fiction and non-fiction to unravel the mystery of HIV and empower people with the knowledge they need to make informed health decisions. Inside Story combines the fictional story of a rising soccer star with an animated journey of the virus inside the human body.

To access the film, visit: www.insidestorythemovie.org

Launched in 2010, the USAID-funded Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa Project (BLC) strengthens government, parastatal, and civil society entities to effectively address the challenges of the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

Throughout the Southern Africa region and with specific activities in six countries, BLC provides technical assistance in organizational development, including leadership, management, and governance in three key program areas: 1) care and support for orphans and vulnerable children; 2) HIV prevention; and 3) community-based care.

In Angola, BLC supports local civil society organizations (CSOs) to deliver improved evidence- and community-based HIV prevention services that promote healthy behaviors among families. BLC provides performance-based grants to CSOs to work with communities, traditional leaders, community health advocates, and local churches to improve individuals HIV prevention practices, and where possible, in collaboration with local municipalities and health care facilities.

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