

Manipur story

One significant change that has happened to me by attending this PAG is my ability to control my anger. I have every reason to be angry but now I have enough strength to control my emotions and think in a more positive manner. Ever since I was widowed, life has never been the same. Even during my husband's illness none of my in-laws came forward to help. I was driven out of my husband's government quarters by the in-laws two days after my husband died. They also stopped me from getting any benefits that I was entitled to from the government. Since that time, I get angry every time I see anyone of them. When I think of the treatment they meted out to me, I cannot control the hatred that builds up in my heart. Even though my parents are very understanding and support me, I am constantly irritated and angry. So sometimes I used to shout at my daughter and even beat her when I had no other way to vent my anger. I have attended other awareness programs conducted by NGOs and I am quite aware of the stigma and discrimination against PLWHAs like me. But those programs did not help me much to address the deep hatred that was brewing in me. My awareness of the attitude that people have towards PLWHAs made me want to isolate myself from everyone. When I attended the PAG meetings, I came to know that there were many other persons like me who face similar situations. We exchange ideas on the benefits of being mentally well and how to nurture positive thoughts; we also share on how to elicit support from family and community members and the importance of good physical health to be mentally well. From the third session I made up my mind that I should be physically well and I went for my CD4 count on 31 July this year and I will be taking ART from tomorrow 10 August. This change is important for me because now I realize the futility of brewing hatred towards those people who discriminated against me. It only caused me to isolate myself from others and even from my five year old daughter. Anger can also make us physically weak and is mentally hazardous. Many of our actions can also be irrational. I realize that I have to face many problems but I need not be angry about them. I need not be afraid of people's attitude and be affected by their actions. I have a reason to live, to bring up my daughter.

Nagaland story

After coming to the sessions I have changed. Earlier I did not speak to my friends or even to my parents and I always felt very weak physically. I felt very hesitant to attend the sessions for widows. I was always ashamed that my husband was a drug user and felt scared that people would point their fingers at me and say that my husband died of drugs. But after coming to the group I realized that I am not the only widow whose husband was a drug addict. Now I am able to accept myself. Earlier I always sat alone with my child, it was very difficult for me to speak out and there was no one to listen to me and gradually my health started deteriorating and I didn't even know if I was taking good care of my child. But after coming here I have started talking to my friends and parents which is a very big breakthrough for me. My parents have been able to see the change in me and have started telling others about it. Even my friends would comment that I have changed a lot in these few months. I never used to discuss or open up a conversation, it was only when someone asked me, and then I just replied yes or no and not beyond. But now I am able to start speaking and discuss about others things as well as our PAG meetings with my friends. After my husband died my relationship with my in-laws became very bad. We did not talk. But now I have started sharing my feelings with them and our relationship has improved. Even my in-laws are becoming closer to me and my child. A big burden in my mind has been relieved. The idea of forming a group and the zeal to reach out to other widows to relieve their feelings, burdens and worries is my plan for the future. I feel that if we can continue having similar sessions it will help many more widows like me.