



Eliane

Facts about HIV worldwide

- 36,9 million people globally living with HIV, of which 1,8 million children (under the age of 15), 21,1 million people – (59%) have access to treatment.
- In The Netherlands almost every person living with HIV has access to this life saving treatment.
- U=U stands for: Undetectable equals Untransmittable. A person living with HIV who takes medication as prescribed and has an undetectable viral load cannot pass the virus on.
- There is no cure for HIV yet. But current medication, when taken daily, gives a very good health perspective.

(Source: UNAIDS)

AIDS2018: a positive vibe

This is the second column on living with HIV in The Netherlands. Eliane Becks shares her experiences during AIDS2018 as an activist and a stigma fighter.

It was a special week from 23rd till 27th of July, when the International Aids Conference was held in Amsterdam RAI. I met wonderful, inspiring people and many activists from all over the world. The Global Village was busy like an African market place. I received many compliments for my picture on the poster of Positively Dutch campaign, to welcome all the international participants to the conference. It was so nice to tell the story of having children and have them together with me on these colourful posters.

I have been busy all week, as a woman and a mother, an activist and a stigma fighter. I started in the Women Summit and in the U=U pre-conference claiming attention from scientists that we need proof to sustain that women with HIV can indeed breastfeed when they take HIV medication. I used my story of being breastfed for several years and the psychological damage I had when I was not allowed to breastfeed my sons. Women living with HIV and on effective treatment need clarity about breastfeeding as science has made a lot of progress. Many were inspired by my presentation and I am happy I could represent the HIV positive mothers and mothers to be. On the Positively Dutch booth in the Global Village there were two activities I participated in. The first was

a Positive Prayer led by Pastor Elvis Iruh. He thanked our Lord Father for the gift of life and preached that HIV is not a punishment, and that everyone will die when time comes. God loves all his children and does not punish them by giving them any disease. It was a nice, short and educational church service. After that It was my turn.

I used my personal story combined with music and dance to educate and empower. Many sisters and brothers from African countries and other parts of the world joined my dance. This is how I fight the stigma around HIV/AIDS. William Matovu, a young HIV activist from Uganda, joined in. We danced like it was our last day on Earth. It felt like we have been friends for years while before this week we were only friends on Facebook! Many people expressed appreciation for my ability of educating people using my talents. I will never stop sharing my story of hope, of encouragement and empowerment for women and girls living with HIV.

Hiv Vereniging

The Dutch Association of People Living with HIV (Hiv Vereniging) represents the interests of all people with HIV in The Netherlands, irrespective of background.

We provide information about living with HIV and organise all kinds of meet-ups.

Servicepunt

Our team of expert volunteers can be contacted for any question about living with HIV, by telephone on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 14:00 – 22:00 hrs, or by email: servicepunt@hivvereniging.nl.

See www.hivvereniging.nl