

My name is Lina and I'm 31 years old. I am Domilique's mother, who is 9 months old. When I was a child my mother was not afraid to tell me that I was living with HIV and needed medication. When I was 12, I had a relapse because I stopped taking the pills. I stopped because I was tired of other people talking about the size of the tablets. When I told my mother that I had stopped she supported me and helped me to continue taking the medication.

I grew up, I started dating, and I had my first child. He is 10 years old today and was born without the virus. Last year, I had my second son, Domilique. He was born with the virus. He got sick very soon and was admitted to the Matola Provincial Hospital. Dr. Elsa – the pediatrician of the Pediatric Center of Excellence (PCE) - came to visit Domilique and told me that he had the same virus I have. She offered treatment and helped fight for my son to grow up healthy, just like me. She explained about the medication and the clinic where she was working. At that time, Domilique was 3 months old and the only thing I had given him was the syrup when he was born. He had not started any other medication yet.

When I was discharged, I got home and went to the Health facility near my house. However, I decided I liked the clinic where Dr. Elsa was working more, and went back to the PCE to receive the treatment for the baby. That was when Dr. Elsa told me about the EARTH study. I agreed for Domilique to participate in the study, most of all, because I wanted Domilique to take the ARVs and have a healthy life.

That same day he started with the ARVs and got used to it really quickly. I have the support of my husband who is seronegative and who knows my serostatus and the serostatus of our son; in case I cannot administer the drugs, he gives them to him. Today Domilique is well, growing up and healthy. He has put on so much weight that today it is hard to *'nenecar'* – *'carry him on my back'*. Domilique has been going to the PCE and participating in the study for 6 months. I understand that, with his participation in the study, I will help other children as well as my son.

In the PCE they are taking good care of Domilique and myself. Although it is a bit far from my place, it is my wish to continue my follow up here because I feel that if I change then Domilique won't have the same treatment and I'm afraid he could die. Nurse Luisa calls me to know how we are doing and to remind us about the appointment, the blood test and the vaccination. We feel special here at the hospital and we are lucky to have all the team supporting us. Fortunately, my family helps us as well. Everyone in my family, and also my neighbors, know that myself and Domilique are living with HIV; my mother is living with HIV too. When there is support within the family one can continue her own life and it becomes a normal situation. When I was pregnant I took the medication but my son got the virus. I learned not to blame myself for this and I promised myself I would always take care of Domilique. When he is able to understand, I will explain to him he has to take the pills in order to grow strong and healthy, just as my mother did to me, and have his dreams fulfilled.

In Mozambique, according to National survey data (IMASIDA 2015), HIV prevalence is 13.2%; vertical transmission rate is 14%, ART coverage among HIV infected children is 51% and viral suppression rate is 54%.

The Maputo Province, where the EARTH study is ongoing, has a HIV prevalence rate of 22.9% and a vertical transmission rate of 4%.



*Figure 1.* In 2018, Domilique, who was only 3 months old, was the 2<sup>nd</sup> patient to be recruited for the study. He started antiretroviral treatment and is now virologically controlled and growing well. He is coming to the clinic with his mother every month and taking his medication regularly.



*Figure 2.* Lina and Domilique attending support groups for caregivers where they share their experience, talk about the difficulties in giving medicines to their children, and listen to success stories from other parents.

