

REAL LIFE STORIES

Living in fear of deportation

Michael is 50 years old and is from Zambia. He lives with his wife and four daughters in the UK. When Michael arrived in the UK in 1982, he did not intend to remain. He fell ill and was advised to begin taking HIV treatment. Michael's claim to remain in the UK on medical grounds has been rejected. However, he cannot return to Zambia because the medication that he needs to remain healthy is not readily available in Zambia. Michael said, 'Why do they allow us to begin treatment with the advice that one can remain on medical grounds only for me to be forced into a situation where I will have to stop? It's like giving someone an oxygen mask and taking it away again.' Statistics highlight the limited availability of HIV treatment in Zambia and the high mortality rate as a result of HIV-related illnesses. Michael has a letter from his medical practitioner stressing the importance of staying on medication. It states that his life expectancy on medication is 10 years but without follow-up and treatment his life is reduced to 1 year 6 months. Michael said, 'It is very traumatic being ill let alone having to deal with other difficulties. It is devastating for me to know that if I am taken back home my children will become instant orphans. At least right now I can say to them I am alive and I am here for you. Animals have more dignity than me as an HIV positive man without secure immigration status.' Michael continued, 'my biggest fear is that there is no medication in my home country, that I will have no income, no-one to take care of me, and my children will have no breadwinner. I will have lapses in my health and may die'.

July 2006

Deported, now struggling to access HIV treatment

Ratidzai visited the UK in 2002. She fell ill and was diagnosed with HIV. She began taking HIV treatment and her health improved considerably. She was an active volunteer for several HIV organisations, including the UK Coalition of People Living with HIV and AIDS and Zimbabwe Women's Network UK. Ratidzai applied to remain in the UK on asylum grounds and was dispersed to Newcastle. Her family belonged to the opposition party in Zimbabwe and her life was in danger. In February 2007, she went to report to the immigration services in Newcastle where she was detained and then placed at Yarl's Wood detention centre. She was held at Yarl's Wood until early April. Her application to remain in the UK was refused and she was deported to Zimbabwe. Ratidzai is now in Harare and she has run out of medication. In order to access medication, she has to go to the government hospital, where they ask to see the ruling party's political card. As Ratidzai does not belong to this political party, she is not able to access HIV treatment. Since there are some authorities who know she was deported from the UK, they also know she belonged to the opposition party. It is therefore impossible for her to get a party card, even if she wanted one, to enable her to access medication. One of her friends in the UK stated 'Ratidzai should not have been deported. Her health is rapidly deteriorating. She is a very intelligent woman and has so much to offer. It should never have come to this'.

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NB. The names of the people in the cases above have been change to protect their identity.