

Maria thought she would die very soon – A Story from El Salvador

A widowed mother of one, Maria (not her real name) and her daughter are both HIV positive, born before Maria knew she had the virus. She was struggling as a single mother with a significant health diagnosis for herself and her daughter. Then, when her daughter was 12, Maria met staff from PWRDF partner CoCoSI (the Committee Against AIDS). They connected with her through the HIV Clinic at the hospital in Sensuntepeque, Cabañas and began home visits, then invited them to a support group run by CoCoSI at the hospital. Through this support group Maria met José and with their families they have made a new life together.

CoCoSI was founded in 1999 by teenager Elizabeth Membreño and her friends. They were aware of the lack of HIV education and prevention in their rural communities. CoCoSI provides opportunities for youth to plan and run workshops in schools and the local prison on inequality, gender-based violence, discrimination, bullying and hate crimes against people of non-conforming genders. Team members provide transportation and food costs for people travelling so that they can get to the support group meetings. They will even help with money to get to the hospital for appointments or to buy medications from the clinic at the hospital.

In 2010 CoCoSI received a Red Ribbon Award from the United Nations HIV and AIDS program.