

# DIAMONDS



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## Foreword

*It is my pleasure to let you know that “Diamonds” is published in the year of the 15th anniversary of Asia Pacific Network of People living with HIV (APN+).*

APN+ is the network of people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Asia Pacific region. It was established in 1994 at a meeting in Kuala Lumpur by 42 PLHIV from eight countries. It was established in response to the need for a collective voice for PLHIV in the region, to better link regional PLHIV with the Global Network of PLHIV (GNP+) and positive networks throughout the world, and to support regional responses to widespread stigma and discrimination and better access to treatment and care.

Women of APN+ (WAPN+) was formed in 2006 as one of the working groups of APN+. Its vision is the empowerment of women living with HIV in Asia and the Pacific. Women who share their life stories in this book are good examples our vision being realized. They have become leaders despite severe discrimination and stigma, and are inspiring and empowering other women. Above all, these eleven women in the book are great advocates of people living with HIV/AIDS rights and voices, whose stories are sometimes not being told. Through these stories, we are being reminded that the numbers indicated in the HIV data represent people who have different life stories, stories of hopes, dreams, love, passion and life experiences to share with all of us.

I would like to thank all the women who contributed their time and effort by telling their stories as well as UNIFEM for their support. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation and deep admiration to Dr. Susan Paxton, author of this book, respected researcher, wonderful trainer, and above all, good friend of ours for her extraordinary work.

I hope as the title represents, our “Diamonds”, which are formed under immense pressure to become the strongest and most brilliant natural resource on earth, are beautiful and colourful, and will keep on sparkling, shining and inspiring many people, including other women living with HIV.