CASE STUDY 1

Kung had been married to Tan, a migrant labourer, for ten years and had two children. She operated a small but successful sewing business from home.

When Tan returned for his annual holiday he had lost a lot of weight and said he had not been well for the past few months. Kung was worried because Tan had no appetite, even for his favourite delicacies that she lovingly prepared. He began to cough badly and became increasingly weak. After two weeks Kung convinced her husband to go to the hospital to get some medicine.

On arrival at the hospital, Tan was immediately admitted to a ward. A nurse came and took his blood pressure, temperature, and a blood sample for some "routine tests". Tan was given some tablets and told that the doctor would see him first thing in the morning. Kung stayed for an hour or so, trying unsuccessfully to coax Tan into eating a little of his favourite food that she had brought with her.

The following morning Kung came to the hospital to visit her husband and bring him food. As she walked through the hospital grounds, she felt that several of the staff members were pointing her out and staring at her. She attempted to greet an old friend who worked there, but the woman quickly turned and walked away as if she had not noticed Kung.

Kung was told that Tan had been moved to another section of the hospital, the infectious diseases wing. When she arrived she discovered that Tan was in a single room. He said that since the move, no medical staff had attended to him and he had overheard a hospital cleaner arguing with a nurse outside the room, and refusing to enter. Tan said that he thought he must have TB. Before Kung left the hospital she tried to find one of the medical staff to ask about Tan's condition, but she was told the doctors were all busy as they were short staffed and that she would be able to speak to somebody the following morning.

Early that same evening Kung was taken by surprise when a nurse from the hospital visited her at her home. When Kung attempted to greet the nurse she avoided touching Kung's hand. Kung offered her guest some tea but she refused and said she was not staying long. She said she had called to tell Kung that Tan was HIV-positive. She said she was surprised because she thought they were decent people but now she must tell the owner of the house about their HIV status. Kung begged her not to but the nurse was adamant that it was her duty.

The next day the landlord arrived at Kung's house with his son, a policeman. He said he wanted her to leave the house immediately. Kung argued that she had signed a lease that had not expired. The son began shouting that nobody wanted them in the neighbourhood any longer and if they did not leave his father's house, he would bring a gun and kill them all. He picked up Kung's sewing machine and flung it to the floor, breaking it.

Kung said she would move as soon as Tan was discharged from hospital.

Tan died the following week. Kung and her children moved back to the village where her parents lived. She was not able to repair the sewing machine.
CASE STUDY 2

Lek thought she was pregnant after missing her period and decided to go to the local hospital for confirmation and a check up. The hospital close to her home was where she had delivered her two daughters, now aged 5 and 3. When she got there she was told that the hospital had introduced a new policy and that they would give her a blood test to check for HIV. When she went back to the nurse to collect her results she was told that she was pregnant, and she had HIV. The nurse said she should not have the child because of the risk of it having HIV. When Lek met with the doctor, he said she would be referred to a hospital in the city, several hours drive away, because they handled all HIV-positive cases.

When Lek attended her first antenatal visit at the city hospital, the doctor explained to Lek that she needed to start taking medication for the HIV infection immediately so that she could have the best chance of delivering a healthy baby. He also told her that this should be her last pregnancy. The doctor said that she could deliver at the hospital providing she agreed to be sterilised after the delivery. Lek did not feel she had any choice and she agreed. A cousin who lived in the city suggested Lek move in with her for the last couple of weeks of the pregnancy so she would be near the hospital.

Lek went into labour six weeks prematurely and was forced to attend the hospital close to her home. She arrived in advanced labour with her mother accompanying her. When she was admitted, the nurse noted that she was HIV-positive and asked why she had not had an abortion.

Lek was put in a room and left alone with her mother for the next three hours. Her labour progressed, with increasing difficulty. Lek's mother tried to get one of the mid-wives to come and attend to her daughter and monitor her progress, but nobody came. When Lek delivered, despite calling out for help, she only had her mother to assist. When the baby was born, the umbilical cord was wrapped around its neck and Lek's mother pulled it over the baby's head and rushed to get help.

A nurse came and checked on her baby, but it was blue. She picked it up with a piece of plastic and took the infant away before Lek could see or hold her newborn. Soon afterwards another nurse came into the room with a mop and bucket and told Lek's mother to scrub the floor clean of blood.

Lek was bleeding heavily after the delivery. She was left alone for another hour. A nurse then came in with some sanitary pads. She told Lek that the baby had died and that she should return home with her mother. No follow-up visits were scheduled.

Lek continued to bleed heavily for the following two weeks. Lek's mother brought her back to the hospital but the doctor did not give her a physical examination, and instead gave her some tablets and told her to return home and the bleeding would stop. Lek continued to haemorrhage and her family were concerned, so they arranged to transport her to the city hospital. Lek was admitted into surgery immediately. When she recovered she was informed that doctors had performed a curette and at the same time they had done a tubal ligation.