

The Needles I Hid

A Dual Journey Through Diabetes Stigma as a Patient, Clinician, and Advocate

Elia Sarubare Nnko – Tanzania • Storytelling Contribution • Global Summit to End Diabetes Stigma

Story Begins



At seventeen, I hid insulin injections under school desks so no one would say, "he is sick."

In a place where myths travelled faster than truth, silence felt safer than explanation.

Stigma & Challenges



- Seen as contagious or self-inflicted
- Hid injections to avoid shame
- Fear replaced understanding
- Stereotypes followed into my career

A Dual Journey



From lived experience and clinical practice

- Stigma does not disappear with education.
- It hides in assumptions.
- It grows in silence.

Turning Silence into Voice



- Teenagers newly diagnosed



- Parents burdened with blame



- Communities fearing public injection



- Healthcare workers reinforcing shame



Reflection

Diabetes does not diminish our capability – it expands our strength.

When we replace myths with understanding, we replace shame with dignity.