

SOCIAL ISSUES TEACHING KITS

HIV AND AIDS



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SUB-TOPIC 1: WHAT ARE HIV AND AIDS?

HIV = Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS = Acquired Immune Deficiency Virus

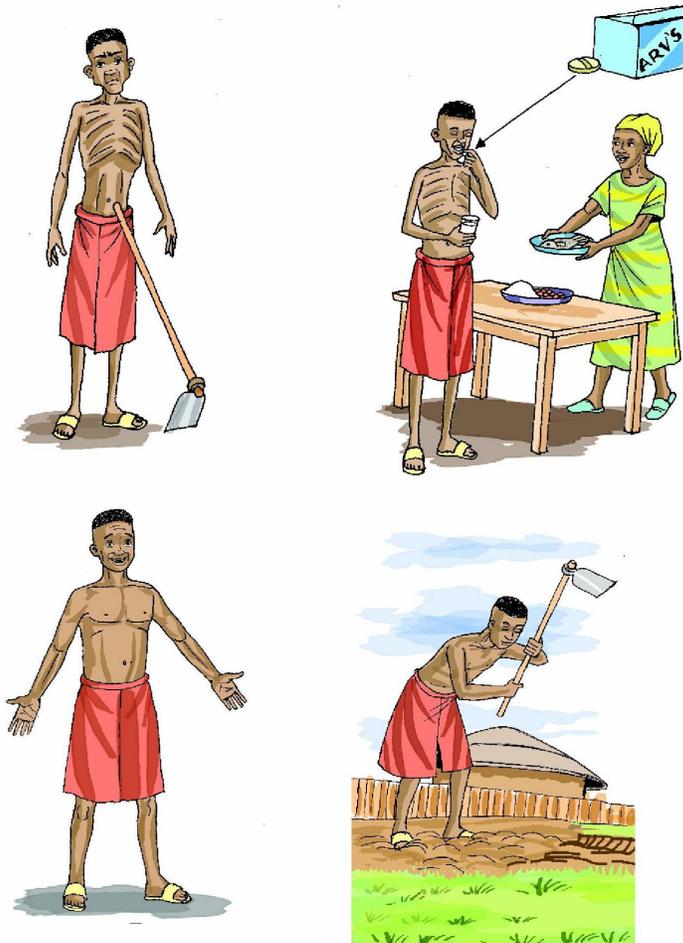
HIV is a virus that causes the body's defence system, its 'immune system', to become weak. It is an incurable but preventable disease. Our blood has 'soldier' cells that are strong and attack germs that cause diseases, but HIV targets, impairs or destroys these cells. When HIV has destroyed these cells, the body has no more soldiers to attack germs, and the person becomes very sick with a set of serious illnesses. This is when a person has **AIDS**.

You don't have AIDS as soon as you are infected with HIV. HIV behaves like a termite in a house. At first it hides and then the virus multiplies. At first the person looks and feels well, without any symptoms, or with only mild-to-moderate symptoms. This healthy-looking time may last for years. However, during this time the infected person can still pass on the HIV virus.

Without treatment, HIV eventually destroys the body's natural protection from infection and the body can no longer defend itself. The person becomes very sick with different diseases such as fever, sickness, diarrhoea, coughs and skin problems. As time goes on, these diseases may get more serious and the body will get weaker. This is when the person is said to have AIDS. When a person dies from AIDS, it is usually this set of serious illnesses that cause death.

In 2007, there were 33 million people in the world living with HIV. Approximately 22 million of these people were living in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that there are as many as 320,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in Sudan, meaning that out of every 100 people, there may be as many as 2 with HIV/AIDS. In 2007 it was estimated that there were 25,000 children living with HIV and AIDS. In the same year at least 25,000 people died of AIDS in Sudan.

Is there a cure for HIV? At this present time (2009) there is no cure for HIV / AIDS. Once the HIV virus is in a person's blood it will stay there. Nothing can make it come out. However, there are new medicines that can keep people with HIV healthier for longer periods, so that they can live a healthy and happy life for many more years.



Where did HIV and AIDS come from? There have been many theories since HIV and AIDS were identified about where it originated from, and even now there is no proven theory. Most recently, researchers identified a subspecies of chimpanzees native to west equatorial Africa as being the original source of the virus. The researchers believe that HIV was introduced into the human population when hunters became exposed to infected blood. However, this theory has not been proven.

Scientific explanation of HIV and AIDS

The soldier cells in our blood are called CD4 cells; they are a type of white blood cell. When HIV gets into the blood, it damages or kills the CD4 cells, causing the immune system to gradually deteriorate, leading to 'immune deficiency'. The immune system is considered deficient when it loses too many CD4 white blood cells, and can no longer fulfil its role of fighting off infections and diseases, so the infected person is more likely to develop a wide range of serious, often deadly, infections. These are called opportunistic infections (OIs) because they take advantage of the body's weakened defences. AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV infection, when the body's immune-weakened state can no longer stop illnesses and diseases from developing and so becoming deadly. It is called a syndrome because there are different signs, symptoms, infections and diseases associated with the deficient immune system, which are not always found in each case or together. For example, a person may have tumours, cancers, lung infections, chronic diarrhoea. When someone dies of AIDS, it is usually these opportunistic infections that cause death.

Discussion:

What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

SUB-TOPIC 2: WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HIV?

Most people can not tell that they have been infected straight away, as they do not feel ill immediately after infection. However some people have faster signs, and within one to six weeks of infection, they have flu-like symptoms such as fever, swollen glands, muscle aches, or a rash. These 6 weeks are called 'seroconversion', the time when the body first begins to try to fight HIV infection. People are very infectious in the first few weeks, whether they have symptoms or not, and can transmit the virus to another person.

The only sure way of knowing if someone has HIV is to test for the virus. You cannot tell if someone has HIV just by looking at them.

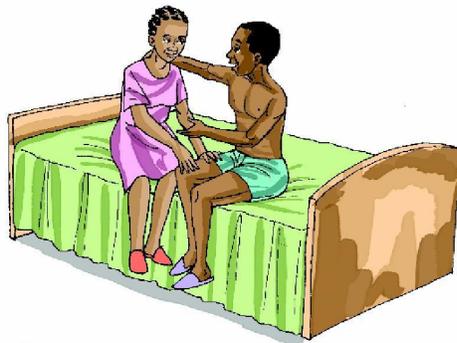
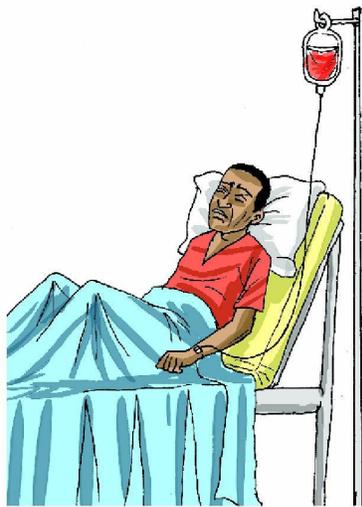
Medicines called 'antiretroviral drugs' (ARVs) help fight the effects of HIV and AIDS and let the infected person live healthily for more years. These drugs work by reducing the level of the HIV virus in the person's blood. Some of the drugs are available easily and at no cost while others are not available or are too expensive.

At first, the person with HIV may be healthy with no symptoms for some years. especially if they are taking antiretroviral drugs. After a person has had the HIV virus for a long time, they may show symptoms due to the damage to their immune system and the infections they get. The symptoms will vary depending on the stage of the disease, and which infections the person has. Symptoms may include long-lasting swollen lymph nodes; permanent night sweats; long-lasting diarrhoea; persistent fever; severe weight loss; fungal diseases; dermatitis; dry cough; breathlessness; chronic fatigue; persistent headaches.

The length of time between getting HIV and developing AIDS varies from person to person. The majority of people, if they do not receive treatment, develop signs in 5 to 10 years, but some people do not develop AIDS for up to 15 years. The progression from HIV to AIDS is marked by the development of infections such as pneumonia, TB, cancers, and neurological infections.

SUB-TOPIC 3: HOW IS HIV TRANSMITTED?

Many people do not have enough information and knowledge on HIV and AIDS. They attribute the death it causes to witchcraft or ancestral curses. As a result people continue in their lifestyles and traditions, and resort to traditional means to try and find remedies, which sometimes accelerates the spread of HIV.



Many people with HIV look and feel healthy and do not think they are at risk. But the truth is that anyone can get HIV and AIDS – babies, children, rich and poor,

disabled and healthy people, men and women. It is a person's actions, or those actions taken against him or her, that puts the person at risk. The HIV virus is found in body fluids, including blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast-milk.

To get AIDS you first get HIV. HIV is spread in the following ways:

- In most cases, HIV is passed from one person to another through unprotected sexual intercourse (without a condom), during which the semen, vaginal fluid or blood of an infected person passes into the body of another person.
- HIV can pass from one person to another through blood, when a tiny amount of infected blood is left on needles, syringes, razor blades, knives or other instruments that cut or pierce the skin, if they are not sterilised after use.
- HIV can be transmitted through blood transfusions when the blood of an infected person is given to another person, but these days, most hospitals are careful to screen blood for HIV before giving blood transfusions.
- HIV can be passed from an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. When the baby is in the womb, there is a possibility that the virus could enter the baby through the placenta. During birth, especially if there is any tearing, the baby can be infected. If the mother breast-feeds, there is a small chance that the HIV can be passed on through the mother's milk. These risks can all be reduced.

Young people may be more at risk of getting HIV than older people because:

- They may be very sexually active, or may experience peer pressure to drink, abuse drugs and have sex at an early age
- They may be unable to say no to the sexual advances of older people, for example, sometimes older men want to marry or have sex with younger girls, and the men may have already had many partners, or young men may have sexual intercourse with older women as part of the rites of passage
- They have delicate sexual organs which are more likely to tear or bleed
- They may have few places to relax, and few opportunities for education, training or employment so they may end up in unsuitable relationships

Cultural Practices Sometimes the word 'culture' or 'cultural tradition' is used as an excuse when people do not want to change a practice, or even to discuss it. Here in South Sudan, there are many wonderful, rich aspects of our different cultures which are worth preserving. But there are also parts of our cultures that can be harmful to our communities. There are some cultural practices that present a risk for HIV transmission, unless precautions are taken, for example:

- Wife inheritance where a man dies, and his wife is 'inherited' by his brother or relative. The wife may have been infected by her husband, or the man 'inheriting' the wife may be infected and spread the disease to her. The wife and her new husband should be tested first for HIV and practice safer sex.
- Removing of teeth, ritual cutting and circumcision can be dangerous practices if the same instrument is used for different people. If these practices are done, a different and sterilised instrument should be used for each person. If this is not possible, the instrument should be fully and properly sterilised.

SUB-TOPIC 4: HOW IS HIV NOT SPREAD?

Different communities hold different misconceptions about HIV and AIDS. These contribute to stigma or shame and disgrace for those who are infected with HIV or have AIDS. It is very important to remember that **HIV *is not*** spread by:

- Kissing, hugging, touching or shaking hands with those who have HIV
- Coughing and sneezing , sweat, saliva, crying / tears
- Sharing toilet seats or urinating in the same place as someone with HIV
- Sharing plates, glasses, cups, eating utensils and phones
- Sharing clothes or sleeping in the same bed as with someone with HIV
- Breathing the same air as someone with HIV
- Mosquitoes - even if the virus enters a mosquito, it cannot reproduce in insects, so it cannot transmit HIV to the next person it bites.
- Swimming in the same lake / river



It is important to know how HIV is not spread so that we can make sure that children and adults who are infected are not segregated or isolated. For people with HIV to live a longer life, they need to be involved in all aspects of life. They can do things that normal people do without spreading the virus. It helps them live a happy healthy life when they feel that they belong.

People with HIV cook, clean, play with others, lead in class and other places, and also hold good jobs. You should not be fearful of interacting with persons living with the disease. What is most important is that people living with HIV and AIDS have the love, care and support of their family and friends.

Discussion

1. What is the main way of spreading HIV?
2. What ideas about what a person with HIV will look like are common in your community?
3. What are some beliefs and misconceptions about HIV and AIDS in our community that contribute to stigma / discrimination against those infected?
4. How can we challenge stigma and discrimination against children who are sick or have someone in their family who is sick or has died of HIV and AIDS?

Teacher's note for discussion: Children can make a big difference by ensuring other children are included in their activities and by challenging stigma and discrimination.

Lilly's Story

Lilly cried all the way home from school. It had been another horrible day at school. No one would play with her, no one would sit next to her, and no-one would share food or water with her. Lilly did not like going to school anymore. Lilly used to love going to school, she used to have lots of friends and play lots of games. But then last year her father died,

and now her mother was very sick. At school the other children shouted at her that her father had died of AIDS and now her mother also has AIDS.



Lilly is working very hard to look after her brothers and sisters, so she is very tired all the time and does not find time to study and sometimes she misses school. Her mother wants Lilly to continue in

school so she can get a good job. Lilly does not tell her mother how sad she is because she does not want to upset her mother.

Lilly wishes the children at school understood about HIV and AIDS. Even if her parents had AIDS, it did not mean that Lilly or her brothers and sisters had HIV too. She wishes that the other children knew that you can't get HIV by playing with someone, by sharing your food and drink, by sitting next to someone, or touching or kissing someone. Most of

all she wishes that the other children knew that you can't get HIV by being someone's friend. She wishes that they understood that when someone is affected by HIV or AIDS, either because he or she is sick, or their parents are sick, what they need more than anything is love, support and friendship.



SUB-TOPIC 5: HOW CAN HIV BE PREVENTED?

The risk of getting HIV through sex can be reduced when:

- People abstain from sex, and delay the age that they begin to have sex
- Uninfected partners only have sex with each other with no other risky behaviour
- People have safer sex – without penetration or while using a condom
- People reduce the number of partners they have sex with
- People who have sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are at greater risk of getting and spreading HIV. They should get tested and treated promptly and avoid sex or practice **safer sex**

What is 'safer sex'? No sexual act is 100% safe from the risk of HIV. Safer sex is protecting oneself to reduce the risk of transmitting or getting HIV through sex. When condoms are used correctly every time, they are very effective at preventing HIV infection in both women and men; this is 'safer sex'.

The risk of getting HIV through other ways can be reduced by:

- Not sharing sharp instruments used for cutting / piercing / injecting the skin. If they must be shared, they should be fully and properly sterilised before use
- If you inject drugs, always use new and disposable needles and syringes
- Check that any blood products that you need (e.g., blood transfusions), have been tested for HIV and that blood safety standards are in place

The risk of transmission of HIV from mother to child can be reduced by:

- Testing pregnant women for HIV during their antenatal care treatment
- Giving the mother antiretroviral drugs before and close to the time of birth
- The mother delivering her baby by caesarean section
- The mother using formula milk rather than breast feeding **but only** if she has good, affordable and sustainable access to replacement feeding, including a source of clean, safe water. In many situations formula milk is too expensive or not easy to get, and babies may become malnourished if they are not breastfed. In these cases, a mother should give her baby *only* breast-milk and *no* other foods or liquids for the *first six months* of the baby's life. This will reduce the chance of the virus passing to the baby

SUB-TOPIC 6: TESTING FOR HIV

Who should be tested for HIV? It is wise to go for HIV testing if:

- You have had sex without a condom
- You have shared instruments that have been used for cutting / piercing skin
- You are uncertain of your partner's HIV status or your partner is HIV positive
- You have had a blood transfusion
- You are pregnant or are considering becoming pregnant
- You have ever been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease
- You have Hepatitis A, B or C



Why is it important to get tested for HIV? There are 4 important benefits:

1. If you have HIV, you can try to access antiretroviral drugs, care and support services in order to live healthily for longer.
2. If you know your status, you can take steps to protect others from getting the disease from you.

3. If you are pregnant, you can talk to a health worker about how you can protect your unborn child from getting HIV.
4. If you are found to be HIV negative, you can learn how to stay that way.

Where is HIV testing provided? This will vary from place to place, but mostly testing in South Sudan is done in the hospital or in primary health care centres. It is often called 'Voluntary Counselling and Testing' or VCT. It is also often provided as a voluntary service for pregnant women if they want it, when they go for care during pregnancy. People must always give consent before being tested, their results are confidential, and they should receive counselling after receiving their result.

How is HIV testing provided? Anyone who suspects that he or she might have contracted HIV should go to a special clinic for counselling to decide whether to have a blood test which checks for HIV. When you are infected, your immune system makes antibodies to fight the virus. The HIV test looks for these antibodies. If you have them in your blood, it means that you have the HIV infection. The only way to know for sure if you are infected is take an HIV test.

It is best to wait three months before going for testing. This is because it can take up to three months for the HIV antibodies to show up in your blood. However, this does not mean that a newly infected person is not infectious during this time; in fact they are very infectious in the first few months. If you think you may have been infected with HIV you should take measures to prevent transmitting the disease to anyone else.

At the HIV test, a small amount of blood is taken and examined. Sometimes people will get the results back immediately, but sometimes people have to wait longer to get the results. A person who has HIV is said to be **HIV positive**. Someone who does not have HIV is said to be **HIV negative**. People will be counselled when the results come.

SUB-TOPIC 7: When someone tests positive for HIV

When people find out they have HIV they react in different ways. Some are shocked and angry, some become very sad. Some people will keep this news secret as they do not know what their family, friends or employers will think, say and do. It is important for people to know if they are HIV positive, so that they can take good care of their health. People with HIV can live healthy and productive lives for many years, especially if they have the support of people around them. Also, because of new drugs, many people with HIV are living much longer and healthier lives. People with HIV should be given support to eat healthy foods and use safe drinking water, to get lots of sleep and rest, but also to exercise regularly to keep strong and fit. It is important that people who are HIV positive get immunised against illnesses such as pneumonia and flu as they find it harder to fight off such infections.

People with HIV need to seek advice from doctors and health professionals about prevention of transmission to other people. Their partners and children will often need to be tested as well. If an HIV positive woman is pregnant, it is important that she gets information on the prevention of transmitting the disease to her unborn child. People cope best when they can talk openly about having HIV with family and friends. It is important that family, friends and communities understand that they cannot get HIV from casual contact, and that it is perfectly safe to live with a person with HIV. Most countries have support groups for people who are HIV positive. These groups often play a central part in HIV and AIDS education and care activities.

When someone tests negative for HIV If a person is found to be HIV negative, it means that no HIV antibodies were found in the blood at the time of testing. However, as it can take up to three months for the HIV antibodies to show up in blood, sometimes even when a test comes back negative, the person can have HIV, so it is advisable to get re-tested at a later date. While waiting for a later test, it is important to take precautions against spreading the disease. People who test negative should learn how to stay that way.

Mr. Tukei's Story

When Mr. Tukei found out that he had the HIV virus in his body his head was filled with sad thoughts. At the clinic they gave him some advice, and told him how to 'live positively with HIV'. They advised him to eat good food, and to make sure that everything around him was clean – his food, water, body and home. He was told that he should go to the clinic quickly whenever he has an infection. Mr. Tukei was told to learn new things and develop new skills, and to make new friends who understand him. He was told to talk to his children about the illness, and to plan his family's future. The counsellor at the clinic said that he should keep his mind on good thoughts and feelings, and to share his problems. Mr. Tukei was told to say to himself 'Yes I am infected but I am going to get on with life'. Mr. Tukei was a smoker and he often skipped meals to go and smoke and drink beer



with his friends. He knew that his house was a bit of a mess. Mr. Tukei talked to his wife and his children about his HIV and explained that he wanted to live positively. He asked them for help. The family cleaned up the house and promised to keep themselves and the house clean. They tidied the neglected garden and with their neighbours' help, and sowed fruit and vegetables. Mr. Tukei gave up his cigarettes and his beer and

learned how to cook good food for himself and his family. Mr. Tukei told his brother Sam about his HIV. Sam is a businessman, and lived in the city. He decided to come and visit. Instead of a house full of sadness, Sam found a family trying to make life better. Mr. Tukei died a few years later. Although his family is sad that he is no longer with them, the Tukei family had some of their happiest times together when their father was HIV positive.

GLOSSARY

Advanced	Something that has developed or moved forward
Ancestral	Something related to someone but that existed at an earlier time
Antenatal	Happening or taking place before birth
Antibodies	A protein produced in the blood which fights diseases by attacking and killing harmful bacteria
Caesarean section	Operation where a woman's womb is cut open to allow a baby to be born
Circumcision	To cut the protecting loose skin off a boy's penis, or to cut away a girl's clitoris and the skin around it, for medical, traditional or religious reasons
Condom	A thin rubber covering that a man can wear on his penis during sex to stop a woman becoming pregnant or to protect him or his partner against infectious diseases
Counselling	Listening to someone, giving them advice about their problems
Deficiency	A lack of what is needed
Dermatitis	Inflammations of the skin such as rashes
Deterioration	When someone who is ill becomes worse
Fungal disease	Diseases caused by fungi that penetrate into the tissue of the body
Glands	An organ of the body or of a plant which produces liquid chemicals that have various purposes
Gradual	Happening or changing slowly over a long period of time / distance
Hepatitis A/ B /C	A serious disease of the liver
HIV Status	Whether a person is HIV positive (has HIV) or HIV negative (does not have HIV)
Immune system	The various cells and tissues in the body which make it able to protect itself against infection
Immunise	To give a person protection against a particular disease by introducing a special substance into their body, usually by injection
Immunodeficient	When a body is unable to produce enough antibodies to fight bacteria and viruses, often resulting in infection and disease
Impairs	To spoil or weaken something so that it is less effective
Infection	Disease in a part of the body that is caused by bacteria or a virus

Inheritance	Something (money, a house, a responsibility) which is received by someone after the person to whom belonged has died
Nerurological disease	Diseases that affect the nervous systems. Including the brain and spinal cord
Opportunistic infection	An infection caused by bacteria or a virus which is harmless to a healthy person but harms a person whose body's natural defence against infection is damaged
Peer pressure	The strong influence of a group, especially of children, on members of that group to behave as everyone else does
Penetration	A movement into something or someone
Pneumonia	A serious illness in which one or both lungs become red and swollen and filled with liquid
Precaution	Action taken to prevent something unpleasant/dangerous happening
Preventable	Something that can be stopped from happening
Progression	Advancement to an improved or more developed state, or to a forward position
Rash	A lot of small red spots on skin
Rites of passage	An official ceremony or informal activity which marks an important stage or occasion in a person's life, especially becoming an adult
Semen	A liquid containing sperm which is produced by male sex organs
Seroconversion	The development of antibodies in the blood as a result of infection
Sexually transmitted disease	An illness that is spread through sexual contact
Sterilise	Process of making something completely clean / free from bacteria
Symptoms	Any feeling of illness or physical or mental change which is caused by a particular disease
Syndrome	Combination of medical problems that commonly go together, that might show the existence of a particular disease or mental condition
Target	To aim at something or someone, or to aim to achieve something
Transmit	To pass something from one person or place to another
Vaginal fluid	A clear or whitish fluid that comes out of the vagina
Virus	An extremely small organism which causes disease in humans, animals and plants

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