

## Global Basics: HIV and AIDS

Use this session on World AIDS Day, 1 December, to help your group explore this important issue. It includes a quiz, new animation, case-studies, discussion, prayer and opportunities to take action. We believe tackling HIV and AIDS is essential to overcoming poverty.

### You will need:

- Quiz questions and prize
- HIV fact sheet
- CAFOD HIV animation
- Big sheet of paper and pens
- Copies of case studies
- Candle
- Bible



### Icebreaker Quiz

(10 mins) Play in teams and have a prize ready! You could give teams three minutes to look at the HIV fact sheet before the quiz. Make sure you share the correct answers with the group too.

[cafod.org.uk/Media/Files/Resources/Secondary/resource-pages/Factsheets](http://cafod.org.uk/Media/Files/Resources/Secondary/resource-pages/Factsheets)

### 1. What does HIV stand for?

*Human immunodeficiency virus. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. The virus infects cells that help protect the body from disease. When the cells are infected, the body's immune system can become damaged and a person's ability to fight off disease reduced.*

### 2. What does AIDS stand for?

*Acquired immune deficiency syndrome. When HIV has damaged a large proportion of the key cells in the body's immune system, a person can no longer fight off illness. AIDS is usually diagnosed when an HIV infected person becomes ill with one or more serious illnesses such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, skin cancer or dementia.*

### 3. In 2013, how many people were living with HIV and AIDS – 3 million, 35 million, 350 million?

*In 2013, there were 35 million people living with HIV (UNAIDS). This is equivalent to more than half of the UK population.*

### 4. True or false – people can get HIV and AIDS by hugging or kissing someone who is infected?

*False. HIV is passed on when blood, sexual fluids or breast milk from someone who is HIV positive get inside an uninfected person.*

### 5. True or false – women are more at risk of HIV infection than men?

*True. Globally young women (15-24) are most vulnerable to HIV with infection rates twice as high as in young men. Every minute, a young woman is newly infected with HIV. Women are more vulnerable both physiologically and culturally.*

### 6. True or false – there is no cure for HIV and AIDS?

*True. There is currently no cure for HIV but there have been huge advances in treatment. Special drugs known as 'antiretrovirals' (ARVs) can slow down HIV infection and reduce the amount of virus in the bloodstream.*

*Many AIDS-related illnesses can also be treated successfully, at least in the short-term. Even when a person has had an AIDS diagnosis, they can still be helped to recover so that they feel healthy.*

#### Input Animation

(10 mins) Watch the CAFOD HIV animation. You could then:

- Ask groups to draw the HIV problem tree on large pieces of paper and then go through any words or ideas of which they are unsure.
- Discuss: Why do the root causes make it more likely a person will contract HIV? How will the solutions (leaves) help tackle HIV?

#### Activity Living with HIV

(20 mins) In small groups, read one of the case studies of Blenda Nantongo and Brhan Reda Gebresgi below. Then discuss: What are your first thoughts about the story? Why is living with HIV a challenge

for the person? What are they doing to make their, and others', lives better?

#### Reflect and pray

(10 mins) Light a candle and read 'a woman healed' Luke 5:21-34. Discuss: What does the story make you think about? What does this passage say to you today? How does our faith help us if we are ill? What other support helps us when we are ill?

You could then invite the group to offer prayers. Perhaps, pass the candle around the group and invite them to offer their prayer out loud or in the quiet of their heart when they are holding the candle. Finish with the sign of the cross.

#### Take action

Offer your young people the opportunity to take action:

- Share the CAFOD HIV animation on social media.
- Challenge prejudice and raise awareness of HIV.
- Pray for those affected by HIV across the world.
- Fundraise for our *Make a child smile* world gift which supports children affected by HIV and AIDS: **worldgifts.cafod.org.uk**
- Get involved with World AIDS Day on 1 December: **worldaidsday.org**

#### Further info

- **cafod.org.uk/hiv** Explore CAFOD's HIV resources for adults.
- **unaids.org** Check out UNAIDS' infographics.



## Blenda Nantongo

*"My name is Blenda and I am 12. I live in Uganda with my grandmother.*

*My mother died of AIDS when I was only four years old. A few months after her death, I started to fall sick. My father refused to take me for an HIV test as he blamed HIV drugs for killing his brothers in law.*

*When the sickness persisted and my grandmother took me for HIV testing which showed I was HIV positive. They asked my grandmother to always come for my antiretroviral (ARV) drugs at the centre every week. She told me that every day I was supposed to swallow some tablets.*

*When my father knew this, he blamed my grandmother that she was going to kill me with the ARV drugs as he thought that it was the ARV drugs which killed his brothers in law, not HIV. Surprisingly, my grandmother did not stop giving me the drugs!*

*One time when I was in fourth grade, I got fed up of taking those drugs and I asked my grandmother why I was taking the tablets yet other children at home were not taking them? She told me that I have a germ called 'slim' (i.e. HIV) that can be cured by the drugs I take every day. I cried because I had seen my uncles dying of slim. At times I could not go to school, eat, play and sleep knowing that any time is my time to die."*



CAFOD's partner, Kitovu Mobile AIDS Organisation supports families and communities in Uganda affected by HIV and AIDs.

They run a peer support group for children living with, or affected by, HIV. The young people in the group share experiences; support each other; receive counselling and learn skills to make crafts for fun and to sell. They also lead activities in their community to inform people of children's rights and HIV care and prevention issues.

*"My peer support group is called 'Yezu atwagala' meaning Jesus loves us. My group members have encouraged me to take ARV drugs on time.*

*In our group, we make baskets, shoe polish from charcoal and paraffin, brooms and bags. We give them to our friend to sell them on every Friday in the market. Some money we earn is put in a box where we save it and the rest is shared amongst members."*

## Brhan Reda Gebresgi

Brhan Reda Gebresgi, 68, lives in Ethiopia. He is HIV positive.

Stigma and discrimination are a huge challenge for people living with HIV. If someone is known to be HIV positive, they can be excluded from their family and thrown out of their homes by neighbours.

It can mean people are afraid to have an HIV test. If they are HIV positive, they may feel they have to hide their HIV status and do not take their antiretroviral (ARV) drugs properly which help keep them healthy.

Faith leaders and communities can be part of the solution in dealing with HIV and AIDS – but they can also be part of the problem. For example, some wouldn't conduct burial services or provide graves for people living with HIV. Some didn't allow people living with HIV to kiss the cross during religious services. Others even encouraged people to stop taking their ARV drugs while they are taking the holy water.



When Brhan Reda Gebresgi found out he was HIV positive, he started the 'People Living with HIV Association' which is now a CAFOD partner. Their aim is to reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV who are part of faith communities.

They work with religious leaders to work out how they can reduce stigma and make sure their communities are inclusive, non-judgmental and non-discriminatory towards people living with and affected by HIV.

In Ethiopia the project has provided faith leaders with information and messages to increase their own understanding and awareness. This has meant more people in the community are supported with their HIV status.

Brhan Reda Gebresgi feels that the work has made people more confident to be open about their HIV status because the religious leaders and communities were more accepting and understanding.

Photo credits: CAFOD, Tamiru Legesse/CAFOD.