TRY THIS

Watch the ‘HIV animation’ on CAFOD’s website and draw the problem tree. Discuss the root causes.
(Search for ‘HIV animation’ at cafod.org.uk)

HIV and AIDS: a development issue

HIV and AIDS isn’t just a health issue, it is one of the biggest threats to development today. It has a huge impact in low and middle income countries where 95% of all people with HIV and AIDS live. HIV can harm the economic development of a whole country, for example when people are too ill to work, or too busy caring for sick relatives.

› HIV is number 6 in the top 10 causes of death worldwide.
  1.1 million people died of AIDS-related diseases in 2015.
› Orphans: by 2013 there were an estimated 17.8 million children who had lost one or both parents to AIDS. Their development may be held back without their primary carers.

There are many factors that make poorer countries more vulnerable to the spread and impact of HIV. See ‘Root Causes’ overleaf.

HIV and AIDS: the facts

What is HIV and what is AIDS?

HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. It infects cells in the body that protect a person from getting sick, making it difficult to fight off diseases. There are no clear symptoms of HIV infection.

AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection. Not everyone with HIV gets to this stage. When the body can no longer defend itself, a person may get one or more serious diseases like pneumonia or tuberculosis.

HIV = Human Immunodeficiency Virus.
AIDS = Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

Infection and treatment

HIV is passed on when blood, sexual fluids or breast milk from someone infected with HIV get inside an uninfected person. This can happen during:

› unprotected sex;
› pregnancy, childbirth and breast-feeding if the mother has the virus;
› sharing of drug-injecting equipment;
› blood transmission from an HIV-infected donor or use of medical equipment which is not properly clean.

NB In a developed country like the UK, the risk of becoming infected through donor blood or unclean medical equipment is almost zero.

Progress and the future

The last 15 years have seen great progress:

› Between 2000 and the end of 2014, new HIV infections dropped by over a third.
› By June 2015 the number of people getting access to treatment had doubled in five years, to 15.8 million.
› Incredible milestones are within reach – such as preventing children from being born with HIV. [All data above: UNAIDS 2015]

However, AIDS is not over. Half the people with the virus do not know they have it, and in some parts of the world like Eastern Europe, new infections are on the rise. There’s still a long way to go.

FACT

37 MILLION PEOPLE ARE NOW LIVING WITH HIV AND AIDS. [UNAIDS 2016]
Root causes: why poor countries are hit hardest

Poverty
Poverty is at the root of the spread of HIV in developing countries. It makes people more vulnerable in many ways. Lack of education leads to ignorance about the causes of HIV and AIDS. Not having enough cash to access healthcare can mean people don’t get tested – or treated.

Conflict and emergencies
The spread of HIV increases in situations of war or natural disasters. Chaos interrupts normal care provision, so testing and support for people at risk of, or living with, HIV may be limited or not available.

Stigma
Cultural attitudes or ignorance can make it hard for people to talk about HIV and AIDS. Fear of social stigma increases people’s reluctance to be tested, since people with HIV may be rejected by their communities and lose their jobs and homes. Children orphaned by AIDS are often outcast. Discrimination and human rights violations are widespread. 1 in 8 people with HIV report being denied access to healthcare (OHCHR). All of this increases the risk of the virus spreading. Principles of non-discrimination, equality, access to justice and accountability are crucial if the AIDS response is to be effective.

Access to treatment
People in developing countries often have more difficulty getting treatment for HIV than people in wealthier countries. ARVs are offered for free in many places, but even then people may not have money to travel to clinics. Distribution and availability can also be problematic, so people can’t stick to their medication regime.

Gender inequality
HIV is the leading cause of death for women of reproductive age. The unequal legal, economic and social status of women in many poor countries makes them especially vulnerable. Women, especially women with HIV, suffer more stigma, discrimination and violence than men. They may be raped, or not have the power to refuse unsafe sex with an infected partner. Women may be denied access to health services.

HIV: Who is getting treatment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>People living with HIV (million)</th>
<th>People accessing treatment (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa and Middle East</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asia/Pacific</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>E. Europe and C. Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>W. and C. Europe &amp; N. America</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

What is CAFOD doing?

FACT
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS THE SINGLE BIGGEST PROVIDER OF CARE FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HIV AND AIDS WORLDWIDE, THROUGH ITS NETWORKS AND AGENCIES LIKE CAFOD.

We work with partner organisations to address the causes and impacts of HIV and AIDS. Prevention is critical, so we work to ensure people know what HIV is and how to protect themselves. We believe all-round support is needed for people living with HIV, for example:

› Healthcare, including psychological support.
› Help in getting back to work.
› Getting enough to eat.
› Help with legal issues.

In Honduras, CAFOD-supported project Puerta Abierta (Open Door) provides all-round care at home for people with HIV and their families. A team which includes people living with HIV offers medical, material and spiritual help.

In Zimbabwe, the Putting Children First programme helps children living with or affected by HIV to stand up for their rights. Children lead clubs which explore trauma, stigma or legal rights through songs and drama.

Useful websites

cafod.org.uk
Search ‘HIV animation’ and ‘HIV session for Youth Groups’

unaid.org
UN data on HIV and AIDS in all countries

stopaids.org.uk
youthstopaids.org
80 UK agencies including CAFOD working on global response to HIV and AIDS

CAFOD is not responsible for the content of external websites.

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