



## ***Social Issues***

### ***HIV and AIDS***



#### **Definition:**

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus and this virus weakens the immune system of the body which makes it harder to fight infection.

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and this is where the immune system is damaged and is open to other diseases which may not normally be a threat.

HIV will usually, given time develop into AIDS.

There is no cure or vaccine for either HIV or AIDS, but there are drugs that can help. The drugs however are not always widely available and are often very expensive.

This is a worldwide problem and HIV and AIDS can be gained by individuals from any community no matter what their age, race or economic status.

#### **Why the situation occurs?**

HIV and AIDS are passed on from person to person by a number of methods for example:

- Through sexual intercourse
- Through sharing injecting needles
- Through blood transfusions
- Between mother and baby either in the womb or through breast feeding.

HIV and AIDS are not spread through touch of intact external skin and are not caught like a cold or flu through the air or through water.

Many cases of HIV or AIDS are due to lack of education as people are unaware of how the disease is spread or how to prevent it. This in turn is linked to poverty as those in the poorest places are most likely to have a poor education and have the least access to healthcare. 90% of new HIV infections occur in the poorest communities in the world and 71% are in sub Saharan Africa.

The loss of parents due to HIV or AIDS can have a huge impact on a child's future chances and economic status.

### How you can make a difference:

Tackle the issue and help young people to understand the issues surrounding HIV and AIDS. Not just prevention of the disease but how the problems are made worse by poverty and factors within society. It may also be useful to look at prejudices and myths surrounding the topic. What difficulties are faced by those experiencing these problems? How can you support them? What attitudes need to be changed and how can you help this to happen?

Use the materials and tools provided to follow the process of:

1. Identify the problem
2. Develop Awareness and empathy
3. Take action
4. Measure the change

### Resources and links:

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, **UNAIDS**, is the main advocate for global action on the epidemic. It leads, strengthens and supports an expanded response aimed at preventing transmission of HIV, providing care and support, reducing the vulnerability of individuals and communities to HIV/AIDS, and alleviating the impact of the epidemic: <http://www.unaids.org>

The United Nations Children's Fund website "Voices of Youth" contains a great deal of information on this subject: <http://www.unicef.org/voy>

The Voices of Youth website also includes an interactive game that explores real life situations with regard to HIV/AIDS:

[http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/aids/explore\\_1360.html](http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/aids/explore_1360.html)

The United Nations CyberSchoolBus website provides a briefing paper on HIV/AIDS:

<http://un.org/cyberschoolbus/briefing/hiv/index.html>

Information on the Dakar Youth Forum (March 2004) on "AIDS - A Matter of Education":

<http://www.scout.org/wse/dakar.shtml>

World Scout Conference Resolution 15/93 on AIDS prevention

<http://www.scout.org>  
[worldbureau@world.scout.org](mailto:worldbureau@world.scout.org)

World Scout Conference Resolution 16/99 - Together against AIDS

<http://www.scout.org>  
[worldbureau@world.scout.org](mailto:worldbureau@world.scout.org)

The South Africa Scout Association website contains a great deal of information on AIDS and HIV, including information leaflets for Scouts and leaders, and a badge programme:

<http://www.scouting.org.za/resources/aids/>

The Africa Scout Region has developed a badge programme to raise awareness of AIDS and HIV entitled Scouts Red Ribbon. This will be available from the Africa Region website and the home of world Scouting: <http://www.scout.org>