



United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization



# Living and Learning in a WORLD with HIV / AIDS

**HIV/AIDS AT SCHOOL**





United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization

> Young People Acting Together

# Living and Learning in a World with HIV/AIDS

## HIV/AIDS AT SCHOOL







> **OLWETHU MSUTHU**  
Sinthemba Senior Secondary School,  
South Africa

# What is HIV/AIDS?

AIDS – Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome – is an illness caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The virus weakens the immune system of the infected person, and gradually destroys his or her body's defences and ability to fight off infections and diseases.

## Is there a cure?

A cure for HIV/AIDS has not yet been found, although some very strong drugs are being used to slow down the virus. However, these drugs don't work for everybody, and they are very expensive. Today, the best way to protect ourselves from HIV/AIDS is prevention.

## Prevention:

### The best protection from HIV/AIDS

The spread of HIV/AIDS is relatively easy to prevent if we are well informed and motivated: well informed about the behaviours that can lead to infection and motivated to behave responsibly and encourage our friends and classmates to behave responsibly, too.

## How does one get HIV?

Anybody can get HIV/AIDS. It's not correct to say that it only affects certain people or certain types of people. But it is true that certain behaviours or sanitary conditions may greatly increase the risk of infection. By knowing and understanding the ways that people can become infected and the behaviours that may put them at risk, we can greatly reduce our own chances of infection, and in turn help to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The most common ways of contracting HIV are:

- > through unprotected sexual intercourse - such as vaginal, anal and oral intercourse without using a condom properly - with an HIV-infected person;
- > by using instruments – such as those used for ear piercing, tattoos or circumcision – which have been used on an HIV-infected person and not been properly cleaned;
- > by using needles or syringes – for example, to inject drugs – which have been used by someone infected with HIV and not properly cleaned;
- > from an HIV-infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding;
- > through transfusion of infected blood.

## Can we really protect ourselves from HIV?

Yes, we can! Through responsible behaviour we – and our friends – can play a very real part in stopping the spread of HIV.


If we don't feel ready to be sexually active, we shouldn't be afraid to say so. It also means respecting the wishes of others – if one partner says no, remember, it means "no". There are many safe ways for couples to express love for one another – kissing, hugging, holding hands and others. Protecting ourselves and our partners from HIV is itself a sign of respect and affection.

If we feel we are ready to be sexually active, let's be sure to know the rules of safe sex. The practice of "safe sex" prevents contact with the blood, sperm or vaginal fluids of an HIV-infected person during sexual intercourse. It is essential to use a condom correctly and every time we have sex.

Concerning intravenous drug use, the best way to protect ourselves from HIV infection is not to inject drugs at all. However, if we do inject drugs, we can avoid the very high risk of being exposed to HIV by always using sterile, never-used needles and syringes. It is vital never to share needles and syringes and not to use the same ones more than once. Also, we should be aware that drugs (or alcohol) may make us more likely to act irresponsibly – forcing behaviours on unwilling partners or forgetting to use a condom, for example.

## We know how HIV can be transmitted. What about the ways it cannot be passed on?

The virus cannot be transmitted through everyday contact. We cannot get infected through spitting, sneezing, coughing or through tears or sweat, or through bites from mosquitoes or other insects. It is perfectly safe to shake hands or hug an infected person, use the same showers or toilets, swim in the same swimming pool and breathe the same air. So, there is no reason not to involve HIV-infected classmates in school activities. We can share our school things with them, eat alongside them, invite them home. There is no reason not to be friends with someone who has HIV/AIDS.



# A supportive school environment – in and out of the classroom

All young people have the right to benefit from an education that meets their basic learning needs, regardless of HIV status. Schools are the ideal place to tackle the many issues surrounding HIV/AIDS.

***“The school should teach about HIV/AIDS: how it is spread, how it cannot be spread, and how people should protect themselves against it.”***

Think about it: schools are where facts and information are taught and learned, ideas are discussed and debated, and all kinds of messages are shared. Everything we learn at school can then be shared with our family members and other members of the community, forming a kind of chain of knowledge that extends way beyond the classroom.

## **Schools are not just for learning to read and write**

Education is more than just gaining knowledge and learning skills. It is also about creating attitudes and behaviours which prepare us for life. It is about learning to be a useful and constructive member of society, one who treats others – no matter who they are – with love and respect.

But, we can't just “learn” respect for others. Acting with respect must be a part of our everyday experience – at school and elsewhere.

School is a place where we should feel safe – where we can feel comfortable talking about sometimes-uncomfortable subjects.

A school which allows this comfortable, supportive environment to flourish is one where all students – and teachers – are accepted and treated with respect, regardless of the HIV/AIDS status. Each and every student can contribute to this environment by acting responsibly and by showing consideration to others.

***“Educating people about the real risks of HIV transmission and developing messages regarding the need to treat all people with respect can play a significant role in helping to reduce the impact of stigma and discrimination (of HIV/AIDS).”***



# What can

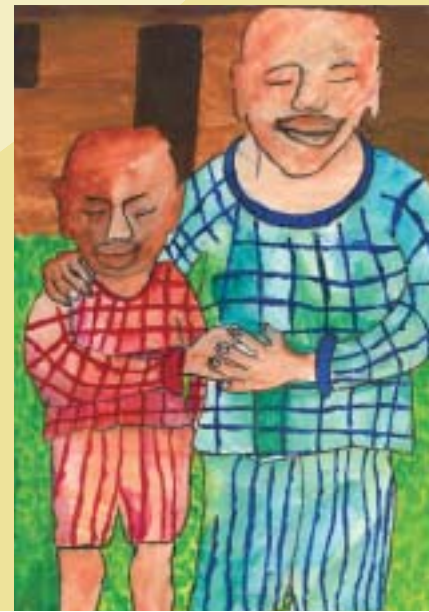
Young people – in Africa and around the world – are all concerned about HIV/AIDS and how it affects our daily lives: in our families, our schools and our communities.

## **Being informed and acting responsibly**

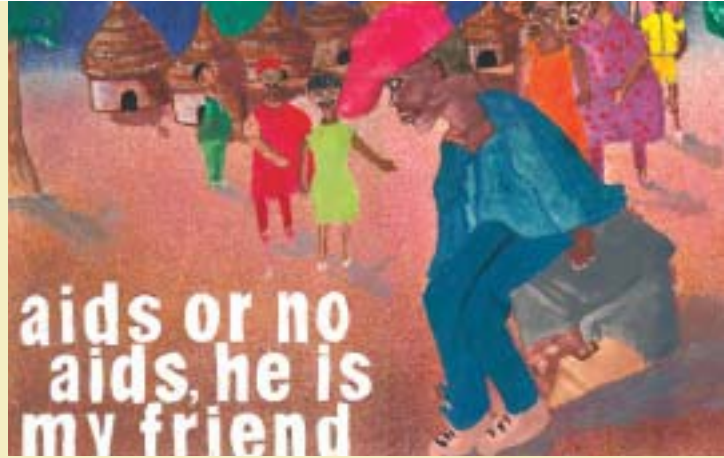
The more we know about and understand something, the less likely we are to be afraid of it, or act in an inappropriate way towards others. By participating fully in classroom discussions about HIV/AIDS, we and other young people show that we recognize our important role in changing the course of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. By being well informed and acting responsibly, we can help prevent the spread of the virus for our own and future generations.

***“We should break the silence through dialogue using class discussions and school assemblies.”***

***The quotes appearing on these pages are the words of young people themselves.***







>MARIAM JAYE  
St. Joseph's Senior Secondary School,  
Gambia

# we as students do?

## Respecting others

People who are infected with HIV can look and feel healthy for a long time before the signs of AIDS begin to appear. They are fully able to continue living their normal lives – working and studying as they always did, for as long as they feel well enough to do so. It makes sense, then, that no one should be denied access to school because of their HIV status.

And, for as long as they are attending school, they should be treated with the same support and respect we have always treated them with.

Discriminating against classmates with HIV/AIDS violates human rights. People who are discriminated against often feel lonely and depressed. The fear of this discrimination can prevent them from taking necessary steps to confront their health issues.

***“Young people living with HIV/AIDS should be allowed to go to school.”***

***“Teachers and other staff who are HIV-positive should not be forced to leave their jobs.”***

Some people who are HIV-infected may prefer that their colleagues or classmates do not know about it. The choice is up to the individual. If we know that someone is infected, but that person has chosen not to make this information public, it is important to respect his or her right to privacy.

***“If you get to know that someone is infected with HIV, you should not spread this information unnecessarily. This person has a right to privacy.”***

## Showing care and support

There are many very simple – but powerful – ways to show support to teachers or classmates who are HIV-infected, by treating them with the kindness and understanding we would expect them to show to us. We can safely work and play – and learn – alongside someone who is infected by HIV.

HIV-positive people can be just as good friends as those who are not infected. They have important contributions to make us a friendship. We can show our friendship and affection through words as well as actions, such as holding hands, hugging and sharing.

It is also important to show our support to those who have to care for a family member or friend who has HIV/AIDS, or who have lost someone close to them because of AIDS. These are sad and difficult experiences for anyone – especially a young person – to deal with, and our support will help them to cope better and feel better. Talk with them and listen to what they have to say: everyone will benefit.

***“We can still play together, even if we have AIDS.”***

***“You cannot catch the virus when you share basic essentials like pens or food with HIV/AIDS-infected people. They will be touched by your kindness.”***





>BONGIWE GUNGULUZA  
Nosizwe High School,  
South Africa

# Young People: Living with the realities of HIV/AIDS



## An increasing number of young people are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS

Nearly 12 million young people aged 15-24 around the world – more than 7.3 million young women and 4.5 million young men – are believed to be with HIV infection. And about half of all new infections daily are occurring among young people.\*

## School is no exception: Students, teachers and school staff - all are affected

An increasing number of students and teachers are infected by the virus. In addition, more and more teachers and students are forced to miss school so that they can care for infected family members. They also may have frequent absences from school in order to attend funerals of those who have died from HIV/AIDS.

The growing number of teachers and other school staff who are touched by HIV/AIDS is having a serious impact on education in many countries, affecting their ability to attend school regularly, and to continue providing the quality education that students deserve.

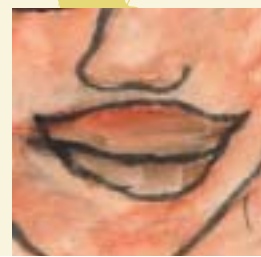
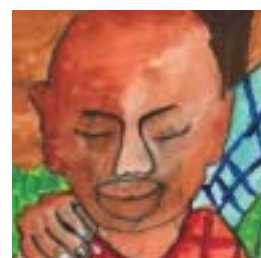
Girls and young women are especially affected, as the responsibility of caring for infected family members often falls on girls and women. These responsibilities often cause girls and young women to miss school frequently or drop out entirely.

\*UNAIDS, 2001.

## Knowing, understanding, acting for ourselves and our classmates: Our rights and responsibilities

Our only hope for curbing the HIV/AIDS epidemic is by making sure that we young people are well informed – that we understand the causes and means of transmission of HIV and are aware of how to prevent infection in the first place. We have the right to be equipped with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to behave in ways that reduce vulnerability to HIV infection – for ourselves and for future generations.

But knowledge alone is not enough: young people like us also have the responsibility to use the information we acquire at school and elsewhere to construct a healthy and supportive environment surrounding HIV/AIDS. The future is in our hands.







United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization

Three booklets have been prepared as part of UNESCO's response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, aimed at promoting a supportive school environment of non-discrimination towards people who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS: for young people, their teachers and their parents.

Students from schools in English-speaking Africa were asked to reflect on the question of HIV/AIDS in their daily lives to draft school guidelines for promoting healthy and supportive attitudes towards persons with HIV/AIDS, and to illustrate these guidelines. The schools were members of SchoolNet Uganda as well as UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network, a network of some 7,500 schools in 172 countries that undertake pilot projects to promote UNESCO ideals and contribute to the quality of education.

Artwork and messages from students in Gambia, South Africa and Uganda form the basis of this booklet. Its goal is to encourage the sharing of information in order to raise awareness between young people. What better way is there than to listen to their own words?

This material was produced with the support from UNAIDS.

### Contact information

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United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization

>Parents Supporting Young People

# Living and Learning in a World with HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS AT SCHOOL





# HIV/AIDS : Protecting ourselves and assisting our children to protect themselves

AIDS – Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome – is an illness caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The virus weakens the immune system of the infected person, and gradually destroys his or her body's defences and ability to fight off infections and diseases.

It would not be correct to say that HIV/AIDS only affects certain people or certain types of people. Anybody can get HIV/AIDS. But it is true that certain behaviours or sanitary conditions may greatly increase the risk of infection. By knowing and understanding the ways that people can become infected and the behaviours that put them at risk, one can greatly reduce his or her own chances of infection, and in turn help to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS.

## Let's be clear about the ways HIV can be transmitted...

The most common ways of contracting HIV are:

- > through unprotected sexual intercourse - vaginal, anal and oral intercourse without using a condom properly -- with an HIV-infected person;
- > by using instruments, such as those used for ear piercing, tattoos or circumcision, which have been used on an HIV-infected person and not been properly cleaned;
- > by using needles or syringes – for example, to inject drugs – which have been used by someone infected with HIV and not properly cleaned;
- > from an HIV-infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding;
- > through transfusion of infected blood.



->SIMPHIWE NOKOYO  
Sinethemba Senior Secondary School,  
South Africa

## ...and the ways it cannot be transmitted

The virus cannot be transmitted through everyday contact. One cannot get infected through spitting, sneezing or coughing or through tears or sweat, or through bites from mosquitoes or other insects. So, it is perfectly safe to shake hands or hug an infected person, use the same showers or toilets, swim in the same swimming pool and breathe the same air.

## Prevention:

### The best protection against HIV/AIDS

A cure for HIV/AIDS has not yet been found, although some very strong drugs are being used to slow down the virus. However, these drugs don't work for everybody, and they are very expensive. Today, the best protection from HIV/AIDS is prevention.

We must all therefore be knowledgeable about the behaviours and conditions which increase the risk of infection, especially in relation to sexual behaviour and intravenous drug use.

We may wish to encourage our children to abstain from having intercourse as the most reliable method of preventing infection. If, however, our children do choose to be sexually active, it is essential that they use a condom correctly every time they have sex. The practice of "safe sex" prevents contact with the blood, sperm or vaginal fluids of an HIV-infected person during sexual intercourse. We must be sure that they are well aware of the implications and ready to take on the responsibilities that go along with an active sexual life.

In the same way, by providing accurate information about drug use and its dangers, we would hope to discourage drug abuse in the first place.

We may point out that under the influence of drugs (or alcohol), people may be more likely to act irresponsibly – forcing behaviours on unwilling partners, or forgetting to use a condom, for example. If, however, our children do choose to use drugs (or use other instruments, such as those used for piercing, tattoos or circumcision), it must be stressed that they should never share or use needles or other instruments which have been used already and not been properly sterilized.



> **OLWETHU MSUTHU**  
Sinethemba Senior Secondary School,  
South Africa

## A supportive school environment – in and out of the classroom

All our children have the right to benefit from an education that meets their basic learning needs, regardless of HIV status. Schools are the ideal place to tackle the many issues surrounding HIV/AIDS.

School is the place where facts and information are taught and learned, ideas are discussed and debated, and all kinds of messages are shared. But education is more than just imparting knowledge and skills. It is also about creating attitudes and behaviours which prepare young people for life beyond the classroom. Learning to be a useful and constructive member of society, one who treats others with love and respect is at least as important as learning to read and write.

***“The school should teach about HIV/AIDS: how it is spread, how it cannot be spread, and how people should protect themselves against it.”***

School is a place where our children should feel safe, where everyone feels comfortable talking about serious subjects such as HIV/AIDS. A school which allows this comfortable, supportive environment to flourish is one where all students are accepted and treated with respect. It is essential that our children be able to continue attending school, and keep up with their schoolwork, regardless of their HIV status and in spite of demands on their time at home.

***“Educating people about the real risks of HIV transmission and developing messages regarding the need to treat all people with respect can play a significant role in helping to reduce the impact of stigma and discrimination (of HIV/AIDS).”***

***The quotes appearing on these pages are the words of young people themselves.***

## What

### Creating a comfortable environment at home and supporting learning at school

Providing young people with knowledge that is thorough and accurate and equipping them with skills to put knowledge into practice is the best way to fight against HIV/AIDS. How can young people be expected to make careful and sound decisions that will impact their lives forever, and learn to respect the decisions and wishes of others if they do not possess the necessary information and skills?

Many schools have started teaching about sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Some parents may fear that talking about HIV/AIDS will encourage our children to be sexually active or use drugs; to the contrary, when they are well-informed and feel able to express themselves openly, young people are in a better position to make sound decisions about issues that will affect their lives forever. It is important that they fully understand the implications of being sexually active, and take appropriate measures to protect themselves and their partners from HIV/AIDS.

Many of us may feel uncomfortable speaking openly about HIV/AIDS with our children. But, difficult though it may be at the time to talk about it, we know that they will always remember and appreciate having benefited from an open atmosphere at home, in which they were able to discuss such important issues when they were young. If they have had a good example set for them, our children will be more likely to be frank and open when they themselves are older.





->BONGIWE GUNGULUZA  
Nosizwe High School,  
South Africa

# can parents do?

## Respecting others

People who are infected with HIV can look and feel healthy for a long time before the signs of AIDS begin to appear. They are fully able to continue living their normal lives – working and studying as they always did, for as long as they feel well enough to do so. It makes sense, then, that no one should be denied access to school because of their HIV status.

And, for as long as they are attending school, they should be treated with the same support and respect we have always treated them with. Our children will not catch HIV by studying or playing together with those infected with HIV.

Discriminating against those with HIV/AIDS violates human rights. People who are discriminated often feel lonely and depressed. The fear of this discrimination can prevent them from taking necessary steps to confront their health issues.

***“Young people living with HIV/AIDS should be allowed to go to school.”***

***“Teachers and other staff who are HIV-positive should not be forced to leave their jobs.”***

Some people who are HIV-infected may prefer that others do not know about it. The choice is up to the individual. If we know that someone is infected, but that person has chosen not to make this information public, it is important to respect his or her right to privacy.

***“If you get to know that someone is infected with HIV, you should not spread this information unnecessarily.***

***This person has a right to privacy.”***

We as parents can be the first ones to respect the rights of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, by setting a good example for our children.

## Showing care and support

There are many very simple ways that we can show support for those who are HIV-infected, by treating them with the kindness and understanding we would expect for ourselves. At school, students as well as teachers can safely work and play – and learn – alongside someone who is infected by HIV. Our children should feel free to be friends with classmates who may be HIV-infected, and to invite them to our homes. HIV-positive people can be just as good friends as those who are not infected. They have important contributions to make to a friendship. Friendship and affection can be effectively expressed through words as well as actions, such as holding hands, hugging and sharing things.

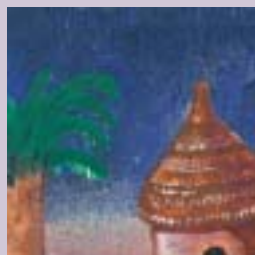
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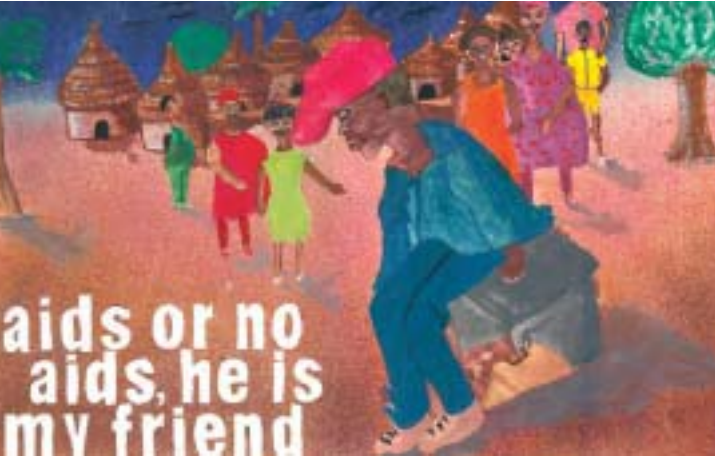
## All together: A team effort

Today more than ever, it is important that parents work together with teachers. We should be actively involved in school activities, for example by attending PTA meetings and other school events. We can also encourage other parents to keep their children from dropping out of school.

Teachers recognise the importance of working with parents to see that the supportive environment that exists in the school also extends to the home. Teachers encourage young people to share what they learn at school with family members, and, as parents, we should foster this behaviour by providing an environment in which our children feel free to express themselves.







>MARIAM JAYE  
St. Joseph's Senior Secondary School,  
Gambia

## HIV/AIDS and young people: The future is in their hands

### An increasing number of young people are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS

Nearly 12 million young people aged 15-24 around the world – more than 7.3 million young women and 4.5 million young men – are believed to be with HIV infection. And about half of all new infections daily are occurring among young people.\*

### School is no exception: Students, teachers and school staff - all are affected

The increasing rates of HIV infection among teachers, school staff and students have seriously impacted education. The responsibility of caring for infected family members may cause young people – especially young girls, on whom the responsibility of caring for family members most often falls – to miss school frequently, or drop out altogether.

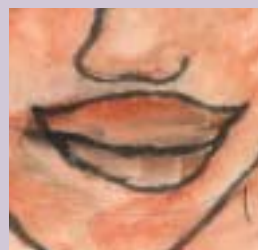
Teachers and school staff may have frequent absences from school in order to attend funerals of those who have died from HIV/AIDS or take care of infected members in their own families. Some teachers are HIV-infected and they continue teaching despite symptoms of declining health.

\*UNAIDS, 2001.

### Parents: Young people's key partners against HIV/AIDS

Our greatest hope for curbing the HIV/AIDS epidemic is to ensure that our children are well-informed – that they understand the causes and means of transmission of the virus and, better still, know how to prevent infection in the first place. Along with the responsibilities that fall on them, young people have the right to be equipped with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to behave in ways that reduce vulnerability to HIV infection – for themselves and for future generations.

Parents play a critical role in ensuring that young people are provided with the information they need to reduce their risk of acquiring HIV. It is essential that we, as parents, fully understand the issues around HIV/AIDS, so that we may share this information with our children, work with them to create a positive environment at home in which they feel comfortable expressing themselves, encourage them to make sound decisions and to treat others with respect.





United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Students from schools in English-speaking Africa were asked to reflect on the question of HIV/AIDS in their daily lives to draft school guidelines for promoting healthy and supportive attitudes towards persons with HIV/AIDS, and to illustrate these guidelines. The schools were members of SchoolNet Uganda as well as UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network, a network of some 7,500 schools in 172 countries that undertake pilot projects to promote UNESCO ideals and contribute to the quality of education.

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### Contact information

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United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization



>Teachers Supporting Young People

# Living and Learning in a World with HIV/AIDS

## HIV/AIDS AT SCHOOL



# HIV/AIDS : Protecting ourselves and assisting our students protect themselves

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We must all therefore be knowledgeable about the behaviours and conditions which increase the risk of infection, especially in relation to sexual behaviour and intravenous drug use.

We may wish to encourage young people to abstain from having intercourse as the most reliable method of preventing infection. If, however, young people do choose to be sexually active, it is essential that they use a condom correctly every time they have sex. The practice of "safe sex" prevents contact with the blood, sperm or vaginal fluids of an HIV-infected person during sexual intercourse. Teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that young people are well aware of the implications and ready to take on the responsibilities that go along with an active sexual life.

In the same way, by providing accurate information about drug use and its dangers, we would hope to discourage drug abuse in the first place.

We may point out that under the influence of drugs (or alcohol), people may be more likely to act irresponsibly – forcing behaviours on unwilling partners, or forgetting to use a condom, for example. If, however, young people do choose to use drugs (or use other instruments, such as those used for piercing, tattoos or circumcision), it must be stressed that they should never share or use needles or other instruments which have been used already and not been properly sterilized.







> **OLWETHU MSUTHU**  
Sinethemba Senior Secondary School,  
South Africa

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School is the place where facts and information are taught and learned, ideas are discussed and debated, and all kinds of messages are shared. But education is more than just imparting knowledge and skills. It is also about creating attitudes and behaviours which prepare young people for life beyond the classroom. Learning to be a useful and constructive member of society, one who treats others with love and respect is at least as important as learning to read and write.

***“The school should teach about HIV/AIDS: how it is spread, how it cannot be spread, and how people should protect themselves against it.”***

School is a place where young people should feel safe, where everyone – student and teacher alike – feels comfortable talking about serious subjects such as HIV/AIDS. A school which allows this comfortable, supportive environment to flourish is one where all students – and teachers – are accepted and treated with respect, regardless of one’s HIV/AIDS status.

***“Educating people about the real risks of HIV transmission and developing messages regarding the need to treat all people with respect can play a significant role in helping to reduce the impact of stigma and discrimination (of HIV/AIDS).”***

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## What

Many teachers may feel uncomfortable speaking openly about HIV/AIDS in the classroom. But, difficult though it may be at the time to talk about it, young people will always remember and appreciate those teachers who spoke frankly and openly with them and were able to discuss such important issues when they were young. If they have had a good example set for them, young people will be more likely to be frank and open when they themselves are older.

### **Providing young people with information and skills**

Providing young people with knowledge that is thorough and accurate and equipping them with skills to put knowledge into practice is the best way to fight against HIV/AIDS. How can young people be expected to make careful and sound decisions that will impact their lives forever, and learn to respect the decisions and wishes of others if they do not possess the necessary information and skills?

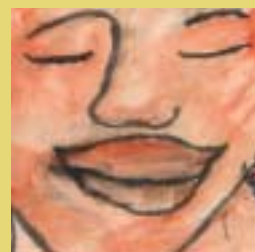
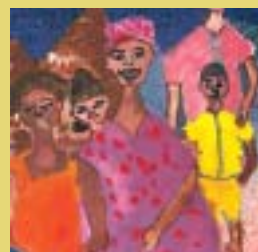
Many young people have to shoulder increasing responsibilities within their families; some even end up heading the household at a very young age, due to deaths in the family caused by AIDS. We need to provide relevant information and equip young people with skills that will prevent them from turning to sex work or crime as a means of survival.

### **Respecting others**

People who are infected with HIV can look and feel healthy for a long time before the signs of AIDS begin to appear. They are fully able to continue living their normal lives – working and studying as they always did, for as long as they feel well enough to do so. It makes sense, then, that no one should be denied access to school because of their HIV status. And, for as long as they are attending school, they should be treated with the same support and respect we have always treated them with. HIV cannot be transmitted by studying and playing together.



-BONGIWE GUNGULUZA  
Nosizwe High School,  
South Africa



# can teachers do?

Discriminating against those with HIV/AIDS violates human rights. People who are discriminated against often feel lonely and depressed. The fear of this discrimination can prevent them from taking necessary steps to confront their health issues.

***“Young people living with HIV/AIDS should be allowed to go to school.”***

***“Teachers and other staff who are HIV-positive should not be forced to leave their jobs.”***

Some people who are HIV-infected may prefer that their colleagues or classmates do not know about it. The choice is up to the individual. If we know that someone is infected, but that person has chosen not to make this information public, it is important to respect his or her right to privacy.

***“If you get to know that someone is infected with HIV, you should not spread this information unnecessarily. This person has a right to privacy.”***

## Showing care and support

There are many very simple ways that teachers can show support for students who are HIV-infected, by treating them with the kindness and understanding we would expect for ourselves. At school, students as well as teachers can safely work and play – and learn – alongside someone who is infected by HIV. HIV-positive people can be just as good friends as those who are not infected. They have important contributions to make to a friendship. Friendship and affection can be effectively expressed through words as well as actions, such as holding hands, hugging and sharing things.

***“We can still play together, even if we have AIDS.”***

***“You cannot catch the virus when you share basic essentials like pens or food with HIV/AIDS-infected people.***

***They will be touched by your kindness.”***

We as teachers need to show our care and support towards young people who may be HIV-infected, or caring for infected family members, and must do everything possible to see that these young people continue to attend school for as long as possible, and keep up with their schoolwork. For example, we can arrange the school calendar and hours to suit them, or set up support groups in the school. All young people have the right to benefit from an education that meets their basic learning needs regardless of their HIV status.

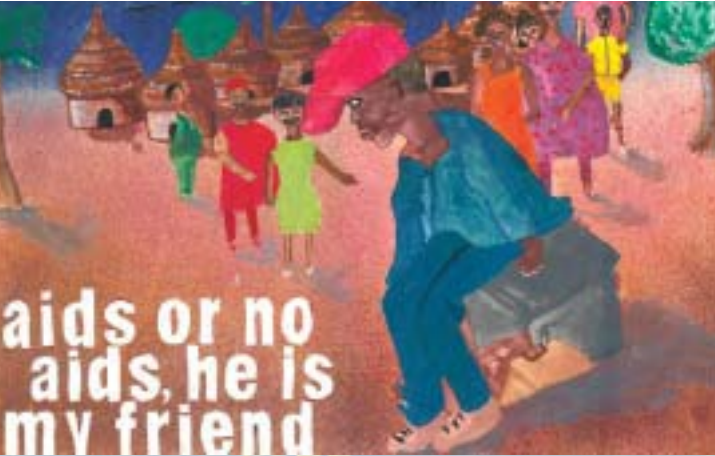
It is also important for teachers to show support for young people who have lost someone close to them because of AIDS. These are sad and difficult experiences for anyone – especially a young person – to deal with, and teachers' support will help them to cope better and feel better. It is important to talk with them and listen to what they have to say: everyone will benefit.

## All together: A team effort

Today more than ever, it is important that teachers work together and support other teachers, so that the flow of education continues as smoothly as possible. There may be high absenteeism on the part of the teaching staff, as teachers may have to take care of infected members in their own families, attend funerals of students or colleagues, or they themselves may be HIV-infected.

Teachers also have an important role in interacting with the community, in particular the families of their students. Since parents may feel that the needs at home are more pressing than school, teachers need to impress on them the importance of education for their children – especially in the case of girls, whose responsibilities in the home are often great.





>MARIAM JAYE  
St. Joseph's Senior Secondary School,  
Gambia

## HIV/AIDS and young people: The future is in their hands

### An increasing number of young people are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS

Nearly 12 million young people aged 15-24 around the world – more than 7.3 million young women and 4.5 million young men – are believed to be with HIV infection. And about half of all new infections daily are occurring among young people.\*

### School is no exception: Students, teachers and school staff - all are affected

The increasing rates of HIV infection among teachers, school staff and students have seriously impacted education. The responsibility of caring for infected family members may cause young people – especially young girls, on whom the responsibility of caring for family members most often falls – to miss school frequently, or drop out altogether.

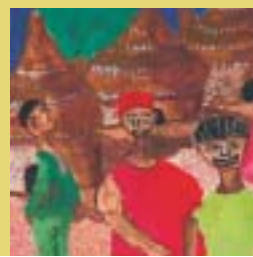
Teachers and school staff may have frequent absences from school in order to attend funerals of those who have died from HIV/AIDS or take care of infected members in their own families. Some teachers are HIV-infected and they continue teaching despite symptoms of declining health.

\*UNAIDS, 2001.

### Teachers: Young people's key partner against HIV/AIDS

Our greatest hope for curbing the HIV/AIDS epidemic is to ensure that young people are well-informed – that they understand the causes and means of transmission of the virus and, better still, know how to prevent infection in the first place. Along with the responsibilities that fall on them, young people have the right to be equipped with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to behave in ways that reduce vulnerability to HIV infection – for themselves and for future generations.

Educators play a critical role in ensuring that young people are given the information they need to reduce their risk of acquiring HIV, and that their classrooms provide a safe, comfortable environment where they will feel free to discuss the serious and important issues related to HIV/AIDS. It is essential that we, as teachers, fully understand the issues around HIV/AIDS, so that we may share this information with our students, work with them to create a positive environment in which they feel comfortable expressing themselves, encourage them to make sound decisions and to treat each other with respect.





United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization

Three booklets have been prepared as part of UNESCO's response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, aimed at promoting a supportive school environment of non-discrimination towards people who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS: for teachers, parents and young people.

Students from schools in English-speaking Africa were asked to reflect on the question of HIV/AIDS in their daily lives to draft school guidelines for promoting healthy and supportive attitudes towards persons with HIV/AIDS, and to illustrate these guidelines. The schools were members of SchoolNet Uganda as well as UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network, a network of some 7,500 schools in 172 countries that undertake pilot projects to promote UNESCO ideals and contribute to the quality of education.

Artwork and messages from students in Gambia, South Africa and Uganda are used throughout this booklet. Its goal is to encourage the sharing of information in order to raise awareness of teachers, parents and young people. What better way is there than to listen to their own words?

This material was produced with the support from UNAIDS.

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