

# Children

Infected  
&  
Affected  
by

# HIV/AIDS

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# Children **Infected &** **Affected** by HIV/AIDS Teacher Resource

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# Children Infected & Affected by HIV/AIDS

## Does Your Class Know...?



Who is vulnerable?



Can a child be born HIV positive?



What is HIV?



What is AIDS?



In what part of the world is HIV/AIDS most prevalent?



How is the disease transmitted?

## Key Definitions

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Disease is a retrovirus that attacks the cells of the immune system. The cells are progressively destroyed or impaired so they can not function properly. This causes the immune system to deplete over time, hence the 'immunodeficiency' in the disease's name. HIV is the virus that eventually causes AIDS.

AIDS: An Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome diagnosis is made when the group of symptoms that collectively indicate the disease are identified in an HIV positive person. These symptoms include the development of certain infections and/or cancers, in addition to the decrease in the number of certain immune system cells in a person's bloodstream. This diagnosis is made by a doctor using specific clinical standards.

CRC: The Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty that recognizes the human rights of children, defined as persons up to the age of 18 years. It obligates states to ensure the rights to survival, development, protection and participation of all children without discrimination.

CSEC: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. According to the World Conference against CSEC, "It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object."

what does your  
class know?

# Children Infected & Affected by HIV/AIDS

-  Every minute five people around the world between the ages of 10 and 24 are infected with HIV.<sup>1</sup>
-  There are 2.5 million children under the age of 15 living with the disease worldwide.<sup>2</sup>
-  Of the 3 million people who died of AIDS in 2003, 500,000 were
-  In Sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of new infections occurs among young people between the ages of 15 and 24.<sup>4</sup>
-  The total number of children orphaned by AIDS - 13.2 million as of 2001 - is expected to more than double by 2010.<sup>5</sup>
-  Half of all new infections occur among young people aged 15-24.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNAIDS. <[www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)> (April 29, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> UNAIDS, "AIDS Epidemic Update: December 2003," p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, "Young People and the HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis," p. 6 [publication on-line], <[www.unicef.org/publications/pub\\_youngpeople\\_hivaids\\_en.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/pub_youngpeople_hivaids_en.pdf)>(February 17, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS."Fact Sheet." 2001

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF Statistics on HIV/AIDS [http://www.childinfo.org/eddb/hiv\\_aids/young.htm](http://www.childinfo.org/eddb/hiv_aids/young.htm).

basic  
facts

# Children Infected & Affected by HIV/AIDS

## Definition

The Human Immune-deficiency Virus (HIV) is transmitted through an exchange of bodily fluids. This occurs through exposure to infected blood, during sexual activity with an infected individual, or by sharing contaminated needles. It can also pass from an infected mother to her child. An HIV positive person receives an Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) diagnosis when he or she develops an AIDS-indicator illness (which is defined by the Center for Disease Control) or on the basis of certain blood tests. AIDS is a global epidemic that is the cause of millions of deaths.

## Why do children have HIV?

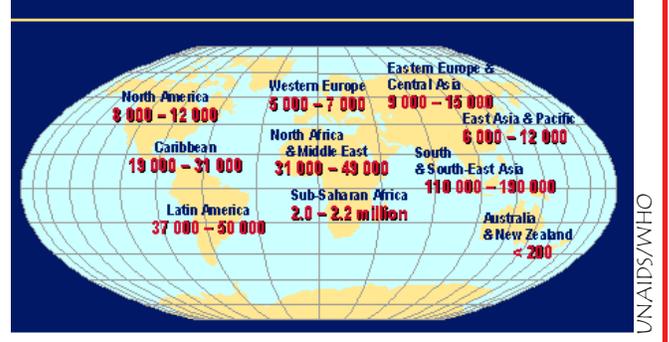
The face of AIDS is increasingly young and female. Most children under 15 become infected through their infected mothers, mother to child transmission. This occurs during the pregnancy, during birth, or during breastfeeding post birth. Also, sexual activity, which remains the main route of disease transmission worldwide, begins in adolescence for a majority of people worldwide. These young people are at risk of becoming infected, largely because they remain uninformed about HIV and its prevention.

## Which children are most affected?

HIV/AIDS can affect anyone. A general lack of knowledge and experience increases the risk of HIV/AIDS. Poverty, the lack of education, the lack of medical resources, and the thriving commercial sexual exploitation of children industry are also factors that contribute to the proliferation of HIV/AIDS among children and youth around the world. In addition, recent studies show that adolescent girls and young women are at disproportionately high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. According to UNICEF girls are physiologically more vulnerable to infection, and in addition, gender-based inequities and violence compound their risks, "girls and women are more likely to be poor and powerless, have less education, less access to land, credit or cash, and to social services." Forced or coerced sex makes a girl even more susceptible. All these factors make it more likely that girls will become a victim of CSEC which in turn further compounds their likelihood of becoming infected. Other children at higher risk for infection include those who live on the streets and children who inject drugs.

## Who has HIV/AIDS

Children (<15 years) estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS as of end 2003



## Where are the children affected by HIV?

Children affected by HIV/AIDS live everywhere. The majority are concentrated in Africa. UNICEF statistics show approximately 2,600,000 children live with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa alone. In addition, an estimated 35,100 children live in the Middle East and North Africa; 222,285 infected children live in South and East Asia and the Pacific; 15,050 in Central and Eastern Europe; 60,000 in Latin America and Caribbean; and, 15,450 infected children live in the most industrialized countries.

## How are children affected?

Children suffering from HIV/AIDS have weaker immune systems, making them more susceptible to other illnesses such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and hepatitis. In addition, they face stigmatization and rejection from their families and communities. Misguided perceptions about the disease increase the alienation and discrimination suffered. For example, many people believe HIV is spread by physical contact and refuse to hug or shake hands with infected people. The stigmatization and discrimination foster ignorance and create a barrier to testing, treatment and prevention. This creates an awful cycle of infection and discrimination where children and youth are often the

background  
information

# Children Infected & Affected by HIV/AIDS

victims.

Children whose parents have died from HIV/AIDS suffer the trauma of witnessing sickness and death in addition to the challenges of living without parental support and guidance. Often these children are stigmatized, may suffer delayed emotional development, and have less educational opportunities. AIDS orphans are likely to be poorer and less healthy than their peers. Almost 14 million children worldwide are orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. Of these, 11 million AIDS orphans live in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## What is being done to address this

Significant efforts have been made to prevent the spread of HIV. UNICEF, UNAIDS, NGOs, and governments have collaborated to educate the public about the disease and provide individuals with the locations of clinics offering free HIV testing. In addition, there are continued efforts by researchers to find better treatments to help those infected by AIDS, and ultimately a cure. Recently, scientists developed medicines that help children with AIDS live longer, healthier, and more productive lives. Unfortunately, medications are often too expensive for many poor countries to afford. Furthermore, intellectual property rights make it difficult to make generic versions of the medication.

However, children affected by AIDS and AIDS orphans are benefiting more from an increase in funding provided. Many schools have been established which cater to AIDS orphans. Some governments, such as Namibia, have adopted legislation to guarantee education benefits to AIDS orphans

According to UNICEF, it is becoming clear how crucial a role young people play in the fight against AIDS, "from Sub-Saharan Africa to South East Asia and the Americas, prevalence rates are falling among young people who have been equipped and motivated to make safe behavioural decisions that block the spread of HIV." This is why it is essential that young people and children have all the information, resources, and expertise they need in order to make safe and healthy decisions for their lives.

## AIDS Orphans

There are at least 13.2 million children currently under 15 years of age who have lost their mother or both parents to AIDS (UNAIDS). This number is predicted to double by 2010, even as prevention methods succeed, because parents currently infected by the disease will continue to die. These children witness the death of their parent(s) - a traumatic event magnified by the negative stigma attached to HIV/AIDS. Often orphans living in foster homes or with relatives face discrimination from their caretakers. Orphans may receive limited or no health care, and lack access to education and social services. Some orphans receive no outside assistance and become the head of household, caring for their younger siblings. They have to find food and frequently must work to support their family.

These children are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. They may lose their family's land and belongings because they are too young for community leaders to listen to their protests. Furthermore, AIDS orphans may be uneducated about their rights. They are also more likely to become infected themselves.

## How you can help

There are many ways you can help. Share information with people around you about children affected by, and infected with, HIV/AIDS. This will increase awareness and help break the silence, stigma, and shame associated with HIV/AIDS. Volunteer with organizations providing services for patients and families affected by HIV/AIDS. Also, you can contribute to or help with fundraising efforts of organizations supporting AIDS research and individuals diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

# background information

# Children Infected & Affected by HIV/AIDS

## Discussion Questions

-  How can HIV/AIDS be transmitted?
-  How do children contract HIV?
-  Who is most vulnerable?
-  If someone in your family was diagnosed with HIV how would you react? What would you say?
-  How can you prevent yourself from contracting HIV/AIDS?
-  How do you think people would react if you had HIV?
-  What are the stigmas attached to HIV/AIDS?
-  How did these stigmas become created?
-  Are these stigmas accurate? Why?
-  How can people remove inaccurate stigmas?
-  What could organizations and governments do to help AIDS orphans?

### 3 x 5 Plan - One Way to Fight AIDS

The 3 by 5 Plan was created by the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide medication to at least 3 million people with AIDS in 50 countries by the end of 2005. In 2003 when the plan was initiated, only 400,000 patients receive treatment from WHO. However, more than 6 million infected people in developing countries need immediate treatment. The antiretroviral therapy the plan promotes has extensive benefits including: prolonging life, preventing transmission of the disease, and improving quality of life for those who have it. The 3 by 5 plan attempts to move the world closer to the ultimate goal of treatment for all who need it.

There are five guiding “pillars” for the program: global leadership, strong partnership and advocacy; urgent, sustained country support; simplified, standardized tools for delivering antiretroviral therapy; effective, reliable supply of medicines and diagnostics, and rapidly identifying and applying knowledge.

The 3 x 5 initiative aims to develop country support; create partnerships; generate community involvement; educate about treatment guidelines and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS; monitor, evaluate and survey the disease and its treatment; and continue research and development of treatments. SOURCE: WHO. <[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)> (April 29, 2004).

discussion  
questions

# Children Infected & Affected by HIV/AIDS

## Topic Introduction

 Make nametags with "AIDS victim" written across them.

Every five minutes, give a student a nametag to wear. This symbolizes how many youth ages 10 to 24 across the world become infected with AIDS.

Another method is to set a timer to ring every five minutes for the same purpose.

### Governments Working for a Solution: A CASE STUDY OF BRAZIL

The spread of AIDS in Brazil during the early 1990s led to an exploding infection rate. People from all economic backgrounds needed access to antiretroviral drugs. In 1996, the government responded with the guarantee that all citizens could have free access to HIV treatment; today more than 135,000 people are using their access to free medication.

Since its treatment program began, Brazil estimates it has reduced AIDS mortality rates by as much as 50 percent. Brazil finances the enormous cost of the medication by negotiating lower prices directly with drug companies and by creating generic versions of the expensive namebrand medication. Through its comprehensive National AIDS Program, Brazil has proved to the world that a developing country can address the issue of HIV/AIDS and achieve positive results.

## In-Class Activities

 Act out a drama

Have students write out a drama and present it. Set requirements that they incorporate HIV and the stigmas attached to the disease in their production.

 Free Write

Allow students to gauge their reactions to what they have learned. What are some of the challenges that face people working to help others with AIDS? What are some of the solutions that can be realized?

 Group Work

Divide the students into groups and either assign or have them choose a side of the debate about intellectual property. Groups may represent the pharmaceutical companies, researchers, governments of poor countries, UN Agencies, etc.

Encourage students to research their topic area and then simulate a mock meeting for the World Trade Organization or the United Nations.

 Class Discussion

Have the students imagine that their parents have died. They have brothers and sisters they must support and they have to buy food and pay the rent/mortgage. "What do you do? How do you find the money?"

Talk about the merits of the 3 x 5 plan and the obstacles to accomplishing it.

# classroom activities

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## Homework Assignments



Write a letter to your representative asking for his or her support for AIDS orphans.



Research about an AIDS orphan's life or an organization that works with AIDS orphans.



Write a short story about how you think a person's life changes when they are diagnosed with HIV.



Write a brief paper about the benefits of getting tested for HIV.

## Papers

Pick a country and research how AIDS has affected the population growth rate, economic development and children living in the country.

## Projects

Write letters to your congressional representatives asking for their position on children infected with HIV/AIDS. Find out what they have done to help AIDS orphans.

Contact organizations that work with AIDS orphans and learn what they need and how they need help.

## Just in Case...

### Student Experience

- If you know the student has personal experience with this, let him/her know of the class in advance.
- If the student volunteers this information, ask the student if he/she would to talk about the experience.

### Student Openly Emotional

#### Crying

- Don't draw attention to the student.
- Follow up with the student.

#### Angry

- Ask the student questions to try and channel the emotion positively.

#### Skeptical

- Find out what questions the student has.
- Encourage the student to complete additional research about the topic and report to the class.

#### Hopeless/Guilty

- Offer ways for the student to get more involved.

## For More Information

Youth Advocate Program International

[www.yapi.org](http://www.yapi.org)

University of California, San Francisco

[hivinsite.ucsf.edu](http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu)

AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families

[www.aids-alliance.org](http://www.aids-alliance.org)

Population Services International

[www.youthaids.org](http://www.youthaids.org)

UNICEF

[www.unicef.org/aids](http://www.unicef.org/aids)

UNAIDS

[www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)

Center for Disease Control

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

AIDS.org

[www.aids.org](http://www.aids.org)

beyond  
the classroom

# Children Infected & Affected by HIV/AIDS



## Yetarik's Story

Yetarik was only eight years old when she lost her father. He died of pneumonia, which became deadly due to his contraction of HIV. A year later her mother succumbed to the AIDS virus, leaving Yetarik, the eldest, to support her family.

In the Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya Yetarik's family is common. Now left to raise her three siblings, Yetarik felt lost. She had a two year old sister, three year old brother, and a six year old sister. With nowhere else to turn, Yetarik turned to her grandmother.

When Yetarik and her siblings went to their grandmother's house, they joined their eight cousins already living with their grandmother. Yetarik's aunts all passed away two years before and Yetarik's cousins were also orphaned. The family structure is common in the Kibera slums as many extended families have had to compensate for relatives killed by the virus. Yetarik's grandmother was left to raise her twelve grandchildren.

Since the deaths in her family, Yetarik has taken the education of the public about HIV and AIDS very seriously. She is a UNICEF trained HIV/AIDS peer educator. Now she helps by visiting schools and talking to other youths about how they can prevent contraction. She hopes through her work she will help stem the current explosion in deaths by AIDS and HIV.

--this story is based on actual events

# INFOCUS ON HIV/AIDS

# Children Infected & Affected by HIV/AIDS

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UNICEF Statistics: HIV/AIDS [http://www.childinfo.org/eddb/hiv\\_aids/orphan.htm](http://www.childinfo.org/eddb/hiv_aids/orphan.htm)

WHO <http://www.who.int/3by5/about/initiative/en/index.html>