

HIV&AIDS and YOUTH

1. Biblical foundations: Making choices
2. We've heard it before: AIDS and Youth in Zambia
3. Bringing "Life Abundant" to schools
4. Life skill resources
5. Young people - we care
6. Making it known - Reflections from the scorched earth
7. Tip of the Month - Health journeys

Jesus said, "No procrastination. No backward looks. You can't put off God's kingdom till tomorrow. Seize the day."

John 9:62 (The Message)

To what extent is complacency about sexual issues evident among young people in your setting? What are effective ways of addressing this? My hope is that this AIDS LINK focusing on youth will open up new thinking and the opportunity to discuss your experience with others. In coming issues we will be looking at volunteers, palliative care, working with children, and ethics. Let us know of any resources you recommend and information on events coming up that are important to highlight.

Diane

international.aids-consultant@sim.org

SIM HIV&AIDS related ministries and HOPE for AIDS

1. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS: MAKING CHOICES

Complacency about HIV is concerning. Later in this AIDS Link, Dorothy Wiebe looks at the serious problem of complacency among youth in Zambia. But any of us - young or old, male or female - can fool ourselves with the lie: "It won't happen to me!"

Jesus constantly faced complacency. Read Luke 9:57-62.

1. These three men were each forced to make a decision. What were their options, what did they decide, and why?
2. How did Jesus handle the situation? Why does he sound so discouraging?

Life is full of choices - some determine our future. At times we have to decide between something good and something bad. At other times the choice may be between the good (eg. family responsibilities - Luke 9:59b, 61) and the best (eg. obedience to Jesus - 9:59a, 60, 62).

When we become complacent, we lose our ability to discern between good and bad, and especially between the good and the best.

3. Think of a situation in which you were complacent and failed to make a wise decision. Why were you complacent? What lesson did this teach you?

Now read Luke 14:25-33.

Like HIV, there is no room for complacency in the matter of following Jesus. It's about life and death! As we go through life, we see some ignoring or avoiding the urgency of deciding to follow Jesus. Sadly we see others who have been His followers becoming complacent and drifting away.

4. What do we learn from Luke to help us to encourage others move from complacency to commitment?

2. WE'VE HEARD IT BEFORE: AIDS & YOUTH IN ZAMBIA

Dorothy Wiebe, AIDS Prevention and Life Education, Zambia, addresses the serious concern of prevention complacency. For further information and networking contact Dorothy and the APPLE team (AIDS Prevention Plus Life Education) at: dorothywiebe@gmail.com

"As I was sitting and casually talking with one of the young girls the topic of AIDS came up and she said, "I'm tired of hearing about AIDS." I asked if she felt she knew everything and she answered, "I know enough not to get it." Often when we enter a school the administration will say that these people have come to talk about AIDS and instantly we see the students totally lose interest. When we say we have come to talk about issues such as love, sex and romance we regain their interest.

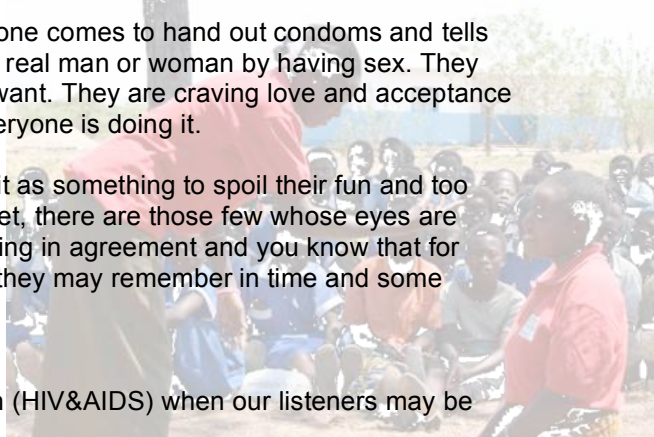
"Zambian youth think they have heard it all before and yet they are continuing to have unplanned pregnancies, contract STIs and contract HIV. Why? As we talk openly with the youth we see the shock on their faces as the Peer Educators bluntly talk about real issues that youth are dealing with. We see the understanding as the Facilitators share their own experiences. We see the remorse as we show the multiplication factor, demonstrating the connection that is made every time you sleep with someone and you can never know what everyone else is passing on to you. We see the hope as we talk about their dreams and future and what they can become. We see their wry laughter as they see the irony of how just 5 minutes of pleasure can decide their whole future for them.

"They understand all we are saying but the next day someone comes to hand out condoms and tells them it's ok. Their friends tell them to prove that they are a real man or woman by having sex. They need money and sex is a quick easy way to get what you want. They are craving love and acceptance and think they will find it through sex. They believe that everyone is doing it.

"Yes, Zambian youth do know a lot about AIDS. They see it as something to spoil their fun and too serious when they want to enjoy love, sex and romance! Yet, there are those few whose eyes are latched on to the facilitators taking in every word and nodding in agreement and you know that for those few they will make the right choices and for the rest they may remember in time and some maybe too late."

For reflection:

How can we communicate a message of life and death (HIV&AIDS) when our listeners may be complacent? What strategies have worked for you?



3. BRINGING "LIFE ABUNDANT" TO SCHOOLS

The following insights into peer education in an Angolan school are contributed by David and Miriam Trott. For networking and further information contact them at: david.trott@sim.org

"The neighbors could hear cheers and applause coming from the public school across the street. The 'Life Abundant' group had finished another presentation on HIV, AIDS, sexuality, and self-image to 7th and 8th graders. Music, drama, and humor make the program memorable and popular.

The selection of peer educators is critical. A talented group of twelve young people from various churches completed the training. Schools have afternoon and morning sessions, so we have two teams. The peer educators are students themselves, so those who go to school in the morning go back to do the program for the afternoon classes; those who go to school in the afternoons are presenters in the morning sessions.

The feedback we get reveals that the program touches on issues that are close to home. The peer pressure is very real, and there are a lot of cultural myths about sex and AIDS. When the program is over, many students ask how they can be part of our group. One of the new components we added this year is a monthly meeting off campus for continued interaction including spiritual follow-up.

The key lessons we have learned facilitating peer education in schools are:

1. Keep the peer educators motivated. Ours are volunteers and the satisfaction of a successful program, inclusion in an elite group, and seeing the effect in the lives of their peers is payment enough. However, we also let them know verbally and in other ways such as treats and retreats how important they are.
2. Prepare them spiritually. We make sure that each of our peer educators has a good testimony in their church, school, and community and that they are growing through some form of

discipleship and accountability. We expect them to be able to give an account for the hope in them when their peers ask.

3. Listen to them. Our best ideas for drama and music have come from the peer educators themselves. We let them express the concepts of the program with their own "youth" language and culture. We have also found it helpful to let them evaluate themselves to encourage one another and suggest ways to improve.

4. LIFE SKILLS RESOURCES

1. *"Sexuality and life-skills: participatory activities on sexual and reproductive health with young people"* (3.5 MB) can be accessed from:

www.aidsalliance.org/custom_asp/publications/view.asp?publication_id=295 Printed copies are available to those working in Africa.

This toolkit is written for anyone who wants to facilitate participatory learning activities with young people to equip them with the knowledge, positive attitudes and skills to grow up and enjoy sexual and reproductive health and well-being. This includes peer educators and leaders, outreach workers, teachers, community workers and others. This toolkit aims to help provide learning activities for young people by:

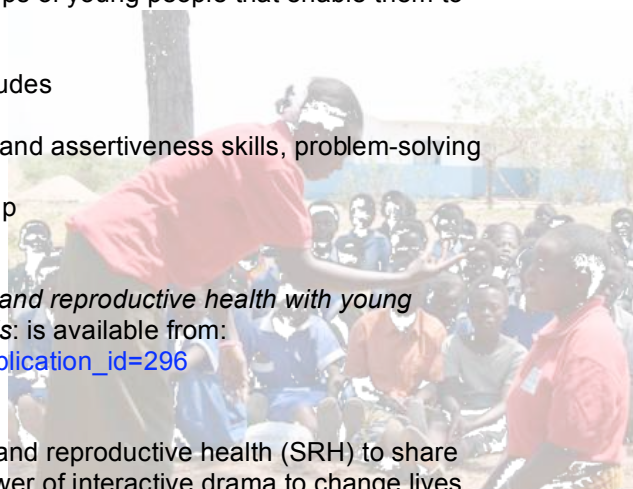
- * Providing accurate and factual information to young people
- * Planning appropriate educational activities for groups of young people that enable them to analyse their own situations, resources and needs
- * Applying new knowledge to their own lives
- * Increasing awareness of their own values and attitudes
- * Developing their self-esteem and confidence
- * Developing life skills, for example, communication and assertiveness skills, problem-solving and decision-making
- * Building trust and taking collective action as a group
- * Following up and evaluating their work

2. *"Feel! Think! Act! A guide to interactive drama for sexual and reproductive health with young people"* (3.4MB), which accompanies *"Sexuality and life-skills: is available from:*

www.aidsalliance.org/custom_asp/publications/view.asp?publication_id=296

This toolkit aims to:

- * Encourage practitioners in drama and in sexuality and reproductive health (SRH) to share their knowledge and skills and work together to bring the power of interactive drama to change lives for the better
- * Increase the use of drama as a creative and participatory process to address SRH issues rather than a one-way message delivery tool
- * Equip practitioners with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to use interactive drama effectively in SRH programs and other areas
- * Enable practitioners to use drama in a positive way, which reduces stigma and discrimination towards vulnerable groups



5. YOUNG PEOPLE - WE CARE

"Young People We Care: Making a Difference in Our Community" (2005) is a manual written in Zimbabwe for use by organizations or groups of young people aged 15-24 years who support home-based care activities or assist children affected by AIDS.

It consists of two parts: the Training Guide, written for a facilitator with good knowledge of HIV&AIDS and facilitation; and a Community Activities section which suggests ways young people can support children in the community. The activities are designed to require little or no resources.

The book aims to promote values and practices that will reduce stigma and discrimination and help the community find ways to allow vulnerable children and orphans live better lives. The resource sheets cover the following topics: knowing your facts about HIV&AIDS, being a young caregiver, ending the stigma, helping families, being a friend, making memory boxes, overcoming and avoiding abuse, making good choices about sex, helping children grieve, and getting help from the community.

Downloaded (4.1MB) from: www.synergyaids.com/documents/Young_People_We_Care_v2.pdf

6. MAKING IT KNOWN – REFLECTIONS FROM THE SCORCHED EARTH

If you are interested in Africa, a good read, and an honest questioning of God in the face of suffering, but still want to be left with a confidence in God, *'Reflections from the scorched earth'* (2007) by Ed Walker has it all.

Ed Walker has worked as part of TEARFund's Disaster Management Team (to whom all royalties are directed) in some of the most desperate situations confronting the world in the last ten years: Burundi, Southern Sudan, Northern Kenya, Sierra Leone and most recently Darfur. This book is part of the author's search for the God of hope in the midst of extreme suffering, deep anguish and despair.

Available through www.amazon.com

7. TIP of the MONTH – HEALTH JOURNEYS

"Health journeys" is a way of visually representing the story of a person's health over time by marking a person's health 'ups' and 'downs'. It is best done with individuals or in pairs and is useful for discussing: sensitive issues about physical and mental health and HIV&AIDS in a non-threatening way; knowledge and beliefs about HIV&AIDS; common health problems faced by people living with HIV&AIDS; treatment and support needs; what treatment and support is available and who can (or cannot) access this; and barriers to accessing treatment and support and how they can be overcome.

Using *"Health journeys"*:

- Explain the purpose of the tool.
- Ask the participants to think about (a) the different health issues experienced by a person who has HIV&AIDS, or (b) their own health issues.
- Choose a specific period of time, eg 'a person's health journey in the last month' or 'my health journey since being diagnosed HIV positive'.
- Draw the health journey of the person. As the journey progresses, the line goes up when things get better and down when things get worse.
- Indicate on the line what made things better or worse at each point.
- Discuss health issues that the person experienced during the chosen period of time and show them on the health journey line.
- Identify gaps in available treatment and support.
- As participants present their health journeys, ask them to explain what has been helpful, what has not, and how the health journey could be made easier for the future. ***

Tips:

- If people don't want to draw their own health journeys, ask them to make one up by thinking of the health journey of someone they are familiar with or have heard about.
- Encourage participants to think about informal treatment and support – for example, traditional medicine or psychosocial support from friends as well as 'modern' medicine.
- Draw possible health journeys for different people such as, a young man, a woman, and a child.

This tool has been adapted from *Tools Together Now, 2006*, p,73,74 by AIDS Alliance and is available for downloading (2.9MB, 250 pages) at: www.aidsalliance.org/sw36326.asp

Correction: In AIDSLink 69, the SIM church partner in Burkina Faso should be EE/SIM (Evangelical church/SIM - indicating their roots), not the UEEB (United Evangelical Church of Benin), which is a partner church in Benin. My apologies for that error.



SIM
SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS
MOTIVATING

The opinions and views expressed in AIDSLink do not necessarily reflect the views of SIM. Technical information in AIDSLink is crosschecked as thoroughly as possible but we cannot accept responsibility should problems occur. Previous AIDSLinks can be viewed at www.hopeforaids.org/resources.asp