

In My Life: Youth stories and poems about HIV/AIDS

Facilitator's Guide

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In My Life: Youth stories and poems about HIV/AIDS
A Facilitators Guide
c GAAP & the individual authors of the stories and poems.

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Table of Contents

Background of In My Life	
About In My Life	1
Themes of In My Life	2-3
Working with In My Life	
Session I	
Activity One	4
Activity Two	5
Activity Three	6
Activity Four	7
Activity Five	8
Session II	
Activity One	8-9
Activity Two	10
Activity Three	11
Activity Four	12
Session III - Follow up	12
Session IV- Spreading the Message	13
Producing your own “In My Life” book	13-14
Appendix A	15
Appendix B	16
Handout #1 – HIV/AIDS facts	17-18
Handout #2 - Quiz	19
Handout #3 – Social Aspects - Gender	20-21
Quiz Answers	22

About *In My Life*

'This is a true story and I am the narrator of this story,' writes Lindeka Cynthia Rwidia one of the young authors in the anthology, *In My Life: Youth Stories and Poems about HIV/AIDS*, as a closing line in her piece, 'When AIDS came knocking at my door'. The selection is part of an edited volume of writing by 14 young people from several township schools in the Western Cape on the subject of HIV/AIDS in their everyday lives.

In my Life, published by the Centre for the Book and McGill University, investigates how HIV/AIDS plays out in the lives of the youth participants, in their homes and their communities. It is striking in the finished work to see the enthusiasm and the dedication of the youth to come up with new and inventive ways to tackle the AIDS pandemic and to keep 'getting the word out' in their communities, schools and peer groups. This book is part of that ongoing dedication, and will hopefully serve to inspire and raise awareness in other youth.

In My Life and Life Skills

Themes dealt with within *In My Life*:

- This is me and I'm just a young person who lives an ordinary life;
- Sexual Violence ("Everything about my friend who is HIV positive" by Ann Thembeke Dipa)
- Violence and Gangs ("My Story" Thozamile Vanto);
- Stigma and Discrimination ("What people think about HIV and AIDS" by Nosbusiso M��unukeli);
- Getting Tested ("Story" by Ann Thembeke Dipa);
- The importance of 'breaking the silence' around AIDS ("When AIDS came knocking at my Door" by Lindeka Cynthia Rwida);
- Activism in my everyday life ("The Lady at the Bus Station" by Nombulelo Moeti).

All of these themes remind us that AIDS is something that is around all of us, whoever we are. Looking at the impact of AIDS on our own lives is a way to begin to change the picture around education and awareness. As one 13-year-old girl writes on the topic 'Talking about AIDS with my friends':

Talking about AIDS with my friends is not something you can do that easily especially is there's lot of people your nerves just leave you, but it is something you have to get used to. It is a problem; if we don't talk about it no will know about it. We are the future. Our parents will die ... it is for us to see if our generation carries on....

She goes on to explain how she plans to engage in more discussion with her friends in the future. A 13-year-old male student writing on the same theme says:

A lot of my friends from outside school are sexually active and don't know much about the deadly HIV/AIDS virus. When I told them about it they were shocked. They couldn't believe how easily it could be spread. I advised them to have AIDS

tests and they did a couple of weeks later. One of my friends started acting weird. I asked her what was wrong and she told me to leave her alone. I gave her one day and then the next day I asked her again. She burst into tears and told me she had bad news. She has AIDS. It still shocks me because one of my classmates does not believe that you cannot cure AIDS.

The objective of talking and writing about AIDS in our lives is to uncover and unpack some of our thoughts about the epidemic so we can begin to forge a road ahead. This guide gives you some idea on how to use the writing from *In My Life* with a group in your community or classroom, and some activities to get learners writing and thinking about the often complex and difficult issues around HIV/AIDS

NOTE to facilitators: *In My Life* is meant to be a springboard to working with youth in your community, and to find out what **THEY** think about HIV/AIDS in **THEIR** lives, and what **THEY** think **THEY** can do. The idea is to get them involved and thinking about making changes in their own lives and the lives of their friends. The ideas contained come out of our work with other young people in South Africa. They are not meant to be followed rigidly and you may find that there are other follow-up activities that come out of your group that are more appropriate.

Working with **In My Life**

SESSION I

Activity One

This activity is meant to be a lead in to get young people talking about AIDS activism. You can look up some of these people to find out more about them before the session, or present other local activists work you are familiar with.

What are some of the ways people in your community and country are trying to tackle HIV/AIDS? Here is a list of some people and organizations who are trying to make a difference through their lives and creative projects:

Pieter-Dirk Uys – You might have seen him dressed up like a lady called Evita, but Pieter-Dirk Uys is a South African comedian who has a special mission of spreading the message, through laughter and sarcasm, about AIDS.

Bush Radio, HIV-Hop - This project with Youth Against AIDS (YAA) used hip-hop and local South African emcees to talk to youth about HIV and AIDS.

Nkosi Johnson – At 12 years old, the brave Nkosi Johnson disclosed to the world he had AIDS. Before he died of AIDS related complications he told his story and urged people to take action to stop the spread of HIV.

Steps for the Future - This is a unique international collaboration of filmmakers working on an HIV/AIDS campaign in Southern Africa to produce films on AIDS issues. You might have seen some of these films on SABC.

Zackie Achmat and the TAC – Zackie Achmat and the Treatment Action Campaign have waged a long struggle against the government and the international pharmaceutical community to provide drugs at affordable prices to people with HIV/AIDS. Achmat even refused to take anti-retrovirals until they were made freely available to the public.

Sue Williamson - Williamson is a Cape Town visual artist. Her recent work was a collaborative project with people living with HIV/AIDS in which she “invited people living with HIV/AIDS to reflect on their experience, and formulate a message they would like to give to the wider community”. These messages were posted around the city. You might have seen some of the tags on walls around Cape Town. One quote by Benjamin Borrageiro said, “I’m sick of Mbeki saying HIV doesn’t cause AIDS.”

Gideon Mendel - Mendel is a photographer who brings us image of HIV/AIDS around the world. His book, *AIDS in Africa*, shows the terrible toll AIDS can have on our communities.

Encourage participants in your group discuss the way some of these AIDS activists or organizations have contributed to the fight against HIV/AIDS. What are some of the strategies they use? Are they effective? Which kinds of messages appeal to you? Why is advocacy and activism important in relation to HIV/AIDS?

Activity Two

Get the group to test their knowledge with the short quiz about AIDS and AIDS activism. Add in your own questions. Learners can do the quiz out loud or in small groups. The point is not to reprimand wrong answers, but to share more information with each other and get talking about the issues. (See HANDOUT 1)

Use Handout 2 to clarify what we know about HIV and AIDS. Have participants discuss their misconceptions about the issues and ask questions if they do not understand any part of the fact sheet.

Activity Three

Present the In My Life book to the group. Introduce how the book is organized so they become familiarized with its contents – There are 14 young authors in the book and each section has an introduction biography of the writer and then 3 to 5 sections of their writing.

Reproduce one of the bios (Clinton's or someone else) and have someone read it out loud so they become familiar with one of the writers.

Ask the kids to flip through the book on their own and pick one writer's bio to read out loud or in small groups.

Why did you pick this author?

How is your life the same or different?

How do your preferences the same or different from the author?

Were you surprised by anything the author wrote? Why?

I am Clinton

*a 15 year old boy
who loves to go out and
meet new people and have fun,
who is talented and smart,
almost perfect!
I love tranquility, opera, music
R&B Bass*

I am Clinton

*who lives in Cafda,
a small village in Retreat.
And who was born on a Sunday,
on the 13th December 1987.*

I am Clinton

*who remembers his first day at school,
and loves school now.
who remembers the day his grandmother died
and who knows that she is now in peace,
with God,
who dreams of becoming a doctor,
who dreams of romantic things,
and whose dreams will come true
one day.*

I am Clinton

*a dancer at the Junior Resource Centre
who hates people with a bad attitude,
who doesn't eat chicken skin
who sometimes feels afraid when he is alone
but not as if in the dark or being bullied
but in his heart
because people can hurt a person
very deeply
and think nothing about it*

I am Clinton

*my message to all of you out there
is that reading a book is like finding
a new world full of wonders
so I hope you have enjoyed this book. (p. 50)*

Activity Four

Have the learners do some reading out loud of the stories from *In My Life*:

In My Neighbourhood

*My watch wakes me up, or the radio
train passing by
taxi, bus, motor car passing by
birds' song from the trees
smelling the fresh air
shoe-steps from people going to work
laughs, talks
opening of the shop nearby
police talking or moving around with their cars*

*my neighborhood late at night
juke box, especially on weekends
gun shots, cars non-stop
shouting of people, fights,
screaming of cats, dogs barking.
police moving around
laughs
talks and steps of people
music, loud music
people having a wild conversation.
screaming people.
people being beaten by lovers
telephones ringing non-stop sometimes
smashing of car doors
rudeness, especially on weekends
rude people trying to disturb us
because they are not asleep
highjacking of fidelity, of cars,
of people's money*

*Sundays it becomes very quiet and very slow
people smoke dagga
go to church
everyone has something to do
always something to say
Sundays people cook, wear beautiful clothes,
it's not like Friday and Saturday
where everything is loud,
it's one of my favourite days*

*although I hate it sometimes because
when it is Sunday, tomorrow is Monday.*

*People in my neighborhood look like fools sometimes
when they act irrationally
fight, go around carrying guns, knives
not caring about the youngsters
there are few motivation things
even the police lack the spirit to motivate people
because they often work with the thugs we are trying to get rid of*

*but for us teenagers
we don't let what is none of our concern
get in the way of doing what we feel is right for us
we respect those who respect us.*

(page 24)

-Nosbusiso Mcunukeli, age 17

Have participants read through more of the writing by the same author and read out loud or to a partner.

What do you notice about the stories?

What are the differences from your life? What are the similarities?

Activity Five

Have everyone write their own introductions. Encourage them to be creative and talk about what is important to them.

(My name is..... I live in ...things about myself are...my challenges...my goals)

SESSION II

Activity One

Ask two or three participants to read aloud from **In My Neighborhood** or **What my friends say about AIDS**.

Take Off These Chains

*People crying
deaths increasing
this is about the pain.
HIV and AIDS is killing us
can't we see?
the daily deaths of HIV*

*Heal this suffering
whether you are infected
or affected
turn this world into a conscious world
where there is no stigma,
or discrimination or denial*

*The young ones Nkosi Johnson
and Sibongile Mazeka
died of AIDS in the early stage of life.
and we have discrimination that led
Gugu Dlamini to die
Our minds can change this tragedy*

*Heal this suffering
for the sake of our brothers and sisters,
mothers and fathers
who are no longer with us.
(page 39)*

KK Mofu, age 17

Activity Two

Using the In My Life texts, encourage the group to read and talk about the various issues that surround HIV/AIDS.

Stigma and Discrimination

Disclosing, or telling others about your HIV status, can be really tough, especially when you are not sure how friends and family will react. After disclosing their status, some

young people have been disowned by their friends and family, kicked out of school and left to fend for themselves. Because of this, some people avoid finding out their status, which prevents them from getting medical care and maybe even spreading the virus to other people. Think about times when you might have discriminated against someone with HIV. Why did you do this? It is important to confront our fears and prejudice and to become more educated on preventing stigmatization and discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS. Read what Nosbusiso Mcunukeli says about stigma on page 27-28.

Sexual violence

Why does sexual violence happen? Are there ways that we can try and avoid violent relationships or help our community overcome violence against women and children? Read what Ann Thembeke Dipa says about sexual violence on page 4. This is also a good opportunity to use Handout #3 on Gender.

Violence and Gangs

Think about the roots of youth violence and gangsterism. What causes young people to join gangs? How does violence in our community affect our lives and our vulnerability to HIV? Are there ways we can contribute to an environment where youth will choose alternatives to gang lifestyle?

Read what Thozamile Vanto says on page 62.

Getting Tested

Do you think everyone should get tested? Why do people choose not to get tested? What do you think about that decision? Are there ways that we can make our community safer so people will feel comfortable disclosing their HIV status? Read Ann Thembeke Dipa's story on page 5.

Breaking the Silence around AIDS

What are the consequences of our silence around HIV and AIDS? How can we break the silence? Read what Lindeka Cynthia Rwida says on page 45.

Activism in my everyday life

Every action has a reaction. Talking to your friends about abstinence and safe sex is a form of activism, but it doesn't stop there. There are many things that effect young people's vulnerability to HIV, such as poverty, sexism, violence, ignorance, racism, etc. What kinds of things contribute to fighting HIV and AIDS? Are there any activists who have impacted you? Do you think even small gestures make a difference? Why or why not? Read Nombulelo Moeti's story on page 36.

Prevention

Are there other ways to protect against HIV that we haven't discussed so far? What are ways that young people can begin to discuss condom use and abstinence more openly? At what moment should you talk about condom use with your partner?

Activity Three

Start the activity by asking participants write as many words as they can that they associate with the following prompts:

Home, Waking up, Love, Respect, Sex, Health...

Add your own prompts to this list.

Next, give the participants two or three minutes to write without lifting their pens from the paper on each of the following prompts. Encourage them to write whatever comes to mind on the topic always keeping their pen moving. They will use this writing later to build the basis of their final stories. After each prompt is written, have the participants underline key phrases or sentences they liked.

When I feel afraid....

Write a poem or a story about a moment in your life when you felt afraid. How did you feel? Do you remember the smells and sounds or the way your body felt?

When I feel confident....

What makes you feel brave or confident? Was there a moment you remember where you felt strong and unafraid? Why did you feel that way? Do you remember that feeling now?

In my neighbourhood

What is it like in your neighbourhood? Like some of the stories we have read, write for a few minutes about the sounds, smells and happenings in your neighbourhood.

It happened in my neighbourhood

Do you have a story about something that happened in your neighbourhood about HIV or AIDS?

A moment in my Life

Do you have a story about something that happened in your life about HIV or AIDS?

What I think about AIDS

Write some of your perceptions about AIDS. What are the messages to youth about AIDS? What messages would you like to hear?

Activity Four

Assign each participant to write their own stories of 150-300 words.

They might also choose to write from the following prompt when they go home:

What people in my neighbourhood say about AIDS

Interview some of your friends about what they think about AIDS.

Interview someone in your neighbourhood about AIDS. It could be someone you know, an AIDS activist, someone living with HIV/AIDS, or anyone who lives near you. Are some people in your neighbourhood making a difference around HIV/AIDS? What are they doing?

SESSION III

Follow up

In the final session, encourage learners to share what they have written by reading in front of the class.

- What did they learn from the stories they wrote?
- Did they discover anything new?
- Do they have more information about HIV/AIDS?
- What were some of the positive aspects of doing the writing work?
- What were some of the negative points?
- What did they find interesting in the other learners work?
- Was there anything surprising?

SESSION IV

Spreading the Message

“We must always believe that we can make a difference – if we can make a difference in our lives, we can make a difference in our communities and our country.” -Mandla Oliphant

Encourage participants to work in pairs or small groups to discuss the possibilities for continuing to work on HIV/AIDS issues.

- What can we do to continue spreading the message?
- Through the interviewing and the writing, what aspects of AIDS have become important to you? Where you inspired by talking to other youth in the school? Would you like to care for people who are sick? To fight for treatment? Orphans? Gender issues? How can you continue making a difference in these areas?

Each group may also like to create two lists: 1) of what they could do; and 2) what ideas they could share with others to get youth involved.

After my sister’s death, a doctor tested my niece and she was found HIV–positive and I found that it was my duty to explain to my mother the whole process of being HIV and how we should treat her. From there until now I’m doing what I can so that we can live a positive life. My mother is trying her best to give her what she needs and wants. Since then I’m a teenager but with the life of an adult. And the road is rough. (p. 59)

-Wendy Tapleni, age 17

A final group discussion about taking action can provide a closure for the session, leaving the facilitator to wrap-up with a review of positive points and things to follow up on. Finally, the facilitator can do a recap of some of the possibilities for moving forward.

Producing your own **In My Life** anthology

1. Why ?

Getting young people involved in sharing their own stories about HIV and AIDS and talking about the issues is a first step towards change. We have found that doing creative activities can often stimulate young people to engage with the issues. Through writing and reading our stories we will begin to get a picture of how AIDS is effecting and affecting ALL our lives. It is important, as well, to have stories in the languages that people can relate to, so continuing to do this work in your own language can help add to the fight.

2. How ?

Organize a group of your friends to do a writing project in your own language. Establish a small group of people who are interested in learning more about AIDS and doing creative writing about their lives and communities.

You could organize the group around an already existing group who wants to plan HIV/AIDS activities.

You may want to try and get a teacher or a peer educator on board to help edit the writing with your group. If you've never done this kind of thing before, don't worry! You will learn as you go, but it might be a good idea to get someone who has experience on board to help you out. Talking about these issues can be difficult and draining and it can help to have another person there for support!

Remember that one of the most important aspects of running a workshop is good listening. Make sure you give time for everyone to share opinions and ideas and let the group know at the beginning of the session that everyone's voice matters. Try to ensure a respectful environment where other's do not interrupt or put down people's opinions. Hopefully, you can create a setting where everyone's opinion is valued and respected. Each of us has something to share and knowledge to bring to the discussion. See the process as a collaboration instead of a teacher-student type of relationship.

Firstly, read over the guide and plan how much time you will need and make sure you understand everything.

Set a time and a place for your group to get together.

Next, photocopy some of the stories from the "In My Life" book and hand them out to the group, or choose a few stories and read them out loud.

Follow the sessions outlined in the book. Don't worry if you do not know the answers to questions that may come up during the sessions. Refer to the reference guide to get more

information. Make it an activity for the group to find out about issues or facts that you are unsure about.

Use the lessons in this guide to start writing your stories and poems. Add new writing prompt if you like.

You might also want to get the group to illustrate their stories.

Once your collection of writing is done, you can:

- Organize an event where the writers can read their work out loud.
- Raise some money to type up all the stories and poems and photocopy them – include pictures of the writers or drawings.
- Give out the books to other young people, to educators and to members of your community.
- Talk about the issues raised in your stories and encourage others to ask questions about HIV/AIDS to learn more information.

Add in your own ways of using the “In My Life” guide and let us know about it! Get going! Let’s get the message out!

APPENDIX A

Here is a sample of some discussion group questions. You could use these questions to get your group talking more about the issues around HIV and AIDS...

1. If someone your age says that they are sexually active, what do you think that means?
2. We are always hearing that youth feel pressured to be sexually active? Is this the case? What are some of the pressures? Do you think that they are different for guys and girls?
3. Where do people your age get their information about STDs and HIV/AIDS? What kinds of information are they/you getting?
4. Do you think young people worry about getting HIV/AIDS?
5. How do you think young women feel about condom use? How do you think young men feel about condom use?
6. There's a lot of talk about people "negotiating" around using condoms. What do you think that means? Is it the same for guys and for girls?
7. When you hear the phrase risky behaviour when it comes to sex what do you think it means? Does it mean the same thing for young men and young women?
8. What messages do you get about HIV/AIDS in the media. If you had to create an ad for television or a magazine, what message would give to young women? To young men? Would they be the same or different?
9. In what way could participating in a discussion like this affect how young people think about their own HIV risk.

APPENDIX B

Here is a short list on how to get more information on HIV/AIDS:

By Phone

- HIV/AIDS toll-free helpline
0800-12-322
- Lovelife information and counseling toll free helpline
0800-121-900
- Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)
021 788-3507 email: tac_tlc@mweb.co.za
TAC can give you more information about AVRs in your area and the fight to gain access to treatment.
- NAPWA (National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS)
011 872 0974 email: napnat@sn.apc.org
- AIDS Law Project
011 717-8600
The AIDS Law Project is concerned with various aspects of the rights of people with HIV/AIDS.

TEXT RESOURCES

ACT now! A Resource Guide for Young Women on HIV/AIDS, by UNIFEM and AWID. (2002)

This is a great resource guide that has a very gendered focus. It includes discussion on HIV and AIDS from a global perspective, resources for youth and outlines for a workshop with girls with activities that can be photocopied.

Download a PDF version online at <http://www.awid.org/publications/publication.html>

Positively HIV+. Monkey Press. 2003

Positively HIV+ is a positive and playful educational book about HIV and AIDS told through the lovely craft art and beadwork of Monkeybiz, a beading collective from around Cape Town. You can find this book in most book stores in Cape Town, or write to Monkeybiz at

E-mail: monkeybiz@iafrica.com

www.monkeybiz.co.za

VIDEO

Fire & Hope (2003) 15 minutes

Fire & Hope is an inspiring documentary about HIV prevention and AIDS activism made with youth for youth in the Western Cape. Available from the Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention project (GAAP): www.utgaap.info

Steps for the Future

Steps for the Future has many educational and engaging videos that talk about HIV/AIDS issues throughout Southern Africa. Tel: 021 424 2970 web: www.steps.co.za email: steps@dayzero.co.za

Handout 1

GETTING the FACTS about HIV & AIDS!

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)

Your immune system keeps your body strong and free of infections. It is like a guard against disease. When you get infected with HIV, your immune system can be weakened, making you more vulnerable to infections and diseases. HIV infects and kills the cells that help your immune system detect infection and disease and fight against it. These cells are called CD4, or t-cells.

HIV lives in the bodily fluids (like blood, pre-ejaculate fluid, breast milk, vaginal secretions and semen) and is transmitted if you come in contact with fluids from a person with HIV.

The main ways that HIV is transferred is through **sexual contact** without a condom. To protect against this happening, you must use a male or female condom every time you have sex, or abstain from sex. There is also a risk of transmitting HIV through unprotected oral sex, although the risk is lower. Oral sex can be risky for the person using his/her mouth when there are open sores in the mouth or bleeding gums, or when semen enters the mouth and when any secretions are swallowed.

Other ways that HIV is transmitted is through:

- Blood Contact
- Sharing unclean needles
- Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT)

Blood Contact can occur through sharing needles and equipment used for injection drugs, through organ transplants or blood transfusions, and through sharing tattoo or skin piercing equipment. To avoid these transmission routes, you should never share needles or any equipment that comes in contact with blood.

HIV can also be transmitted from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding. If you are pregnant and HIV positive or want to get tested, you should speak with a health care provider or AIDS clinic to find out what you can do before the baby is born to reduce infection. They can also advise you on how to prepare formula for your baby instead of using breast-milk, which is another route in which HIV is transmitted.

Even if you have HIV, you can keep your immune system strong by staying healthy, exercising and eating well.

Having HIV doesn't mean your life is over. You can still enjoy a happy, healthy life if you take good care of yourself and keep your immune system strong.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)

A normal CD4 count is 1, 150. When your CD4 cell count is less than 200, you are considered to have AIDS.

AIDS is a collection of infections that occur once HIV has deteriorated your body's ability to combat diseases. If you have HIV, you will not necessarily develop AIDS. There are a whole bunch of different illnesses that are associated with having AIDS.

Neither HIV or AIDS has a cure, but there are drugs treatments called anti-retrovirals (AVRs) that can delay the onset of AIDS. A healthy immune system will also delay the onset of AIDS.

Ways to avoid HIV infection:

- **Sexual Contact:** There are several ways to avoid infection through sexual contact - Abstain from sex, or if you do have sex, use a male or female condom every time. You can also reduce your risk by avoiding having multiple sexual partners and avoiding putting yourself in risky situations where there is a chance that coercive sex or rape may occur (such as places where there is a lot of drug and alcohol use)
- **Blood and blood products:** Do not share needles or injection drug equipment with others, make sure that any equipment, including tattoo, piercing and circumcision equipment, is properly sterilized.
- **Mother-to-Child Transmission:** Women can be tested for HIV during the antenatal period and if she is HIV positive (or if her partner is HIV positive) there are some different things that can be done. She can be counseled on her options and may receive treatment that could reduce the risk of transmission to the child. There are also things that can be done during the baby's delivery to minimize the risk of infection, such as having a Caesarean section, or receiving Nevirapine. After the baby is born, using formula instead of breastfeeding can also reduce the risk of infection. It is important, if you are pregnant, to talk to your doctor about your options.

Delaying when you start having sex is one of the best forms of protection for young people.

You can also avoid HIV infection by practicing other forms of safer sex like kissing, masturbation, using hands to stimulate your partner, dry humping, oral sex on a man or woman using a condom or a plastic protector.

Handout #3

Social aspects of HIV/AIDS: Gender

Why is gender an HIV/AIDS issue? Gender refers to the social constructions that define the roles of women and men are expected to fulfill in a culture. Gender norms define the way girls and guys are 'suppose' to behave. For example, in some cultures women may be expected to be homemakers and men are expected to be tough and non-emotional. While gender roles and norms change from culture to culture, in most parts of the world, men tend have greater social, political and cultural power and privilege. Gender roles have an impact of HIV vulnerability for a number of reasons for both young women and young men. Young women are specifically more vulnerable to HIV due to gender imbalances.

Young Women's vulnerability and risk

Young women represent the fastest growing group of HIV infections worldwide. This is because both social and biological factors make young women vulnerable.

Biological vulnerability

Young women are physically more vulnerable to HIV infection than young men because:

- Girl's vaginas are more likely to tear through intercourse facilitating HIV infection
- STIs are harder to recognize in women than men, and having an STI makes it easier to contracting HIV
- There is more surface area on the female genital tract than on men's
- There is a higher concentration of HIV in semen than in vaginal secretions
- There is more semen exchanged during sex than vaginal fluid

Social and Cultural Factors

The main cause of young women's vulnerability to HIV comes from unequal gender relations and social norms.

While young men are often encouraged to have multiple sexual partners, young women are often expected to be 'innocent' when it comes to sex. This makes it harder for women to talk about safe sexual practices with their partners, who might classify them as 'sluts' for bringing up the conversation. Because in society men often have more power in social relations, young women are also vulnerable to being coerced into having sex before they are ready.

Young women are especially vulnerable to rape, which can facilitate HIV transmission. Young women are often raped through the use of violence and force, which makes it more likely that there will be tearing of the genitals and possible HIV infection.

Men are also more often the ones making decisions about when and where sex takes place and if a condom is used. This can make it difficult for a girl to negotiate condom use with her partner. Young women are also more likely to have older male sexual partners who are more likely to have already been exposed to the HI virus. Age differences also makes girls less powerful in the relationship and have more difficulty insisting on condom use.

Access to education

All around the world policies and laws exist which prevent young women from using contraceptives till they reach adulthood, or prevent girls from gaining access to information about safe sexual practices and clinics that teach about reproductive health. Many cultures think young women should not have sex before marriage, which might prevent them from receiving life saving information.

Economics

Women have less access to economic power than men. Girls who have been orphaned or have family members who are sick are often heading the household. They may drop out of school and miss out on valuable information about safe sexual practices, or they may also feel that they need to turn to survival sex to get by. Sex exchanged with older men for taxi fare or for basic necessities and girls puts girls in a position where it is very difficult to insist on condom use.

Young Men's vulnerability and risk

Young men are often expected to be knowledgeable about sex and so they don't feel comfortable asking questions about how to protect themselves. Gender roles also expect men to have many sexual partners that put them at greater risk of HIV infection. Young men are also expected to use drugs and alcohol and lead a more 'carefree' risky lifestyle.

Young men who have sex with other men may also be afraid of discrimination and stigma from being open about their sexual practices. This can make it difficult to reach these young men with prevention messages, and may also limit their access to clinics and information networks.

ANSWERS

1- F 2 -T 3-T 4-T 5-F 6-T 7-T 8-F 9-T 10-F-11-T 12-T 13-T 14-F 15-F 16-F 17-T 18-F
19-T 20-T 21-F 22-F 23-T 24-F 25-T

Remember that all our answers are important and no one is right or wrong. Instead, try and use these questions as a way to get deeper into discussion about HIV and AIDS. Give the group time to discuss and think about each other's responses. Everyone should be given equal opportunity to share opinions and ideas.