



HOW HIV AND AIDS AFFECT CHILDREN'S LIVES

THE IDEA

This topic helps children to understand how HIV and AIDS affect children's lives and how they can help and support each other. In communities where there are high levels of HIV and AIDS, all children are in some way affected. Some are very directly affected and may have lost parents or other close relative, and may be living with HIV or AIDS themselves. Others will be less directly affected, but may have had a teacher or friend die, and may still be very distressed or worried themselves. This topic will help children to become more empathetic and willing to help each other and to feel good about themselves in so doing. The activities are designed to be used with all children, including those who are most directly affected by HIV and AIDS, or living with the virus themselves. These children have much to offer from their own experience and will also gain an important sense of self-esteem and resourcefulness by participating in the activities.



Important!

This topic may raise strong feelings in some children. Make sure that you have another adult, trusted by the children, who can give counselling to individuals if necessary. This does not need to be a trained counsellor. The person can be a trusted adult from the community with whom children would feel comfortable.

Involving adults

Before starting this topic, it is suggested that you hold a meeting with parents, guardians and other community members. They could participate in some of the same exercises, identifying the needs of children most affected by HIV and AIDS, and thinking about what the community can do to support and care for these children, as well as other vulnerable children.

Understanding

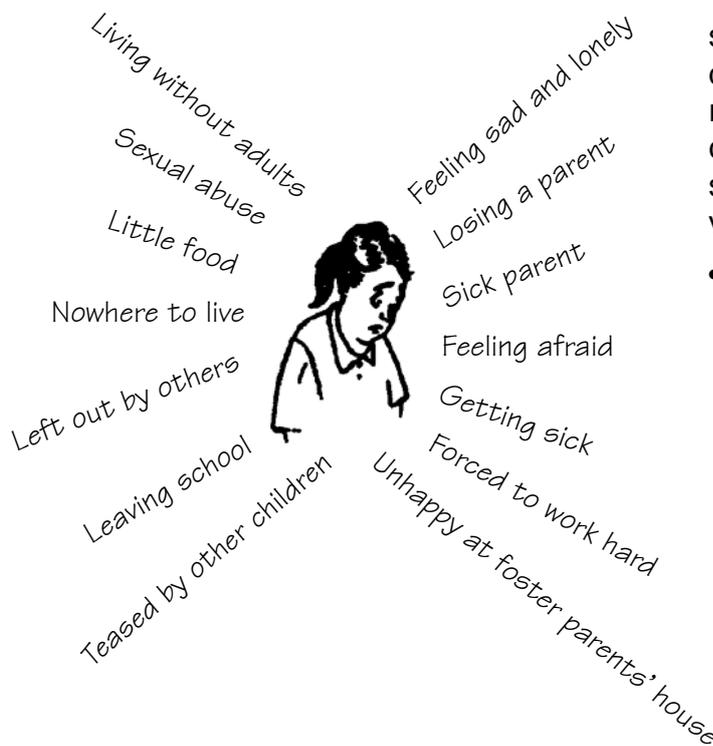
Although all children in communities affected by HIV and AIDS have experienced difficulties or stress in some ways, it is helpful for them to think about the different problems children can face. It is also important for them to understand how they can best help each other.

- Draw a picture of a sad child on the blackboard or on a large piece of paper.
Ask the children: 'What are the problems

that a child faces when a member of his or her family is sick or has died due to AIDS?'

Ask the children to discuss in small groups, then write their ideas around the picture of the child. (See next page.)





school. Some may have got involved in dangerous activities, which put them at risk of HIV and violence. How can children help each other in these situations? What advice would these vulnerable children give to others?

- In the community there may be orphans or children who are caring for sick relatives and cannot come to school. In pairs, the children could visit these children and talk to them about their lives. What are the problems they face? How do they try to cope? How could other children help? How could adults help? What advice would they give to other children?

- Now draw a second picture of the same child. In groups, children can now discuss all the things that would help make that child happier. Write their ideas around the second picture. For example:

Friends visiting.
Other children helping at school.
Sharing food and school items.
Help in caring for sick parents.
A kind adult to talk with.
Help with coming to school.
Help with chores at home.
Help with school work.
etc.

- Children in the group or club can invite other children to join them for a session of drawing pictures. Each child can draw and label two pictures:

- 1 What makes a child happy?
- 2 What makes a child sad?

A child in Uganda drew this:



A child is happy when his friends include him in their play.

- Collect story books and newspaper articles about children in families affected by HIV and AIDS. Divide the children into groups. Ask them to read the stories and then list the problems faced by children, how they try to cope and who helps them.

Finding out more

Ask the group which other children and young people have difficult lives in their community. For example, some children may have a disability. Some may be very poor and have to earn money and not go to

Planning and doing

The children can list and prioritise the main needs of children in families affected by HIV and AIDS. They can then make a plan of action to help each other in the group and to help other children in the community. The box on the next page gives some examples of simple but effective things children have done to help each other in communities in Uganda and Kenya.

HOW CHILDREN HAVE HELPED EACH OTHER

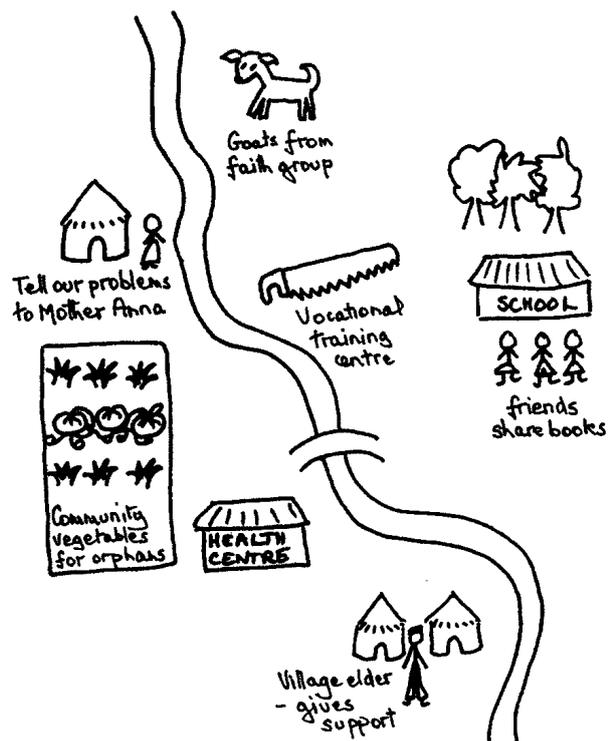
Children have:

- Collected old school uniforms and shoes to give to those children who cannot afford them.
 - Contributed to a fund to help buy stationery and school items for children in need.
 - Convinced their parents or guardians to provide food, as often as possible, to orphans who live alone without adult carers.
 - Supported each other through peer counselling. Often those who have been through difficult experiences are best able to help others.
 - Helped to collect food served at school for their friends who are feeling too weak or sick to queue up.
 - Raised small funds to provide extra nutritious food for children at school who are orphans.
 - Accompanied their friends to the health worker for treatment.
 - Two or three children 'twin' themselves with a child who finds it difficult to come to school. They help the child with their household chores, with schoolwork, and accompany them to school.
 - In some communities, teachers and school authorities, community leaders and religious leaders, have joined children to set up special committees to plan action to help vulnerable children. In some places, children have their own committees.
- Children can make up songs, drama, poems, posters and slogans to show the problems faced by children affected by and living with HIV and AIDS. They can also give positive messages about what children can do to help each other and how adults in the community can support and care for vulnerable children. The children can organise assemblies or community open days to present their work. Teachers or facilitators can help by leading discussion with adults on how they can support children. Posters and slogans can be pasted around the school and community.

Where to go for help

In Uganda, a group of young people wanted to find out where they could get help. They drew a map of their community and drew and wrote on the map all the places where they could get help to cope with the problems of HIV and AIDS in their families. The children also made a list of other resources or services which they needed.

- Old school uniforms.
- Pens and books for school.
- Soap.
- A trusted adult to talk to about their problems.
- Some children in the group may face their own problems. It may help to talk these over with a trusted adult, or with close friends in the group.



- Children can find out what support is available for children from local schools and health centres, from community-based organisations and faith groups and from other individuals. They can draw a map of the community, showing these sources of help. Children can help other children who need support to connect with these services.

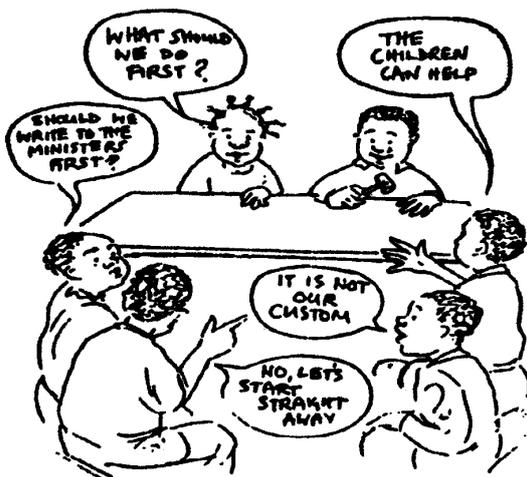
Discussing the results

Children can think about their actions and discuss:

- What have we achieved?
- What support did we get from adults?
- What went well?
- What problems did we face?
- How can we solve these problems?
- Where can we go for further help from adults and from different groups or organisations in the community?
- Did we help just in practical ways or did we also offer friendship and comfort to other children?
- Do we feel better about ourselves? If so, in what ways?
- How can we continue and strengthen this work?

Children can return to visit those children they interviewed earlier.

- Have the activities made any difference in their lives?
- Are they treated any better now by other children and by adults in the community?
- How can the efforts be improved?



Doing it better

This is an ongoing activity. Children face so many different problems related to HIV and AIDS. Children can discuss and identify ways of strengthening the activities they have been doing, and identify new issues which they would like to help with. It is important that these activities offering mutual care and support become part of the life of the school or club. Over time, children will continue to find practical ways in which they can help each other, as individuals and as a group. With the involvement of adults, these activities will help to develop a community which cares for and supports its most vulnerable children.

USING THE SHEET

Teachers and head teachers can use this sheet to develop activities in schools to help meet the needs of orphans and other vulnerable children.

Community groups, faith groups and youth group leaders can discuss these ideas and use them in their activities with children and young people to promote more understanding and better care and support for children in need.

Parents and others in the community can form groups to help orphans and vulnerable children, especially those who are caring for sick parents, or those who are left alone in child-headed households.

Local media can find out more about the lives of orphans and other vulnerable children and raise awareness in the press and on radio and TV.

This Activity Sheet can be used together with Activity Sheets:

- 1.3 Understanding Children's Feelings,
- 6.2 Caring for Children who are Sick, and
- 8.3 Helping Children whose Friends or Relatives Die.