



## NO CHILD SHOULD BE ALONE

### THE IDEA

Children can be excluded, discriminated against and stigmatised for a number of reasons. It is important that other children learn to notice those who are left out, teased or bullied and to understand how they feel. In communities affected by HIV and AIDS, children may face discrimination if they or someone in their family is sick or has died. Often this unkind or cruel behaviour is based on misplaced fear or on ignorance or misconceptions about HIV and AIDS. Children can learn about the facts about HIV and AIDS and overcome these negative reactions.

Children can make a great difference to each other's lives by ensuring other children are included in their activities and by challenging stigma and discrimination. Through participating in this topic, children will be helped to develop empathy for others. They will also feel more confident about helping other children and about seeking help for themselves.

It is important that the Child-to-Child activities are inclusive of all kinds of children. Some children face great challenges, for example, they may be orphaned, very poor, have sick parents, be living with HIV, or have a disability. While needing support themselves, these children have so much to offer other children, because they understand their problems. It also helps these children to feel good about themselves if they have an opportunity to support others.



### Important!

Some of these exercises may raise deep feelings and sad memories in some children. Please make sure that you have with you another adult, who is trusted by the children and has counselling skills and can take individuals for counselling if necessary. This does not need to be a trained counsellor, just a trusted adult from the community with whom the children feel comfortable. It is helpful just to be alongside children when they are unhappy. The adult does not need to solve the problem or stop the child crying, but just to stay with them, listening to them.

## Understanding

Stories can help children to understand their own feelings and the feelings of others.

### *A story about a child being excluded*

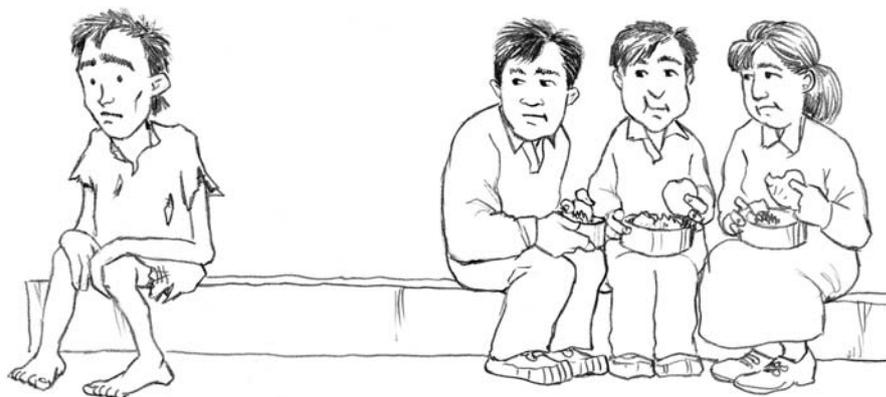
Mary cried all the way home from school. It had been another horrible day. No one spoke to her, except to call out cruel names. No one would sit next to her. No one would share food with her, even though she was often very hungry. Mary was so unhappy. She wanted to leave school.

Last year Mary's father had died. Now her mother was sick. At school the other children shouted that her father had died of AIDS and now her mother has an AIDS-related illness.

Mary worked so hard caring for her mother and her younger brothers. Her mother wanted Mary to continue in school so she could get a good job. Mary did not tell her mother how unhappy she was.

Mary wished the children at school understood more about HIV and AIDS. Even if her parents had AIDS, it did not mean that Mary had HIV too. Other children should know that you can't get HIV by sitting next to someone, by touching them, by sharing food, or by being someone's friend. Mary longed for the other children to be kind and friendly to her.

- After reading the story, ask the children to discuss these questions in groups:
  - Why was Mary unhappy?
  - In what ways did the other children make her feel rejected?
  - Why do you think the other children were unkind?
  - What facts about HIV and AIDS did the other children need to learn?
  - How could Mary's life be improved?
- The children can make up a role-play based on Mary's situation. The role-play can show how a group of children help Mary and teach other children not to discriminate. (If you want to do more on this topic, you can also use Child-to-Child Activity Sheet 1.3 **Understanding Children's Feelings.**)
- Show children the picture below of some children. Ask them to discuss the questions underneath.

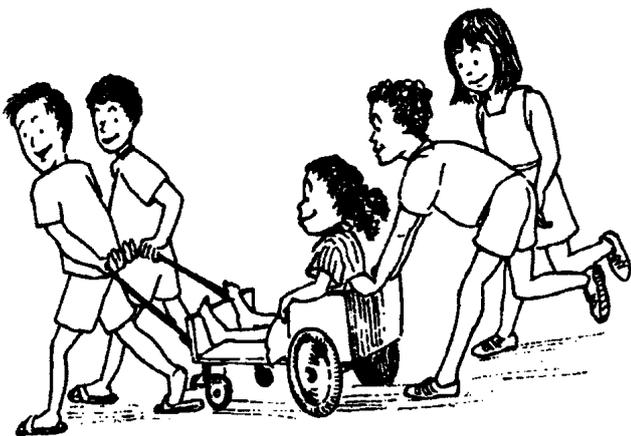


- What is happening in this picture?
- How do you feel about this?
- Is the boy on the left being treated kindly or badly? Why?
- Why do people discriminate against children from families affected by HIV and AIDS? Is this right?
- What can be done to help this child?

*In Uganda, children in primary schools make up dramas, poems and songs to show how it feels to be an orphan or a child living with HIV, who is abused or neglected by adults and other children. These activities help others to understand the vulnerable children's feelings and to change their attitudes towards them.*

## Finding out more

- Children can do a survey in the community. Each child asks five other children for one thing that makes them happy and one thing that makes them sad. Back in the main group, the children can make a list of all the reasons children are happy or sad. Find out which are the most common reasons.
- In groups of four, children can walk through their community. They should try to follow as direct a route as possible (e.g. going north to south) so that they do not follow their usual route. They should note down which children are being excluded from the usual activities where children meet together such as going to school and playing. Why are these children not able to join in these social activities? Back in the main group, discuss a list of reasons.



## Planning and doing

- In groups, choose one reason for happiness and one reason for sadness in children. Decide how they can promote the happy thing and how they can help to prevent or solve the sad thing. Each group

makes a plan of two simple actions they will do over the next month.

For example:

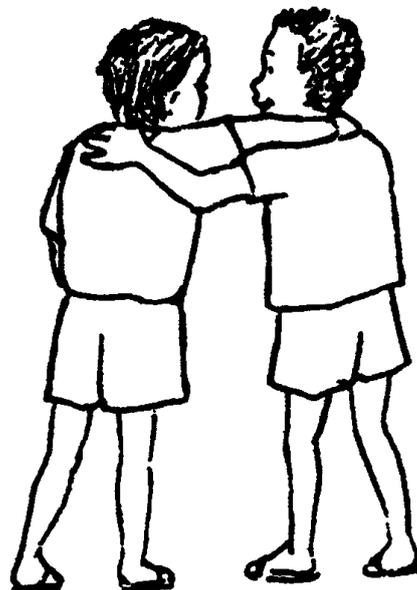
- Reason for happiness: Children have friends to play with in the playground.

**Action:** Two children will be 'on duty' each day to ensure no one is left out or bullied during playtime.

- Reason for sadness: No one will sit next to a child in class because their father recently died of AIDS-related illness.

**Action:** Inform others that children who have lost their parents need special care and friendship. It does not mean that the child has HIV and moreover it is not possible for HIV to spread by sitting next to someone and being their friend.

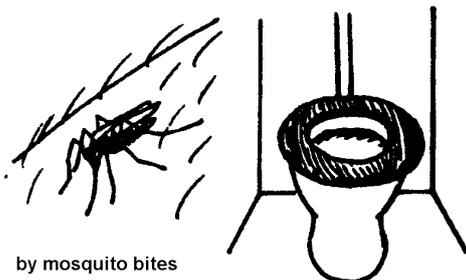
- Ask each child to think of someone they know (at school, in the community or in the family) who they think is left out of activities. How do they know this child feels left out? Each child then writes down what they will do this week to ensure that this person feels included, appreciated and supported by the group.
- Sometimes children face stigma because other children are afraid that they might catch HIV from them. Children in the group can check that they know the correct facts about HIV transmission. They can also make posters and songs to show ways in which HIV is *not* transmitted.



- The facilitator can create a supportive setting for counselling children, with the help of another adult who is trusted by the children. Listen while children tell about their lives. Talk with them about any experiences that they feel good about or may be sad about. How can they help their friends understand what they are going through and what help they need? Would they like to talk more with a trusted adult? Would they like to talk with a friend?

Discuss with the children the importance of confidentiality. This means not talking about another's secrets (for example, if a child tells them that his or her parents are HIV positive). However, children should always report to a trusted adult if they hear that another child is being abused.

### HIV is NOT spread in these ways:



by mosquito bites

from toilet seats



from telephones



by hugging



by kissing



by shaking hands



by sharing cups or cutlery



from coughing

## Discussing the results

- The children can think about and discuss the actions they have taken recently to try to include children who had been left out.

They can ask:

- Have we noticed our own attitudes changing?
- Do we understand more about the feelings of those children who are orphans or have sick family members?
- Have we listened to each other?
- Have we been able to help each other?
- What problems have we faced?
- How could we do better in the future?

## Doing it better

Building a caring environment so that all children feel included and supported is a long-term task. It will be necessary for teachers, group leaders and children to continually review the emotional and social well-being of all children in their community and to see what more can be done. What activities can become a permanent part of school and community life?

## USING THE SHEET

**Teachers and head teachers** can use this sheet to work with children in making the school environment more supportive to orphans and other vulnerable children, in tackling stigma and discrimination and promoting the inclusion of all children.

**Community groups, faith groups and youth group leaders** can discuss these ideas and use them with children and young people to ensure that all children feel welcome and included in their activities.

**Parents and guardians** and others in the community can review these ideas to think about the situation of vulnerable children, especially in families affected by HIV and AIDS.

**Local media** can find out more about the issues of exclusion and stigma and raise awareness through the press, radio and TV. This Activity Sheet can be used together with 1.3 and 1.4 **Understanding Children's Feelings and Helping Children Who Do Not Go To School.**