

Activity 2: Factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS

Purpose: to encourage critical thinking about social and economic factors that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS

Standards:

Social Studies: NCSS standards

IX: Global Connections

English: NCTE standards

1: Reading for perspective

4: Communication skills

8: Developing research skills

12: Applying language skills

Materials:

Activity 2 Student Material: Factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS

Description:

1. Explain to students that AIDS is caused by the HIV virus – but that there are a number of factors that make people more likely to be susceptible to HIV. Ask the class to brainstorm what some of those factors might be.

2. **For middle and high school students:** Distribute the handout “Factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS” to the group to read.

For high school students: Distribute the handout “Factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS” to the group to read. The class may be divided into groups to do additional research on one topic and present their findings to the rest of the class.

3. Divide the class into groups, and have them create a flow chart, story board or other visual representation of the relationship between the various factors that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Activity 2 Student Material

Factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS

AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is caused by a virus known as HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). But there are social and economic conditions that make it more likely that certain people will contract HIV.

Lack of education and information: There are many reasons why people may not be able to get an education. Some lack money for school fees. Some may experience discrimination – for example, education may not be considered important for girls, or ethnic minorities may not have access to education in their own language. Without access to education, and without literacy skills, people may not learn how to prevent HIV infection, which may occur through sexual contact, sharing drug paraphernalia, or mother-to-child transmission.

Read more at

http://www.un.org/ga/aids/ungassfactsheets/html/fseducation_en.htm

Inadequate health care: Many people learn about HIV prevention from their health care provider. But for those who lack insurance, money to pay for health care and drugs, or who live too far from a clinic, it may be difficult to get information about HIV prevention, or to obtain adequate care if they become ill.

Read more at http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/095_aids.html

Poverty: The poor are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because they are less likely to be educated about prevention. If they cannot afford adequate food, they may become malnourished, making them more vulnerable to infection. They are also less likely to be able to afford medical care and drugs if they do become infected.

Read more at <http://youthink.worldbank.org/4kids/aids/aidsstory4.php>

Discrimination: People who face discrimination – whether on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, race or other factors – often find it difficult to obtain jobs that will keep them out of poverty. They may be less likely to go to school or complete school, and may have less access to health care, making

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it less likely that they will know how to protect themselves from HIV infection.

Read more at <http://www.phrusa.org/campaigns/aids/aidsandhr.html>

Women's inequality: In many countries, girls and women have less social status than boys and men. They may be denied the right to go to school or complete their education. They may have little or no choice over who they marry, and may be forced into having sex against their will. When women are not able to control their own bodies or resist pressure to have sex, they are more vulnerable to HIV infection.

Read more at

http://www.un.org/ga/aids/ungassfactsheets/html/fsgender_en.htm

Prostitution: For low-income women with little education, job opportunities may be severely limited. For some, prostitution may be the only way they can support themselves and their families. Women who have sexual contact with a number of men are at greater risk of contracting HIV, especially if they are unable to insist that the men use condoms.

Read more at

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/children/rapporteur/hiv.htm>

War: In countries that experience war and armed conflict, education and health care systems may be disrupted, depriving citizens of information needed to prevent HIV infection, and treatment for those who are infected. Prostitution often increases in conflict zones, as other ways of earning a living may not be possible. And rape is often used by occupying forces to dominate or demoralize; this makes the spread of HIV more likely.

Read more at

http://www.un.org/ga/aids/ungassfactsheets/html/fssecurity_en.htm

"Race and ethnicity are not risk factors. But they are markers for other factors that put people at increased risk, like lack of health insurance and limited access to care."

Paul Denning, M.D., epidemiologist, AIDS Surveillance Branch, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA.