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Activity 6: Taking Action against HIV/AIDS

Purpose: To familiarize students with actions being taken on the HIV/AIDS pandemic globally, and to encourage them to consider actions that they themselves can take.

Standards:

Social Studies

- IV. Individual Development and Identity
- VIII: Science, Technology, and Society
- IX: Global Connections

English Language Arts

- 1: Reading for perspective
- 2: Understanding the human experience
- 4: Communication skills
- 8: Developing research skills
- 12: Applying language skills

Materials:

Activity 6 Student Material: Taking Action Against HIV/AIDS

Activity 6 Student Material: Youth Activists

Description:

1. Ask students if they have heard about examples of action that are being taken to address HIV/AIDS around the world.
2. Distribute the handout “Taking Action Against HIV/AIDS”. Have students read the handout. They may wish to do additional research on the various strategies described.
3. Have students write the names of each of the six strategies – “Development of a vaccine”, “Promoting gender equality”, etc. – on index cards. Ask students to rank the six cards in a “pyramid” formation, with the strategy they think is most important at the top, two moderately important strategies beneath that, and the three strategies of lesser importance at the bottom:

1

2

2

Note: The object of the ranking is not to decide on which is the most or least important strategy, but to encourage discussion, and to enable students to discover the relationships between the strategies.

4. Have students discuss how they ranked their cards and why.

5. Explain to the class that they will consider actions that young people can take in their own communities to address HIV/AIDS. Distribute the “Youth Activists” handout for students to read.

6. Have the class discuss:

- What qualities do the two youth activists seem to have?
- What are characteristics of good action projects?

7. Ask the class to brainstorm ways that they might take action on the issue of HIV/AIDS, on a local, national or global level. Possible ideas include:

- Volunteer with a local organization that works with people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Organize a “day of action” and write to elected officials to encourage them to support HIV/AIDS research, and programs for people affected by HIV/AIDS, in the US and abroad.
- Raise funds for a local, national or international organization that is working on HIV/AIDS.
- Participate in UNICEF’s Voices of Youth discussion on HIV/AIDS at <http://www.unicef.org/voy/discussions/forumdisplay.php?f=1>
- See also the “Ideas for World AIDS Day Whole School Events” section of this unit.

Follow-up activities:

1. Have students write a dialog between individuals who differ in their views on one of the strategies for addressing HIV/AIDS. For example:

- A conversation between a health care worker who thinks drug companies should make medication for people with HIV available at a reduced cost in severely affected countries, and a drug company representative who argues that prices must reflect the actual costs of developing the drug.
- A conversation between two health educators, one who thinks that educating women to be more informed and assertive is a priority, and another who thinks that changing men’s attitudes to be more respectful of women’s right not to be pressured into sexual activity should be the priority.

The dialogs can be performed in front of the class.

2. Have students research the role of individual UN programs, funds or agencies in combating HIV/AIDS. A listing of these bodies can be found in the **Resources for Teachers** section.

Activity 6 Student Material

Taking action against HIV/AIDS

Many types of action can, and must be taken in order to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS. No one strategy alone can be effective. Some possible actions include:

Improving education for prevention

Preventing HIV infection is far less expensive than providing care and treatment. Education programs work: Uganda has cut its HIV prevalence rates significantly—from an estimated 14% in the early 1990s to around 8% in 2000—thanks to extensive preventive education campaigns that involved schools, health care professions, and other parts of the community. Read more at http://www.un.org/ga/aids/ungassfactsheets/html/fseducation_en.htm

Promoting gender equality

Health information must be provided in ways that is culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of women. In addition to information, education for both boys and girls should promote equality and mutually respectful attitudes and behavior in sexual relationships. Read more at http://www.un.org/ga/aids/ungassfactsheets/html/fsgender_en.htm
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs242/en/>

Improving access to anti-retroviral drugs

Without treatment, AIDS is fatal. However, a group of drugs called “anti-retrovirals” can change HIV infection from a death sentence to a manageable condition. However, these drugs are expensive. For people without insurance, the drugs may not be affordable. In developing countries, the cost of a month’s supply of these drugs may be more than a person’s yearly income. Encouraging drug manufacturers to supply these drugs at cost, and encouraging the development of cheaper generic drugs, are important in fighting the pandemic. Read more at <http://www.who.int/3by5/en/>
<http://www.aids2004.org/admin/images/upload/527.pdf>

Development of a vaccine

Top scientists from around the world are committed to developing a vaccine that would prevent transmission of the disease. Clinical trials of vaccines are going on in Thailand, the Netherlands, Canada, Trinidad and the United States. Read more at http://www.un.org/ga/aids/ungassfactsheets/html/fsvaccine_en.htm

http://www.who.int/vaccine_research/diseases/hiv/en/

Reducing poverty and providing debt relief

Poverty increases risk factors for contracting HIV, and poverty increases in countries where HIV is widespread. All efforts to reduce poverty have the potential to lessen the spread of HIV. In some developing countries that have high debt to foreign donors, partial reduction of debt is a way of freeing more financial resources for prevention, care and treatment efforts. Read more at

<http://www.unaids.org/en/in+focus/topic+areas/debt+relief.asp>

<http://youthink.worldbank.org/issues/debt/>

Increasing political will

Since the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS in 2001, and the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment, a Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has been set up, and countries around the world have pledged funds. But funding for AIDS programs in developing countries still need to be increased. An estimated US\$ 7-10 billion per year is needed to stem the tide of AIDS, but only about half that is actually being spent. Government must hear from their citizens that stopping HIV/AIDS is a priority. Read more at

<http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/about/aids/default.asp>

<http://www.un.org/ga/aids/coverage/FinalDeclarationHIVAIDS.html>

Activity 6 Student Material

Youth Activists

Kennedy from Kenya

Kennedy was only 10 years old when both his parents died of AIDS. Kennedy went to live with his grandmother. Because three of Kennedy's aunts had also died of AIDS, his grandmother cared for a total of 12 grandchildren. In Kibera, a slum in Nairobi, Kenya, one in five people is infected with HIV, and thousands have died, leaving behind 50,000 orphans.

Because of his experience, Kennedy has decided to stay healthy himself and to teach other young people about how to avoid HIV infection. He belongs to a club that passes on information through group talks, sports, plays and concerts. In Kibera, football is very popular among boys and young men. Kennedy plays for the team organized by the Kibera Community Self-Help Programme. After football games, the teams gather to discuss information about HIV and AIDS.

This story is adapted from UNICEF's Voices of Youth website. To read more about Kennedy, visit http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/aids/explore_205.html

Carina from Guatemala

Carina belongs to a theatre group that stages performances about AIDS for teenagers and street children in Guatemala City, where it is estimated that 67,000 Guatemalan children and adults are infected with HIV, and more than 30,000 children have been orphaned by the disease.

As well as taking part in the performances on the streets, at schools and at juvenile detention centers, Carina holds workshops at her home, talking to fellow teenagers about how HIV is transmitted and how they can protect themselves. She also goes out at night with a person from a local non-governmental organization to offer young people on the streets basic medical care and health information.

This story is adapted from UNICEF's Voices of Youth website. To read more about Carina, visit http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/aids/explore_204.html

