

HIV: POSITIVE LIVING

POVERTY

Poverty is not just a result of crops not growing and rich people not sharing. There are political systems at work in the world that keep injustice strong and people poor. But, with your help, Christian Aid has a vision to eradicate these systems and declare poverty over – now, not just in the future.

Tell me more

Think HIV only affects people who sleep around, take drugs or live in Africa? Think again:

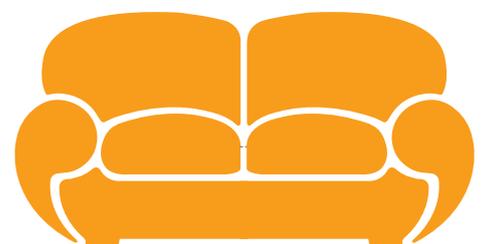
- in 2007, around 7,700 people (that's the equivalent of more than 100 packed double-decker buses) in the UK became infected with HIV²
- worldwide, around 33 million people live with HIV³
- young people aged 15-24 account for nearly half of all new infections worldwide.⁴

Still, you're a Christian, HIV is not likely to affect you, is it? But, hang on, if you're a Christian then you've got an obligation. Didn't Jesus ask us to look out for the poor and the hurting? In the developing world, HIV is fuelling the fire of poverty, ripping families apart and trashing decades of development work.

When you have nothing, your priority is to stay alive. If sex work will feed you and your children today, you don't worry about an infection that might kill you years later. Without money, opportunities for education are limited – you have to work instead of going to school, or your family may be too poor to pay for the equipment and uniform you need – so people don't learn about HIV. And stigma grows. People with HIV lose their jobs, their family, their friends. The result? People would rather not know if they have HIV. And who can blame them? But this means they unknowingly pass it on.

A child is orphaned by AIDS every 14 seconds.¹

'I don't worry about it. If we are both positive, I can live with it. I can tolerate anything as long as we are together.'
Raja from Nayandanahalli slum in India, whose wife Munniyamma found out she was HIV-positive (as a result of a previous rape) when she was pregnant with their first child. Raja has not contracted HIV.



If you're HIV-positive and you're a UK or Irish citizen, you'll get the drugs (anti-retrovirals) you need to remain healthy for longer. But if you live in a developing country, the chances are you won't get treatment. So teenagers die, children die, parents die. Often overloaded grandparents pick up the pieces. Or children orphaned by AIDS are left to look after themselves. Many don't make it.

Depressing, isn't it? But it doesn't need to be. Change begins with a single step. And this could be it.

Kick off

Check out www.christianaid.org.uk/sofasesions for icebreaker ideas.

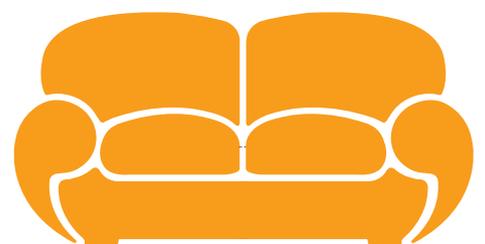
Talk it out

These questions can be used if you need to prompt conversation or steer the discussion if it veers wildly off course. For more tips, go to www.christianaid.org.uk/sofasesions

1. Is it a person's own fault if they get HIV? Are there 'worthier' causes you could focus on?
2. Why does HIV mainly affect poor countries?
3. Imagine that the person you marry becomes HIV-positive. Without knowing it, they infect you. Could you forgive?
4. People who are HIV-positive aren't allowed in to certain countries – prejudice or precaution? Why?
5. Is there stigma in the UK and Ireland towards people with HIV? How is this played out? Why does this stigma exist?
6. How would you react if your friend told you they were HIV positive and asked you to pray for them? What would you pray?
7. If you could only push one message, abstinence or condoms, which would you choose? Why?
8. What Christian or faith-based HIV projects do you know about? What more could Christian organisations do?
9. Is there any point trying to fight HIV? It's always going to be around, isn't it?
10. Look up Luke 8:43-48. In biblical times, women who were bleeding for any reason were considered 'unclean'. No self-respecting person would let a bleeding woman anywhere near them. But what is Jesus' reaction to this woman who touched him? How could you follow Jesus' lead towards someone with HIV?

Every day almost 2,000 mothers pass HIV to their babies.⁵ Other people become infected through blood transfusions. Many more (mainly women) contract the virus from their spouse playing away. Whatever the cause, is it our job to love or to judge? For a biblical perspective, look up Luke 6:42.

In Uganda, the number of new HIV infections dive-bombed from 15 per cent of the population to around five per cent following an HIV-awareness and practical action campaign.⁶



Reflect

The 'HIV: positive living' visual reflection on the *Sofa Sessions* DVD and online at www.christianaid.org.uk/sofasesions can follow on from discussion.

Less talk, more action

The UN says that we're at least US\$11.3bn short of the money we need to deal with HIV globally.⁷ That's a lot of money. But then so is the US\$238m the UK spends online each day,⁸ the US\$10bn every year that women in the UK spend on clothes, shoes and accessories they'll never wear,⁹ and the US\$33bn that the UK government is expected to have spent on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by the end of 2010.¹⁰

And that's just the UK. If all developed countries' governments and their citizens redirected just a tiny amount of their yearly spending, we'd have the money we need to check the spread of HIV and provide treatment for those who need it.

Money is one thing. But to kill the stigma that allows HIV to thrive and people to remain untested, it's going to take something more. Check out the 'HIV: positive living' section of www.christianaid.org.uk/sofasesions for ways to use your time, money, prayers and energy to make a difference.

Imagine the courage it takes to be the first people to say publicly you are living with HIV in a country where such a diagnosis can mean family rejection, losing your job and being hounded from your home.

Rosa Gonzalez and her husband, Alan Dunaway, in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, displayed that courage when they founded the group *Fundación Llaves*, a Christian Aid partner. The group's lobbying, campaigning and media activities helped persuade the Honduran government to provide life-saving antiretroviral (ARV) medicines free.

In the five years from 2003-2008, the number of people taking ARVs in Honduras increased by 2,600 per cent and the HIV-mortality rate has plummeted.

1 www.globalaidsalliance.org/page/-/PDFs/OVC_factsheet_new.pdf

2 www.avert.org/aids-uk.htm

3 http://aidsalliance.3cdn.net/83e598ecdabca06971_fbm6bnx9s.pdf

4 Ibid.

5 www.globalaidsalliance.org/page/-/PDFs/OVC_factsheet_new.pdf

6 www.avert.org/aidsuganda.htm

7 *What Countries Need: Investments Needed for 2010 Targets*, UNAIDS, 2009 http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2009/JC1681_what_countries_need_en.pdf

8 <http://news.scotsman.com/latestnews/-UK-shoppers-spend-145m.4301672.jp>

9 www.Bigwardrobe.com

10 Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, 'The Three Trillion Dollar War', 2008, see www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article3419840.ece

Sources correct August 2009.

