



HIV IS A  
VIRUS



## SAFER PRACTICES

It is important to follow safer practices, which can include correct and consistent condom use, abstinence and faithfulness. Yet the realities and complexities of life mean that accurate information must go hand in hand with the skills and ability to negotiate safer practices. There must be access to all prevention methods, including sterile needles for those who inject, testing of blood transfusions for HIV and prevention of transmission from mother to child.



## ACCESS TO TREATMENT

Everyone who is HIV-positive has a right to treatment and medication. Antiretroviral therapy (ART) – a combination of drugs that fight HIV – can help people manage their condition and prolong life. It is also important that medication for HIV-related opportunistic infections, such as tuberculosis and pneumonia, is available. For HIV treatment to work, people receiving it must have a healthy lifestyle, clean water and the means to follow a nutritious diet.



## **VOLUNTARY COUNSELLING AND TESTING**

These services should be available to anyone who needs them. Information and support can help people who are HIV-negative to stay free of the virus, while assisting those who are HIV-positive to take the necessary steps to stay well, get the treatment they need, and avoid transmitting HIV to others.



## EMPOWERMENT

People who have access to accurate information on HIV and support to uphold their rights can make informed decisions about the way they lead their lives in order to protect themselves and others. Empowerment and defending the rights of women and other marginalised groups are particularly key to stopping the spread of HIV.





## Where the need is greatest...

The majority of new infections are among young people, particularly women, who often have an inferior economic and social position. HIV-prevention programmes must empower women and girls to make their own decisions relating to sex, while encouraging men to be supportive of this.



HIV infection rates are also much higher among groups that are already discriminated against, such as sex workers, men who have sex with men and injecting drug users. Violations or lack of attention to human rights – for example, harmful traditional practices, and violence against women – can increase people's vulnerability to HIV.

Christian Aid partners have developed non-judgmental prevention and care services for these groups, based on the defence of human rights for all.



## Overcoming stigma and discrimination

Millions of people living with HIV are denied their rights to health, work, and education due to discrimination. The stigma attached to the virus can be so great that people are often reluctant to learn their HIV status or reveal it if positive.



HIV must not be kept hidden or treated as shameful. Being open about one's status is an important way to challenge stigma and discrimination. Christian Aid partners work with people with HIV to support those who want to be open about their status, and also with faith and community leaders, governments and others to ensure that people's human rights are respected.

## HIV treatment works!

ART is hugely successful in allowing HIV-positive people to lead healthy and productive lives. We also continue to see evidence of HIV treatment playing a role in HIV prevention, including preventing its transmission from mother to child. As ART becomes more readily available, increasing numbers of people are willing to be tested. This means that those with a positive status learn of this earlier and can then prevent transmission to others by adopting safer practices. They can also seek HIV treatment, which lowers viral load, making them less infectious.

People on ART must commit to taking the correct dosage at the right time, every day, for the rest of their lives, and should continue to practise safe sex to prevent any possibility of transmitting the virus to others.

Christian Aid partners provide support and counselling, helping people to take their treatment successfully. They also give physical, spiritual, emotional and socio-economic support to people with HIV and their families. The work of these partners empowers those with the virus to access the necessary care, support and medical services in their own homes and communities.

Top to bottom: in Honduras, student volunteer Wendy Rodriguez Pineda shows other students how to follow safer practices, such as condom use (Christian Aid/Sian Curry); tubs of life-saving anti-retroviral drugs at the Episcopal Church's rapid HIV testing clinic in San Pedro Sula, Honduras (Christian Aid/Sian Curry); Ivrance Martine works in Christian Aid partner Onè Respé's health centre in the Dominican Republic, providing sexual and reproductive health advice, and running a Haitian women's counselling and support group (Christian Aid/Sophie Richmond); in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Christian Aid partner FFP provides Clarisse Binga (12), who was born with HIV, with food, school fees and counselling (Christian Aid/Tom Stoddart/Getty Images)



One of our partner organisations is INERELA+, an international network of religious leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS. This pioneering group links leaders of different faiths to challenge stigma and discrimination. In 2003, the leaders of ANERELA+, the African network, developed the SAVE message, since adopted by Christian Aid and other NGOs and governments.

## What sets us apart

Christian Aid supports people with HIV to live life to the full, working to prevent transmission, and challenging the fear and secrecy that surround the virus. We also support organisations to address other poverty-related diseases, such as tuberculosis and malaria, which particularly affect people with HIV.

Christian Aid has a unique network of faith-based partner organisations working on HIV, ranging from those responding from a theological perspective, to those advocating for comprehensive prevention strategies, and others directly supporting people and faith leaders with the virus.

Christian Aid supports HIV projects that:

- are comprehensive, evidence-based, and tackle the root causes of HIV
- understand the need for women to have more power
- challenge faith and community leaders, faith-based organisations and governments not to treat HIV as a moral issue
- prioritise HIV-prevention work with the most vulnerable groups
- enable people to access the medication, nutrition, counselling, improved income opportunities and care they need
- promote justice and the defence of human rights, and strive to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all.

# NOT A MORAL ISSUE

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**'Finally, we have an organisation, Christian Aid, supporting partners to address those critical issues that have been missing from institutional conversations, policy discourses, faith community pulpits, country budgets and global partnerships on HIV and AIDS'**

**Canon Gideon B Byamugisha  
Christian Aid Goodwill Ambassador on HIV and AIDS**

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives.

Christian Aid has a vision – an end to poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality. We urge you to join us.

Christian Aid is a leading British and Irish development agency, working in about 50 countries to eradicate poverty and its causes. We work with local grassroots organisations to prevent HIV transmission and defend the rights of people living with the virus.

UK registered charity no. 1105851 Company no. 5171525

Scot charity no. SC039150

NI charity no. XR94639 Company no. N1059154

ROI charity no. CHY 6998 Company no. 426928

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