



# issue brief

## What Is It?

HIV (or Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). The virus is passed from one person to another through blood-to-blood and sexual contact. HIV damages the immune system, the part of the body that fights infection. Eventually, the immune system becomes so weak that diseases and infections begin to attack the body. As these conditions worsen, a person is diagnosed with AIDS.

HIV/AIDS can be treated, but not cured. Not yet. Here are some statistics:

- 33 million people in the world live with HIV/AIDS and the vast majority are unaware of their HIV status
- About 12 million young people between 15 to 24 live with HIV/AIDS
- 6,800 more people are infected with HIV every day! Almost half of them are under 25!
- Young women are about three times more vulnerable to HIV infection than their male peers
- 2 million people died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2007
- 2.5 million people became infected with HIV in 2007
- 96% of infected people live in developing countries
- Since HIV was first documented in 1981, more than 25 million people (men, women and children) have died of AIDS-related illnesses

## Why Should I Care?

People infected with HIV/AIDS live in nearly every country in the world. In some countries, like Botswana and Swaziland, almost 40% of the population has HIV/AIDS.

The virus continues to spread. Epidemics have erupted in China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, several Central Asian Republics and the Baltic States.

HIV/AIDS is not just a health problem, but also a development problem. How? By spreading fast mostly to young people and working-age adults, HIV/AIDS affects the economy, society, family and schooling in a country, weakening the country as a whole.

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## Why Should I Care? (continued)

When 8% or more of a population becomes infected with HIV, the growth of the economy slows down, according to a World Bank study. This is because the labor force gets reduced and demands on the already overwhelmed government, economic and health care systems increase.

Poor countries are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because:

- They often don't have good resources to treat and help HIV patients.
- Their health care systems are most likely already overburdened (or aren't well developed).
- This makes it nearly impossible to provide expensive treatment to a growing HIV-infected population.
- HIV/AIDS medication is often very expensive, not available everywhere in the world and poor countries can't afford it.
- Basic care and treatment for a HIV/AIDS patient can cost as much as 2–3 times per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in the poorest countries.
- Resources for educating the public about risky behavior (which often leads to HIV infections) are equally limited.
- People and societies in general are often reluctant to talk about risky behavior because it touches upon societal taboos and often goes against societal norms.

A growing number of children are orphaned by AIDS. In Africa alone, 13 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS. The number of AIDS orphans could jump to 25 million by 2010, according to the United Nations. These orphans are less likely to attend school, receive good nourishment or proper health-care, and non-secure positions, with few benefits or prospects for advancement. These jobs often don't provide an income sufficient to cover basic necessities.

## What Is the International Community Doing?

The World Bank and other international organizations recognize that the spread of HIV is a major global development problem.

## THINK ABOUT IT

**Imagine ...** Your mother or father has HIV and has become too sick to work. As the oldest child, many adult responsibilities become yours: caring for the sick parent, looking after your brothers and sisters, taking care of the house, earning money, putting food on the table. Meanwhile, there isn't enough money to buy the needed medicines for your mother or father. Preparing for your future is put aside to survive the present; school and job training become a "luxury."

## IT'S A FACT

**South Africa** has most people infected with AIDS. India is second.

**The Caribbean** has the world's highest HIV rate outside sub-Saharan Africa.

**Eastern Europe and Central Asia** have the fastest growing HIV/AIDS epidemics today.

**Brazil, Thailand and Uganda** are countries that had high infection rates but have been successful in controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS. For example, Thailand reduced annual new HIV infections from 140,000 in 1995 to 30,000 in 2001.

## MULTIMEDIA



On the Youthink! website ([youthink.worldbank.org/multimedia/](http://youthink.worldbank.org/multimedia/)), you will find several photo galleries, quizzes and audio about the issue of HIV/AIDS.

## What Is the International Community Doing? (continued)

The World Bank works with other international organizations, like UNAIDS ([www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)), World Health Organization ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)), and Street Kids International ([www.streetkids.org](http://www.streetkids.org)) to:

- Create national health policies to treat and respond to HIV/AIDS
- Expand care and treatment for those affected by HIV/AIDS, and their families
- Improve AIDS education, teacher training, and social programs
- Protect children whose parents have died of AIDS
- Fund international research for an AIDS vaccine through organizations such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS ([www.theglobalfund.org](http://www.theglobalfund.org)), Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM, [www.theglobalfund.org](http://www.theglobalfund.org)) and International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI, [www.iavi.org](http://www.iavi.org))

Since 2002, the Bank has committed approximately US\$2.1 billion through grants, loans, and credits to programs to fight HIV/AIDS. The Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program (MAP) for Africa has made available US\$1.5 billion to 33 countries, including five sub-regional (multi-country) initiatives. Total Bank financing for HIV/AIDS since 1988 is around US\$4 billion.

## What Can I Do?

Talking about HIV/AIDS can be very difficult, but it can also be a matter of life and death. You and others in your community should feel comfortable talking about HIV/AIDS. Keeping quiet about it makes it even more difficult to prevent HIV from spreading further. Many young people don't believe HIV is a threat to them, and many others don't know how to protect themselves from HIV.

We can all help to reduce the spread of the disease and its impact on everyday life, and remove the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS.

**1. First, Protect Yourself!** This is your only life.

- Check out the very honest MTV website on Sexual Health ([www.mtv.com/thinkmtv/sexual\\_health/](http://www.mtv.com/thinkmtv/sexual_health/)) for more information.
- Learn more about youth and HIV/AIDS on the Youth Net Project website ([www.fhi.org/en/Youth/YouthNet/](http://www.fhi.org/en/Youth/YouthNet/)).
- Ask a health advisor your own questions about HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases by visiting Go Ask Alice ([www.goaskalice.columbia.edu](http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu)).

**2. Teach Others To Protect Themselves.** Many people still don't know how HIV is transmitted or that it is preventable.

- Teach others in your community, or search through the volunteer opportunities on the Idealist website ([www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)) clearinghouse.
- Learn about and donate to organizations in your own country that work with AIDS orphans by visiting Albina's Action for Orphans ([www.actionfororphans.org](http://www.actionfororphans.org)).

### What Can I Do? (continued)

- Talk to other young AIDS activists about HIV/AIDS issues on Taking it Global ([discussv5.takingitglobal.org](http://discussv5.takingitglobal.org)), or the Center for the Study of AIDS ([www.csa.za.org/article/articlestatic/7/1/2/](http://www.csa.za.org/article/articlestatic/7/1/2/)) forums.

**3. Respect Those Who Are Infected.** People infected by the HIV virus would never ask for it. Please learn to respect those with HIV/AIDS.

Visit the very informative and internationally active Advocates for Youth website ([www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)) for more information about what you, your family, teachers and peers can do to learn to respect and protect others from the many stigmas attached to HIV and AIDS.

**4. Get Involved.** The world can beat HIV/AIDS, but we need concerned citizens like you to get involved. If you're ready to make a real difference in people's lives, check out the sites on this page for ideas on how you can help.

World AIDS Day is the international day of action on HIV and AIDS that takes place every year on December 1st. To find out how you can participate, visit the following websites:

- World AIDS Day Web Site ([www.worldaidsday.org](http://www.worldaidsday.org))
- World Bank: World AIDS Day ([www.worldbank.org/worldaidsday/](http://www.worldbank.org/worldaidsday/))

Here are several other sites with information about how to get involved in the fight against AIDS:

- AVERT.org: AIDS Orphans ([www.avert.org/aidsorphans.htm](http://www.avert.org/aidsorphans.htm))
- Net AID: Join the Fight Against Poverty and AIDS ([www.netaid.org/global\\_poverty/hiv-aids/](http://www.netaid.org/global_poverty/hiv-aids/))
- UNAIDS: The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS ([www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org))
- World Bank HIV/AIDS ([www.worldbank.org/aids](http://www.worldbank.org/aids))
- Youth AIDS: Protecting Youth Around the World From HIV/AIDS ([www.youthaids.org](http://www.youthaids.org))

### THINK ABOUT IT

#### World Wide Drugs Debate

HIV/AIDS medicine research is mostly done by the world's leading pharmaceutical companies. They view this research and the HIV/AIDS medicine they manufacture as their **intellectual property (IP)\*** and sell the medicine for a lot of money. Some countries capable of producing this medicine, like Brazil and India, want to make generic versions of these expensive brand-name drugs. But pharmaceutical companies won't let them because of IP issues. People are looking for a compromise and say that pharmaceutical companies should sell their medicine at full cost to other rich countries that can afford it, but significantly reduce the cost for poor countries, especially those with a high number of HIV-infected people.

\*Learn more about intellectual property by visiting the Trade section of the Youthink! website ([youthink.worldbank.org/issues/](http://youthink.worldbank.org/issues/))

### LEARN MORE

Check out these sites to learn more about HIV/AIDS.

**AIDS 2006: Youth Site**  
[youth.aids2006.org](http://youth.aids2006.org)

**Global Youth Partners: Preventing HIV**  
[www.unfpa.org/hiv/gyp/](http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/gyp/)

**UNAIDS: The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS**  
[womenandaids.unaids.org](http://womenandaids.unaids.org)

**UNIFEM: Gender and HIV/AIDS**  
[www.genderandaids.org](http://www.genderandaids.org)