

“Five teenagers contract HIV/AIDS every minute around the world”

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND HIV/AIDS

- **You should not have sex if you are not ready.** Before having sex, learn how to prevent pregnancy and protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Many girls become pregnant and have to abandon school, but can only get low-paying jobs while struggling to care for their child.
- **Make your own decisions about sex.** Do not do it because your friends are. Being sexually active will not make your friends like you more than they already do. A true friend will love and support you the way you are.
- **If you are having sex, be safe.** Using condoms is essential to protecting you and your partner from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.
- **Be wary of friends, acquaintances and strangers who offer you jobs in other cities.** Some exploiters may come to your village or town to offer jobs in another location, saying that they want to ‘help poor families’. They may say that the child or teenager will be able to work and bring back good money for the family, or receive professional training. This is not always true!
- **Do not get lured by money, gifts, clothes, mobile phones or jewelry in return for sex.** Paid sex, even occasionally, with friends or people you already know can get you in serious trouble: it entraps you in a lifestyle that can only be maintained through more paid sex and gradually destroys your self esteem and self respect
- **Remember: you are not ‘worse’ than other people** if you (or someone in your family) has HIV or has had sex for money. You deserve respect and love, just like anyone else. Do not be afraid to seek help.
- **Be sure to tell someone you trust if you have been raped,** sexually abused or sexually harassed. Sexual abuse is a serious crime and you can seek help from trusted adults who can assist you and inform the relevant authorities. Do not let your abuser make you or other people suffer.
- **If you are a girl, do not believe that you are of less worth than a boy.** Girls do not have to do things they do not want to, and have the same rights to education, healthcare, jobs,

fair treatment and happiness as everyone else.

- **Continuing with school has its rewards.** Education will give you the information and skills needed for work and a better future. School will also give you valuable personal information on sexuality and development, including how to avoid becoming pregnant or infected by HIV.
- **Know your HIV status.** By checking and detecting HIV at an early stage, infected people can get access to adequate treatment and prevent the development of AIDS and other diseases. There is no need to be afraid: most clinics and voluntary counselling and testing centres (VCTs) are trained to help teenagers and young people with the HIV test, and to provide friendly and adequate treatment as necessary.
- If you have a **sexually transmitted infection**, you are more susceptible to HIV, as you may have undetectable wounds that allow HIV to easily enter your body. If you see any changes in your body or on your sexual organs, such as wounds, abnormal discharge or blisters, see a doctor immediately.

“I am not sure I know how to use condoms...”

- You can ask someone from a health clinic, school or your family. See below where you can get more information.
- Condom packs have instructions on how to use them.
- You can roll the condom onto different objects to see how exactly it works.

“AIDS has no cure. We all need to protect ourselves. Always use condoms when having sex.”

“I AM A TEENAGER AND MAY SOON FACE DECISIONS ABOUT SEX...”



“HOW CAN I PREVENT FALLING INTO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION??...”

“HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM HIV/AIDS?”

You or someone you know may be facing some of the following situations:

I am uncomfortable in school because teachers and/or students pressure me for sex Many schoolchildren and young people drop out of school because they suffer sexual abuse from teachers, classmates and people from the neighbourhood. Sometimes they are offered money or better grades in exchange for sex, or are forced to have sex if they refuse. These actions can cause feelings of self-worth, sadness and pain.

I am caught in a situation where I am being used for sex Many children and teenagers around the world are forced to have sex or are deceived or tricked into having sex through false promises. This generally happens with someone in their immediate surroundings – close relatives, neighbours, work managers and in some cases teachers or other responsible adults. As a result of this abuse, the children may feel ashamed, worthless or depressed and may not trust other people around them. Some may turn to harmful behaviour that may lead them to prostitution. In some cases, sexual abuse involves sex without condoms, which can lead to contraction of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

My parents are no longer able to provide and money is limited When parents fall sick or die from AIDS, many children and teenagers have to work to buy medicines or to provide for their families. It is hard for them to find a good job as they lack the necessary skills. They may work as domestic servants, barmaids or street vendors, where they may become vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation by employers and other adults whom they meet in these working situations. Young people in such situations are often easy targets for those seeking to recruit children for prostitution, as they need money and

are unaware that they are being entrapped for exploitation in prostitution and of the dangerous consequences that this brings.

I do not always have sex with condoms Access to condoms is very limited for most teenagers and young people, and can also be expensive. Most believe they are in a monogamous relationship and that their partner does not have HIV, and therefore decide to have sex without condoms: but many people do not know their HIV status.

I went to the voodoo convent Some girls are forced to stay in a special ‘convent’ in order to be initiated into voodoo practices or to serve the voodoo. Many suffer sexual abuse, and end up running away. They can then be rejected by their families and become further vulnerable to exploitation in prostitution.

My family and I are affected by HIV/AIDS Many children from households where parents are sick or die from AIDS are stigmatised by neighbours, employers, friends and even family members. They may have difficulties continuing school or finding jobs and may feel ashamed, rejected or isolated as a result. They may be vulnerable to prostitution and easily persuaded by adults and even by friends who want to make a profit from their situation.

I went to the voodoo convent Leaving the school system with very basic abilities and without skills to earn a living greatly limits a young person’s livelihood options. They may be offered help (through prostitution) by adults and even by friends who want to profit from their difficult situation. They may also be offered work in another town, only to be forced into prostitution once they arrive. In these cases, they may suffer violence and lose ties with their family and community and the chance for safe work and a better life. Children and teenagers who become involved in prostitution are at great risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and often lack access to information on protecting themselves against it.

I was forced to marry Young girls offered for marriage, usually in return for a dowry, may contract HIV from their husbands. Some girls run away from or are abandoned by their husbands and parents: without support and in need of money, they are easily exploited in prostitution for survival.

I do not know much about HIV/AIDS Many people still believe that it is safe to have sex without condoms, even with people who do not appear to be sick or do not exhibit any of the HIV symptoms that they have heard about, such as a grey complexion, rashes, etc. They are unaware that people who look healthy may still have HIV and transmit it. In

addition, many do not even know how to use condoms, or that HIV can be transmitted in many ways, such as through direct contact with body fluids or by sharing needles. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection: young women aged 15 to 24 are three to four times more likely to become infected than young men.

I am already involved in prostitution Young people are highly susceptible to prostitution when they begin accepting gifts, money or any form of compensation for sex. It may happen occasionally and with people they already know (e.g. an older man, a friend, a teacher) or more regularly, with strangers on the street, in entertainment establishments or brothels. In all these situations the young person is being sexually exploited and suffers great risks, such as contracting HIV/AIDS or STIs. Exploiters (or ‘friends’) know that children and young people in these situations have serious needs and can be vulnerable to pressure and therefore easily forced, with threats or offers of more money, gifts or favours, to have unprotected sex. Children and teenagers involved in prostitution also experience more violence and are often raped, thereby greatly increasing their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Children and youth in these situations rarely report such abuses nor seek medical care, for fear of the police or other people finding out.

If you (or someone you know) wants more information or are in any way affected by HIV/AIDS, rape, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation in prostitution, you can get confidential help by contacting:

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