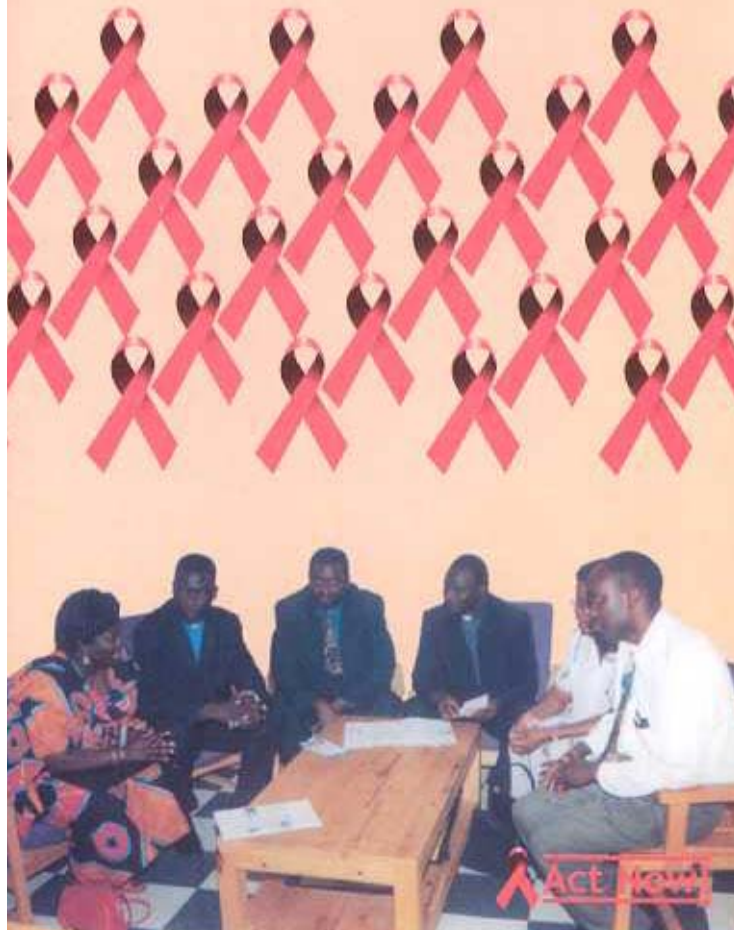


**Leaders  
In the frontline  
against  
HIV and AIDS**



## FACTS ABOUT HIV/AIDS

AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is caused by HIV (human immuno-deficiency virus).

### How does HIV enter the body?

HIV enters the body through contact with blood and body fluids of an infected person. Most people get HIV infection in the following ways:



1. From semen and vaginal fluids during unprotected sex without a condom.



2. Receiving blood which has HIV in it.



3. Skin piercing instruments which have HIV.



4. From an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, labour, delivery and breastfeeding.

You cannot get HIV by living together, shaking hands, eating together, using the same toilet or latrine, sleeping in the same room, using the same plates or playing games with an HIV-positive person.

HIV attacks and weakens the immune system, leaving the body unable to defend itself, and open to attack by diseases.

## Is HIV the same as AIDS?

No. HIV is not AIDS. You may live with HIV in your body for 15 or more years without knowing it, and without feeling any illness. During this period, an infected person can pass on the virus to the people he or she has sexual intercourse with.

**AIDS:** HIV eventually weakens the body's immunity, leaving the body open to infections. When an infected person begins to suffer from diseases because his or her immunity has been weakened by HIV, we say that the person has AIDS. Even after developing AIDS, a person can still live long if he or she lives positively.

### Positive Living

1. Accept your situation positively.
2. Tell your sex partner and family members that you have HIV and discuss how family members can support you.
3. Ask your partner to go for counselling and HIV testing.
4. Avoid sex or use a condom every time you have sex.
5. Eat different kinds of food found at home to improve your health.
6. Continue doing your work and daily activities as usual.
7. Stop or reduce beer drinking and cigarette smoking.
8. Go for treatment as soon as you get sick.
9. Do exercises to keep your body fit.
10. Join a group which can give you support.
11. Find time to rest.

## What happens from the time of HIV infection to the time a person tests HIV-positive?

**Window period:** The period between infection and the time antibodies can be found in the blood to show

that a person is HIV-positive is called the window period. Commonly used tests can only detect antibodies in the blood 3 weeks to 3 months after infection. Although the presence of HIV cannot be detected in the blood, the infected person can infect other people during the window period.

**Viral load:** Once in the body, HIV continues to multiply and increase. The viral load increases faster:

- Shortly after the initial infection
- When the person gets re-infected (e.g., following unprotected sex with another infected person)
- When the person does not eat well and his nutritional status is poor
- Every time the person gets sick

A person with a high viral load can pass on HIV to people he or she has sex with more easily. A woman with a high viral load can pass HIV to her baby more easily.

### How long does it take from the time a person tests HIV-positive to the time he or she develops AIDS?

HIV can have a very long or a fairly short incubation period. An infected person may live with HIV for 15 or more years without signs of illness.

### Do babies born to HIV-positive mothers always get infected with HIV?



No. Only 30%-40% of babies born to HIV-infected mothers get infected with HIV. They get infected during pregnancy, labour and delivery, and breastfeeding. It is estimated that 24,000 infants get infected with HIV in Zambia every year.

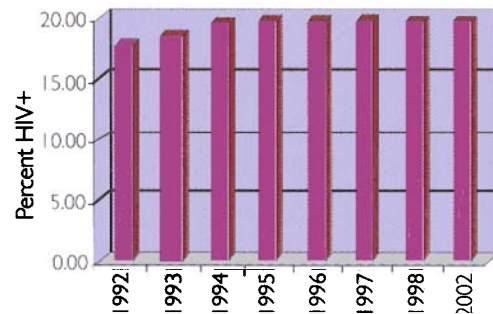
Out of 100 babies born to HIV-positive mothers,

- About 63 may not be infected with HIV at all.
- About 7 may be infected during pregnancy.
- About 15 may be infected during labour and delivery.
- About 15 may be infected through breastfeeding, if the babies breastfeed for 2 years.

There is no way of knowing which baby will be infected and which one will not, so mothers should protect their babies from HIV in the ways discussed below.

### HIV and AIDS in Zambia

The first case of HIV infection was reported in Zambia in 1984. Since then, HIV infection in the country has continued to rise and today Zambia is among the countries hardest hit by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. It is estimated that 15.6% of adults aged 15 to 49 years in Zambia are infected with HIV. Infection among men (12.9%), is slightly lower than among women (17.8%). The rural areas have the lowest HIV infection rates (10.8%). Higher HIV infection rates are found among urban adults (23.1%) and young men and women aged 30-34 (25.1%). Provinces with high HIV infection include



HIV in Zambia (1992-2002)



Lusaka (22.0%), Copperbelt (19.9%), Southern (17.6%) and Central (15.3%).

### Why has HIV and AIDS infection continued to rise in Zambia?

HIV infection has continued to rise in Zambia in spite of the fact that most people have heard about HIV and AIDS. They know that HIV and AIDS have no cure, and they know that AIDS kills. Factors which promote the spread of the epidemic include the following:

- Values and practices which promote risk behaviours, such as having many sexual partners, sexual cleansing of widows, and reluctance to discuss HIV and AIDS openly.
- Many people think that they cannot get HIV. They believe that HIV will infect the other person and not them.
- People know facts about HIV and AIDS but do not take action to protect themselves from HIV infection.
- Poverty and economic hardships which lead to practices such as sex for money or sex for gifts.
- People engage in unprotected sex (without using a condom).
- The way men and women relate makes it difficult for women to say no to sex advances.
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), cause ulcers in sexual organs and surrounding areas. The ulcers open up the skin and make it easier for HIV to get into the blood stream.
- Urbanisation and migration, bring together many people from different parts of the country. This promotes sexual activities.

Lead your people to discuss these issues and find ways of stopping the spread of HIV.

### What can we do to prevent HIV infection?

Leaders can help their people by giving them the following advice.

#### 1 Men and women should protect themselves from HIV in the following ways:



a) **Avoid** sex.



b) **Stick** to only one uninfected sex partner.



c) Use condoms every time they have sex.

- Go for **counselling and HIV testing** to know whether they have HIV or not. This will give them a chance to change to behaviours which can help them to have a longer life.



**After counselling and HIV testing, there is much one can do to live a longer life**

**If you test HIV negative**

Take care to remain HIV-negative:

- Stick to one uninfected sex partner.
- Use a condom every time you have sex.
- Go for counselling and HIV testing from time to time to confirm that you are still HIV-negative.
- Discuss your sex life with your partner and agree on what you can do to remain HIV-negative.

**If you test HIV positive**

*Live positively to have a longer life*

*(See positive living above)*

**2 Partners should support women to do the following to protect babies from HIV infection during pregnancy**

- Both partners should go for counselling and HIV testing to know whether they have HIV or not.
- Women should start going to the clinic as soon as they know that they are pregnant.



- Partners should use condoms during pregnancy to prevent infection.
- Pregnant women should protect themselves from malaria during pregnancy by sleeping under a mosquito net treated with insecticides. Insecticides kill mosquitoes which come in contact with the net.



They should also take malaria prevention medicine according to the advice of a health worker. Malaria weakens body immunity, whether a person is HIV-positive or HIV-negative.

- The family should keep money aside for transport to enable pregnant women to get to the health facility quickly to prevent complications. Complications can increase the chances of a baby getting HIV from an HIV-positive mother.



- Pregnant women should join a support group which can help them to protect their babies from HIV.

### ***3 Partners should support women to do the following to protect babies from HIV during Labour and delivery***

- Deliver under the care of a trained health worker. Health workers are trained to reduce infection during labour and delivery.
- Avoid early pushing. Early pushing can break the bag of waters early and cause cuts in the birth canal and on the baby.
- Deliver under the care of a trained person, if the mother delivers at home. The person assisting should support the mother and wipe the baby quickly.
- Take antiretroviral medicine (e.g., nevirapine) according to the instructions of a health worker, if the mother is HIV-positive. This will reduce the chances of the baby getting HIV during labour and delivery.





#### 4 Partners should support women to protect babies from HIV during breastfeeding

<i>HIV-negative mothers and mothers who do not know their HIV status</i>	<i>HIV-positive mothers</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the first 6 months, breastfeed your baby. During this period, do not give the baby any other food, not even water. Breastfeeding and giving the baby other foods at the same time damages the inside of the baby's young intestines. This makes it easier for HIV to get into the baby's blood.</li> <li>• At 6 months, give the baby other foods in addition to breastmilk. Breastfeed the baby first and then give other foods.</li> <li>• Continue breastfeeding until the baby is 2 or more years old.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you choose to breastfeed, for the first 6 months give your baby breast milk only. During this period, do not give the baby any other food, not even water. Breastfeeding and giving the baby other foods at the same time damages the inside of the baby's young intestines. This makes it easier for HIV to get into the baby's blood.</li> <li>• If you choose not to breastfeed your baby;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make sure that you can give the baby the food you choose all the time for 6 months.</li> <li>- Make sure that you can prepare the food using clean water and in clean pots, plates, and cups. Food with dirt in it will make the baby sick and can kill the baby.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Whether you are HIV-negative or HIV-positive, during pregnancy and breastfeeding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use condoms all the time to avoid getting HIV.</li> <li>• Even if you are already HIV-positive, use condoms to avoid getting re-infected with HIV.</li> <li>• Eat different kinds of food available at home to make your baby's immunity strong.</li> <li>• Breastfeed often to produce enough milk.</li> <li>• Go for treatment immediately if you have a sexually transmitted disease (STI).</li> <li>• Join a support group to share experiences and learn from each other.</li> </ul>	

#### What can leaders do to reduce HIV infection?

Leaders can make a real difference in preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS and in caring for the infected. More and more leaders in Zambia and elsewhere in Africa are leading their people to:

- Prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS.
- Fight stigma.
- Care for infected people and their families

Bring your people together to:

- Discuss HIV and AIDS in your community.

- Develop a common approach to the HIV and AIDS problem.

Act to stop the spread of HIV and AIDS, and care for infected people and their families.

#### • Explain to your people that:

- HIV is like any other life-long infection. A person can live with HIV for more than 15 years without any signs of illness.
- HIV-positive people should be accepted and supported to live positively and have a longer life and protect other people from HIV infection.
- People with full-blown AIDS should be shown love and given care and support.

- Support agencies working in HIV and AIDS.
- Encourage community-based organisations, NGOs, youth organizations, people in the work place, informal groups, and faith-based organisations to include HIV and AIDS education in their activities.
- Participate in HIV and AIDS activities.
- Mobilize resources for HIV and AIDS activities.
- Support creation and strengthening of structures which promote HIV and AIDS work in the community (e.g., committees, study groups, special interest groups men's groups, women's and youth groups).
- Lead the community to discuss and modify community values, beliefs and practices which promote the spread of HIV and AIDS.
- Organise and motivate the community for action against HIV and AIDS.



Distributed by: Zambia AED/LINKAGES PMTCT Programme  
 P.O. Box 32242, Lusaka, Zambia Tel: 260 1 234311/2/4 Fax: 260 1 224474