



## Global Voices Information Sheet

### Discordant Couples

#### **HIV/AIDS**

- The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the virus that causes AIDS. Many infections occur through unprotected sex.
- There are drugs available that can slow down the damage to your immune system. Still, there is no cure.
- The risk of passing on or contracting HIV can be reduced through condom use. In the case of discordant couples, counseling has been shown to help improve communication and help prevent infection.

#### **Discordant Couples**

- A discordant couple is a long-term pair in which one has a sexually transmitted disease (such as HIV/AIDS) and the other does not.
- Tanzania has one of the highest HIV/AIDS rates in the world with women and youth accounting for a disproportionate number of those infections.
- AMREF Tanzania has developed a counseling communications tool. This helps counselors address the needs of the individual couple.

#### **Key Terms**

**disclosure** – the act or process of revealing or uncovering

**opportunistic infection** – an infection that under normal conditions would not bring about disease. These infections occur when the body's immune system is weakened by disease or malnutrition.

**ostracize** – to exclude, by general consent, from society, friendship, conversation, privileges, etc.

**repercussion** – an effect or result of some event or action

**stigma** – a mark of disgrace or infamy; a stain or reproach, as on one's reputation

## Global Voices Secondary Educator Resources

### Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Ontario curriculum connections charts for grades 6 to 12 are included on the Global Voices homepage, [www.thestar.com/globalvoices](http://www.thestar.com/globalvoices).

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

**Note to Teachers:** This column presents a case study of a heterosexual Tanzanian couple who remains together after one partner tests HIV positive. It describes how support and on-going counseling helps these couples stay together. Part of the counseling describes condom use to prevent transmission along with on-going communication and proper diet.

To help students empathize, discussion questions will hypothetically explore typical reactions to friends and/or family members diagnosed with serious illnesses and the extent to which a diagnosis of HIV/AIDS makes a difference.

### Pre-Reading Questions:

Introduce a hypothetical school classroom.

1. Imagine that one of the students in class was diagnosed with a serious illness. What is your first reaction? What questions would you want to ask (i.e., What is it? Is it serious? Will they die? Are they in the hospital? What can I do to help them? etc.)?
2. Imagine that the same student's illness is contagious (ex. H1N1 influenza). What questions would you ask now? How would it change your behaviour towards this friend?  
**Note:** It will be interesting to see if attitudes and behaviours change with the name of the illness and its transmission.
3. What if the student disclosed that they were HIV positive (i.e., How do attitudes and behaviours change)?
4. What if the disease affected one of your family members (i.e., Would you tell other relatives, friends, employers, neighbours etc.)?

5. To think about this in a different way, what if you were diagnosed with a serious illness.
  - a. Would you tell your relatives or friends? If not, why?
  - b. Would your decision to disclose depend on the type of disease (i.e., sexually transmitted)?

### Post-Reading Questions:

1. What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?
2. What questions would you like to ask this couple?
3. What are the health, social and economic pressures facing Lucy and Emmanuel?
4. In an attempt to understand Lucy's perspective, make a chart to explore what her options were upon learning the news. Do you agree or disagree with her decision to stay?
5. Returning to the pre-reading questions, what are some of the pressures that face a family dealing with HIV/AIDS in Canada?

### Writing Assignment:

The two links below are past Global Voices columns dealing with HIV/AIDS in Africa. The first describes the implications for HIV positive women and the second describes existing beliefs about the disease.

<http://www.thestar.com/comment/columnists/article/660631>

<http://www.thestar.com/comment/columnists/article/304511>

Ask students to choose from the following questions:

- a) Compare and contrast Lucy Emmanuel's situation with other women in African countries.
- b) Using examples from all three columns, explain what makes the HIV/AIDS situation in Africa so complex.
- c) There are people in Canada who are HIV positive. Do you think their life experience is different here? If yes, why?

### Research Assignment: HIV/AIDS – A Canadian Context:

1. Visit the Federal Government's website to find out the current statistics on HIV/AIDS in Canada. Compare it with the global statistics presented by the United Nations (see websites below).
2. If Lucy Emmanuel and her husband lived in Canada, what, if any, support groups or services would be available to them (look for programs in your province)?
3. Lucy's husband feared not being able to find an employer who would hire him. Are there any laws protecting him in Canada?

### Websites:

AMREF: <http://canada.amref.org/where-we-work/tanzania/counseling-hiv-discordant-couples>  
Public Health Agency Canada: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/publication/index-eng.php>  
United Nations Cyberschoolbus Link to the Millennium Development Goals related to HIV/AIDS:  
<http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/mdgs/goal.asp?iGoal=6&iLang=en&iKeyword=anim>