



Questions and Answers (Global Pandemic)

Q. Does HIV/AIDS only affect Africans?

A. No, HIV/AIDS has been found in every country of the world. In Asia there are 8.3 million people living with HIV/AIDS, many of whom live in India. Epidemics in Eastern Europe are also on the rise, namely in the Ukraine and Russia where the levels have nearly doubled since 2000. Today, the Caribbean remains the world's second most affected region in the world. In America there are 1.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS.

Q. Why focus on Africa then?

A. Sub Saharan Africa is home to 10% of the world's population, while it accounts for 64% of the globe's HIV/AIDS cases – this includes two million children under the age of 15. In the last year almost three million people became newly infected in this region alone, with another two million dying of AIDS related illnesses. In addition to those dying from this pandemic, the region of Sub Saharan Africa is home to over twelve million orphans from this virus.

Q. Is Africa doomed?

A. No. There have been many successes and there is no reason to feel so much despair to loose hope. Kenya and Zimbabwe have decreasing national HIV/AIDS prevalence rates while areas of Burkina Faso also show decreases. Over 1.3 million people living in developing nations are receiving anti-retroviral treatment and budgets for HIV/AIDS have consistently increased.

Q. What led to the decreases?

A. Studies show that a delay in sexual debut, the avoidance of casual sex, and increased condom use were the positive behavioral changes that resulted from educational and awareness efforts.

Q. This seems too big, what can anyone do?

A. HIV/AIDS is a global problem, and yes, it is very big. But, it will be the collective action of millions of individuals who change the pandemic. This will include a grandmother caring for orphans in Ethiopia, a needle exchange volunteer in the Ukraine, and billionaire philanthropists donating large sums of money for HIV/AIDS programs and research. HIV/AIDS first begins with individuals, each must make a choice for their own lives: "How will I respond personally to HIV/AIDS, including in my own actions as well as in my community?" The greatest sign of hope is that a small group of people really can change themselves and their community. For example, five peer educators in a refugee camp have been able to increase VCT use by 50% each month since Working To Empower held a seminar in partnership with their organization.