



The Red Ribbon Badge

Africa's Response to the HIV-Aids Epidemic

by Maggie Shaddick

Africa is under attack by a silent killer. More than 70 percent of the world's population infected by the killer virus lives in the 10 countries in Southern Africa. In the past ten years there have been 30 million orphans whose parent or parents have died of Aids, and a child dies of an Aids related illness every 50 seconds. Every 50 seconds! This is a tremendous loss of life.

Scout-age youth, those between 7 and 18 years old, are the most heavily affected by the HIV-Aids pandemic. Some of the impacts on these children are loss of family and identity, increased malnutrition and starvation, loss of health, loss of educational opportunities, forced migration, homelessness, vagrancy and crime, exposure to HIV infection, increased poverty, higher child mortality and fewer vocational opportunities.

FIVE WAYS TO CONTRACT HIV-AIDS

- **From unprotected sexual intercourse** with a person who already has HIV.
- **From mother to child.** A mother infected with HIV can pass on the virus to her unborn child, during childbirth or while breastfeeding.
- **Direct contact with blood from an infected person.** This is the most rare way to contract HIV. Use plastic gloves and mouth shield when performing First Aid.
- **By sharing needles or syringes for injecting drugs** with a person who is HIV positive.
- **By sharing toothbrushes or razors.** The virus can spread through cuts in the mouth or skin.



Photograph courtesy of the South African Scout Association

"HIV-Aids is now recognized as the most serious threat ever, to peace, happiness and civil development," said Mr. Chris Mbanga, chairman of the Southern Africa Scout Executive Committee. *"As the largest youth organization in the region, on the continent and the world, Scouting cannot and will not stay away from the collective efforts that our governments, religious bodies, NGOS and UN Agencies are putting together to stop this pandemic."*

No matter where they live, Scouts pledge to do their duty to their country. Their motto is "Be Prepared". By taking part in activities such as the Red Ribbon Badge project, African Scouts are putting both ideals into actual practice, thereby making a real difference in their societies.

Ten Years Ago

Ten years ago I attended the African Regional Conference held in Uganda. As Assistant Provincial Commissioner International for Quebec I was involved in helping planning overseas Community Development projects (Brotherhood Fund) for the Venturers and Rovers. In hopes of discovering more information about

two possible projects in Zimbabwe and South Africa, I attended the conference. One afternoon during the conference I was chatting with some Rovers who started to ask me questions about Scouting in Canada. As we spoke, one of them asked, "Do you have a program for HIV-Aids education?" At my blank look they told me about their program called the Youth Out of School Project, designed to educate youth through their active participation. A joint program on health education, called Youth to Youth had been initiated earlier that year involving several international agencies. Both Senegal and Ugandan Scouting were now involved with this project. The conference ended and returning to Canada this conversation faded from my mind.

This spring I watched a video of Stephen Lewis's address to the Anglican Synod. In that address he said "There are two countries in Africa where HIV-Aids has gone down. Uganda and Senegal." Immediately my talk with the Ugandan Rovers flashed into my mind. Was there any connection with this and their Scouting program?

At the 2005 World Scout Conference in Tunisia, I met with various delegates from the Southern African Region and asked them for more information about their HIV-Aids program in Scouting. Shortly after arriving home several packages with the promised information about their HIV-Aids program arrived. It contained a leaders' booklet, and small booklets for the three levels of Scouting (Cub Scouts, ages 6 – 10, Junior Scouts, ages 10 – 15 and Venturers, ages 14 – 18) with the badge requirements for The Red Ribbon Badge; a very well researched, comprehensive and impressive program.

What Can We Do?

I wanted to become involved. What could I possibly do? I decided that I could tell this story to Scouting in Canada.

In this fortunate country of ours we don't associate Scouting with such a badge or what the requirements are to earn it. It is almost impossible for us to realize what has happened and is happening in Africa. What we **can** do as leaders is discuss HIV-Aids with our youth. Review the facts and myths with them. Talk about how this terrible pandemic is destroying countries in Africa and how Scouting in Africa is becoming a part of the battle against it. If you wish to support our brother and sister Scouts in their fight against Aids in Africa, consider directing part of your Brotherhood Fund money this year towards the Scouts HIV-Aids Education Project. X
 – Maggie Shaddick from the Quebec Council is promoting the battle against HIV-Aids to all Scouting members.

What does HIV stand for?

H Human
I Immuno-deficiency
V Virus

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What does AIDS stand for?

A Acquired: not genetically inherited, you get it from someone else
I Immuno: of the immune system
D Deficiency weakness or inadequacy of your body's main fighting mechanism
S Syndrome a group of diseases, not just one disease

FACTS ABOUT HIV

- 1. You cannot get HIV from social contact.** Shaking hands and hugging someone who is HIV positive will not spread the virus.
- 2. You cannot get HIV through all body fluids.** The virus is present in very small amounts in urine, saliva and sweat. Deep kissing can carry a risk if there are cuts or sores in the mouth.
- 3. You cannot get HIV from a mosquito.** HIV can't survive in the digestive tract of a mosquito.

For more information on HIV-Aids in Canada, go to Health Canada's web site:
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/aids-sida/index_e.html

We're ready to tackle HIV-Aids, youth to youth.



Photograph courtesy of the South African Scout Association



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