

**WHY US?**  
LEFT BEHIND AND DYING



**Video Curriculum Modules**



**Lesson 6: HIV –  
Gender Inequality**

**LEARNING WAS NEVER LIKE THIS**

## Lesson 6: Gender Inequality

### Standards:

#### Health:

1.12.1

1.12.2

2.12.1

2.12.2

2.12.4

2.12.7

2.12.8

5.12.2

5.12.4

7.12.1

#### Science:

#### Skills Practiced and Gained:

1.1—1.7

2.1—2.5

### Overview

Gender inequality describes the unequal status of men and women in a society. Women often experience unequal treatment and status in terms of their economic worth, the power dynamics in relationships, the representation of women in leadership positions, their social worth, etc. This phenomenon occurs in many societies and affects the norms, beliefs, and behaviors of its members. The video module, “*Gender Inequality*,” provides a window on manifestations of gender inequality in African and African American communities. This lesson provides the opportunity not only to examine gender gaps in status and treatment in these cultures and communities but also to expand the conversation to other cultures and ethnic groups.



### Key Concepts

Differences in status and treatment of women and men

Impact of social and cultural stigmas

Social determinants of health

Impact of gender inequality on the spread of HIV/AIDS among women

### Materials for Activities and Educator Background Knowledge

The major activities for Lesson 6 are discussions generated from the video modules and the chart in *Activity 6.1*.

## Procedure

### Part I



View “*Gender Inequality*” video module. After viewing the module use the following questions to facilitate group discussion or give the questions as prompts for journal entries.

### Discussion / Journal Questions

- 1) **W**hat new information did you gather from the video module?
- 2) **H**ow does gender inequality contribute to the high rates of HIV/AIDS in African and African American communities?
- 3) **W**hat other questions or comments do you have?

### Part II

One of the dangers of gender inequality is the tendency of communities to blame women for problems within the community related to sex or the family. This blaming of the women allows the power dynamic in a male dominated society to remain unchallenged and therefore unchanged. The conditions resulting from this power dynamic often lead to the abuse of women and girls, the spread of HIV/AIDS and the disparity in healthcare for females.

### Activity 6.1

Have the students/participants examine examples of gender inequality and how they effect the spread of HIV/AIDS.

- 1) Have students fill out the chart found in the handout named **Activity 6.1**. The chart contains examples of gender inequality described in the video module. How do these inequalities lead to furthering the spread of HIV/AIDS and to blaming women for the epidemic. How does inequality help the HIV virus move into and through the community?

## Part II (continued)

### Activity 6.1 (continued)



- 2) This activity is a good opportunity to organize small group to fill out the chart and report back to the larger group. Discuss the chart and the small group findings.
- 3) After completing the chart and discussion, have the small groups discuss and list other societal problems that can be linked to gender inequality. In what ways, can women be blamed for the problem? How does the problem help the spread of disease—HIV/AIDS or other diseases?

*(Examples: rape and sexual assault of women; health problems of children and youth in the community; etc.)*

- 4) Expand the discussion. Have the small groups discuss and list societal problems that can be linked to other inequalities. Who would be blamed, in these cases, for the problem? Why and in what ways?

*(Examples: lack of education in poor communities; high crime rates in poor urban settings; homelessness of many mentally ill people; etc.)*

- 5) After examining various social problems ask the groups, in small groups and then in the larger group, to discuss:
  - a) How do these inequalities make things worse for everyone, both marginalized groups and powerful?
  - b) What are ways these inequalities might be lessened?
  - c) What are ways we can move from blaming the victim to shared social responsibility?

## Closure

Gender expectations are some of the earliest and strongest messages we receive. Internalized sexism can affect our attitudes toward ourselves, our behaviors toward other members of our own gender, and members of other genders. Sexism can be particularly damaging in terms of women's physical and psychological health. For example, many people assume that men live and work under more stressful conditions than women.

## Closure (continued)

Unfortunately, this assumption has led to women being under-diagnosed or undiagnosed for hypertension, heart disease, and heart attacks. More critically, sexism can lead to women feeling isolated and trapped even in their own families.



However, men also suffer from sexism in our society. For example, many people believe only women experience sadness and other emotions related to depression which unfortunately leads to many men not being diagnosed with depression. More men than women who commit suicide did not seek counseling or help. By challenging notions of gender norms, we can improve our health and our freedom.

Use the following questions to facilitate group discussion or give the questions as prompts for journal entries.

### *Discussion / Journal Questions*

- 1) How do you conform to gender norms and power differences?
- 2) What do you lose and gain by conforming to these norms and power differences?
- 3) Are there things you wish you could do or ways you wish you could be that you don't feel free to do or be because of gender norms? What are things that you could do to allow yourself to be more free to be the person that you want to be?
- 4) Does understanding gender inequality change your thoughts about how you might act? Why or why not?

## Activity 6.1

### Gender Inequality – Spreading Diseases and Blaming the Victim

Example of Gender Inequality	How Does This Help Spread HIV/ AIDS?	How Does This Blame the Victim?
Women depend on men for survival because they do not make as much money, they do not have as much power as men, etc.		
There is a belief that men should have many partners whereas women should be faithful to one.		
Women feel that they have no rights to refuse the advances of men or insist on protection.		
Women don't feel as worthy without a man's love and fear losing their partners if they demand faithfulness or insist on protection.		
A woman who contracts HIV/ AIDS is rejected by her family, whereas a man who contracts HIV/ AIDS is not.		
A male child is valued more by families than female children.		



## Key to Activity 6.1

### Possible Answers: Gender Inequality – Spreading Diseases and Blaming the Victim

Example of Gender Inequality	How Does This Help Spread HIV/AIDS?	How Does This Blame the Victim?
Women depend on men for survival because they do not make as much money, they do not have as much power as men, etc.	Women who must fend for themselves resort to prostitution as a means of putting food on the table. Prostitution increases the likelihood of exposure to HIV.	Prostitutes are blamed for spreading HIV, but no alternatives are offered to them to make money in other ways.
There is a belief that men should have many partners whereas women should be faithful to one.	Multiple partners increases the likelihood of exposure to HIV for men. Even a monogamous woman faces greater exposure because of her partner's multiple partners.	Some believe that if girls abstain from sex, the disease would not prosper, even though males' behaviors are equally important to consider.
Women feel that they have no rights to refuse the advances of men or insist on protection.	Having safer sex with fewer partners are protective factors; accepting the advances of men and without protection increases the likelihood of her exposure to HIV.	Some believe a chaste and monogamous woman should not be asking for protection, even though the male's behaviors put him and his partner at risk.
Women don't feel as worthy without a man's love and fear losing their partners if they demand faithfulness or insist on protection.	Women are more likely to stay in a relationship with a partner who has multiple partners and less likely to use protection, both factors which increases the likelihood of her exposure to HIV.	Women are looked down on when they are without a partner, even if she is so for her own protection.
A woman who contracts HIV/AIDS is rejected by her family, whereas a man who contracts HIV/AIDS is not.	The woman, without her family to support her and provide for her, needs to resort to things like prostitution to be able to survive.	Even though most women contract HIV from a male partner, she is the one blamed for bringing the disease into the home.
A male child is valued more by families than female children.	Female children grow into women who see their worth in the context of a relationship with a man. The sense of deserving and rights that come from a sense of worthiness is lacking.	If a woman has high self esteem or challenges males, she is looked upon as out of line and attacked for hindering a man's progress.