

GLOSSARY

In the context of HIV/AIDS you may come across the following terms and acronyms. This list is not exhaustive, which means that you may not find all words and acronyms you are looking for. Feel free to add to the list if you come across terms that you think need explanation or clarification.

Advocacy – Influencing outcomes - including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions - that directly affect people's lives.

Affected by HIV/AIDS – HIV/AIDS has an impact on the lives of those who are not necessarily infected themselves but who have friends or family members that are HIV-positive. They may have to deal with similar negative consequences, for example stigma and discrimination, exclusion from social services, etc.

AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) – The last and most severe stage of the clinical spectrum of HIV-related disease.

Antibodies – Immunoglobulin molecules in the blood produced by the body's immune system and directed against specific agents, such as "alien" viruses or bacteria. In HIV infection, the antibodies produced against the virus fail to protect against it.

ARV (Antiretroviral Drugs) – These reduce a person's viral load, thus helping to maintain the health of the patient. However, antiretroviral drugs cannot eradicate HIV entirely from the body. Antiretroviral drugs work by suppressing the activity or replication of retroviruses such as HIV.

Bacteria – Microbes composed of single cells that reproduce by division. Bacteria are responsible for a large number of diseases. Bacteria can live independently, in contrast with viruses, which can only survive within the living cells that they infect.

BCC – Behaviour Change Communication

Bisexual – A person who is sexually attracted to both males and females.

CDU – Condom Use

Cell – All living organisms are composed of one or more cells, i.e. autonomous self-replicating units.

Clinical trial – A clinical trial is a study that tries to improve current treatment or find new treatments for diseases. Drugs are tested on people, under strictly controlled conditions.

Concentrated epidemic – An epidemic is considered concentrated when less than one per cent of the wider population but more than five per cent of any high-risk group is infected.

Condom – One type of device that can prevent pregnancy as well as sexually transmitted infections and AIDS. Female condoms are available as well.

Diagnosis – The determination of the existence of a disease or condition.

Empowerment – Attempts to enable the target population to take more control over their daily lives. The term 'empowerment' is often used in connection with marginalised groups, such as women, homosexuals, or sex workers.

Epidemic – A widespread outbreak of an infectious disease where many people are infected at the same time.

Gays – Men that are sexually attracted to men.

Generalized epidemic – An epidemic is considered generalized when more than one per cent of the total population is infected.

GIPA – Greater Involvement of People Living with AIDS

Heterosexual – A person sexually attracted to persons of the opposite sex.

High-risk behaviour – Activities that put individuals at greater risk of exposing themselves to a particular infection. In association with HIV/AIDS, high-risk activities include unprotected sexual intercourse and sharing of needles and syringes.

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) – The retrovirus that causes AIDS in humans.

Homosexual – A person sexually attracted to persons of the same sex.

IEC – Information, Education, Communication

Immune system - The body's defense system that prevents and fights off infections.

Incubation period - The period of time between entry of the infecting pathogen (in the case of HIV/AIDS, this is a virus) into the body and the first symptoms of the disease.

IDU - Intravenous (or injecting) drug users

Lesbians - Women that are sexually attracted to women.

Life skills - Refers to a large group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills which can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life.

Maternal antibodies - In an infant, these are antibodies that have been passively acquired from the mother in utero. Because maternal antibodies to HIV continue to circulate in the infant's blood up to the age of 15-18 months, it is difficult to determine whether the infant is infected.

Microorganism - Any organism that can only be seen with a microscope; protozoans, bacteria, fungi, and viruses are examples of microorganisms.

MSM - Men who have sex with men

Opportunistic infection - An infection that does not ordinarily cause disease, but that causes disease in a person whose immune system is impaired, as by HIV infection.

Orphans - Children whose parents have died. With respect to AIDS, orphans are usually defined as children under the age of fifteen who have lost one or both parents due to AIDS.

Pedophilia - The sexual molestation by adults of children or sexual intercourse by adults with children.

Pandemic - An epidemic that affects multiple geographic areas at the same time.

Pathogen - An agent such as a virus or bacteria that causes disease.

Peer education - A teaching-learning methodology that can develop, strengthen, and empower young people to take an active role in influencing policies and programmes.

Plasma - The fluid portion of the blood.

PWA/PLWHA/PLHA/PLA - People Living with HIV/AIDS

PMTCT - Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission

Prevalence rate - The proportion of a population that has a disease or a condition at a specific point in time.

Rape - Sexual intercourse with an individual without his or her consent.

Safer sex - Sexual activities that reduce or eliminate the exchange of body fluids that can transmit HIV.

Serological testing - Testing of a sample of blood serum.

Seronegative - Showing negative results in a serological test.

Seropositive - Showing positive results in a serological test. A person who is seropositive for HIV antibody is considered HIV infected.

Sex worker - A sex worker has sex with other persons with a conscious motive of acquiring money, goods, or favours, in order to make a fulltime or part-time living for her/himself or for others.

STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections) - Infections that can be transmitted through sexual intercourse or genital contact. HIV is essentially a sexually transmitted infection.

Symptom - Sign of change in the body that indicates disease.

Vaccine - A substance that contains antigenic components, either weakened, dead, or synthetic, from an infectious organism which is used to produce active immunity against that organism.

VCT - Voluntary Counselling and Testing

Virus - Infectious agent responsible for numerous diseases in all living beings. They are extremely small particles, and in contrast to bacteria, can only survive and multiply within a living cell at the expense of that cell.