

Stop The Spread

Selected Student Essays Submitted by STS Club Members

Written in July 2011

Topics for Student Essays:

"My Experience with HIV"

"What Impact STS has had in My Life"

Remarks:

The essays were selected from a writing competition held in July 2011, but are not given in any particular order.

Author names and other potentially identifying information were removed from the essays for the protection of those who wrote them.

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Essay #1: "My Experience with HIV"

The initials HIV stand for Human Immuno-deficiency Virus. This happens to be the cause of the disease AIDS which in turn is a combination of diseases. This pandemic affects everyone, for if you are not infected you are surely affected. I am going to share with you how HIV has affected my life.

I was barely four and seven years old when my parents died from this pandemic, so it's quite personal. I was not fully grown to really understand what death meant but I could tell it was very sorrowful. The faces of my three elder brothers who cried a lot told the story quite clearly. At first, I got used to the minor changes such as after mum's death we shifted from Ndola to another location for I found it interesting but then I realized dad's health was dilapidating bit by bit. The brothers were worse hit, because they had to escape from their programs just to look after dad and run up and down to call elders when there were complications. But still more dad's illness appeared to me he could not survive from his illness. But my father could not make it. It was very difficult for him, finally he died.

My father's death came as a shock to me. I was about seven years old and I had grown a bit, I therefore understood that my father had gone from us and would not return. My school work became bad and difficult. Interaction with friends reduced. Friends did things that I did not know they could do teasing me by saying "his father died from AIDS and even rich people die, we thought it was a poor man's disease."

I was really under a lot of pain. I was really frustrated with what had happened. I stayed for three good days without eating just thinking on what had happened. I did not even feel hungry for a single day. I really thank my uncle from my father's side and his wife, my auntie, really took up my mother's and father's roles. I am still living with them up to now. Thank God for my uncle who continued from where my father left off. I thank him a lot on how he treats me just like his own son. He told me there is still time when I could see mum and dad in the coming days. These are the comforting words which I hang onto each and every day.

My final remarks will show how HIV has devastated not only my life but thousands of lives to all those out there who are undergoing the grief and pain I went through, please keep your head high and focused on tomorrow. God sees and does not sleep nor slumber and he will wipe our tears and they will be no more.

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Essay 2: "My Experience with HIV"

I am a girl aged 16 years old, I was born in Luapula province, Zambia. My parents are both farmers. I am the first born out of 4.

It was on 21 January 2010 when my mum was coming back from another town, and around 21:00 hrs she phone me that at she had arrived at the station and to come and collect me. I started the journey to the station. It was 4 kilometers from home to the station. Now as I was going, I walked almost 2 kilometers away from my home I saw a car come from where I was going. As it was getting closer I wanted to see who was in the car. Unfortunately, the car came and stopped where I was. Inside the car there were two boys wearing black head socks, and they asked me where I was going. I was going [again] after explaining where I was going, [but] I was told to jump in the car. I tried by all means to refuse but I was automatically forced to get into the car. This is how I was driven away from that place into the car. I was commanded not to scream other I will be killed. These guys raped me and took me back to the same place where I met them and [they] left. I had no way to go forward. I was not able to walk on my own. I stayed there for almost 5 hours, and then I saw my mum coming. Immediately she saw me and she was surprised. She asked me [what] was going on and after explaining she had to take me to the hospital for some tests. Unfortunately according to the result, they were showing that I have been affected with HIV and the doctor advised me of being treated so this is how I got into it.

As it was not my mum to call me [that night], I could not have been raped by these two gentlemen.

Essay 3: "What Impact STS Has Had On My Life"

It has been 10 months since I came to know about STS and their works. I learnt about Stop the Spread (STS) as a God-centered team which is committed to equipping people to meet their needs in a Spirit of servanthood through my church. I've further understood that this is a team which aims at stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS through Bible-based principles.

STS has had a big impact on my life so much such that it has changed me positively. It has changed the way I think, act and how I relate with others especially people who are infected and affected with and by HIV/AIDS. Through STS I have been able to realize that what kills people is not the disease but lack of information. This is especially true because most people who discover that they are HIV positive would in most cases want to commit suicide directly or indirectly by depressing themselves to death. This is because they do not have the necessary and adequate information about the disease and how to take care of themselves. In a nutshell, they lack information on positive living, just as the Bible says in Hosea 4:6 that "My people perish for lack of knowledge."

In addition, through the STS workshops, meetings, and lessons that I have attended, I have learnt of a lot of things not only about positive living and HIV but also life in general especially as adolescents. I've learnt how to keep myself pure especially after knowing the battle grounds of purity. Battle grounds are places we need to be aware of as being dangerous places and we should be ready to flight. I have come to know the real energy in the battle for purity is really not the sexual desires in us or sex itself rather, it is actually ourselves because of the impure thoughts which we have, the things that we watch such as obscene pictures, pornographic materials, and the things which we hear from our peers and the media. This has really had a positive impact on my life because I know the real battle grounds for purity which are the heart, mind, body/flesh as well as peers and culture. Through this knowledge I've chosen the right friends that will help me uphold moral and Christian values. I have been selective with what to watch, and have as well keeping conscious with my bodily desires knowing that all these are battle grounds for purity and if I win, then I'm heading and watching to the greatest dream and achievement in my life. PURITY.

Furthermore, knowing the battle grounds has helped me to be more focused on my life spiritually and academically. I can relate this to what the Bible says in Matthew 5:29-30, that "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away for it is better that you lose one of your eyeballs than that your whole body be thrown into hell."

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Essay 3 Continued

Writing about the impact that STS has had on my life is not enough because it is so great such that I have also had an impact on others especially my schoolmates because of this club. Before having meetings with this team I never wanted to go for VCT, have anything to do with HIV+ people and I considered everything in these lives as boring but thank God that everything changed when I knew STS. Changed so much that for the first time in my life I started enjoying talks related to HIV and I actually had myself tested. I'm happy because I know my status, I don't discriminate, I take care of my life, my health as well as my Christianity because of STS.

Through STS I have learnt a lot of things about HIV/AIDS, STI's, domestic violence, rape sexual harassment, circumcision, VCT, nutrition, puberty and a lot more. Finally I would love to thank STS for their wonderful work which has had and will continue having a positive and great impact upon my life. May God Almighty continue giving you the grace to achieve your goals, thereby bringing thousands into God's Kingdom until one day when HIV levels will be reduced to 0% and you'll be called "THE GREAT ACHIEVERS." Thank you.

Essay 4: "My Experience with HIV"

HIV simply stands for the Human Immune Deficiency virus. This virus is so small that it cannot be easily seen with our naked eyes. It can only be seen through the microscope. This virus lives in body fluids such as blood and other fluids. Therefore, this virus destroys the immune system inside human body which protects the human body from diseases. Thus, the HIV virus does cause AIDS.

However, this virus has affected my life in so many ways. It all started when I had unprotected sex with the girl who had this disease. I went for voluntary counseling and test (VCT) where I was told I was HIV positive. I was so shocked that I didn't know what to do. When I told my relatives and friends about this incident, some of them did not want to associate themselves to me because they thought that being closer to me could also affect them. This virus led me to be abandoned and isolated from the people who were closer to me before this incident. My life became so miserable that I wanted to kill myself. Even at school I failed to concentrate because I was neglected by almost everyone. Eventually I believed and trusted the almighty God for everything I was passing through.

In conclusion some of the people who were abandoning me started to appreciate me after being sensitized on HIV and how it is transmitted from one person to another and how to prevent it.

These are some of the ways in which had HIV affected my life. I rest my case.

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Essay 5: "What Impact STS Has Had On My Life"

It was a very common question at my high school in Tanzania which was being asked by many students and even teachers -- "what STS is?" It was in late October 2010 when the STS club started working with all Christian fellowship in the school. By that time many students including me had never heard about STS a situation which led to the rise of many questions and a great interest of knowing what is STS.

As quick as we didn't expect the STS facilitator introduced STS to us that STS is the abbreviation for "Stop the Spread" which is a God-centered team committed to equipping people to meet their needs concerning HIV/AIDS in a spirit of servanthood. After knowing it, I was very much interested in joining this club.

The STS club has brought good impacts to me and my life by changing me in many aspects of human life such as attitudes towards HIV/AIDS, cooperation (team work), leadership, commitment and many others as discussed below since I joined to be a member of it.

To start with the STS club has opened my mind that teamwork is an important aspect in any group of people such as family, society, community, and nation. Working as a team in any group of people is important since it brings about effectiveness and efficiency of the work or any task which is to be done. Teamwork also increases cooperation among the group members. With STS club in our school we have been working as a team in all club activities, a condition which has led to good performance of our club. In my life therefore, I will encourage teamwork in every society I will come across with.

Not only that, the STS club also has imparted me with the leadership skills which are very crucial to my life and my society. During my leadership period in STS club, I have learnt a variety of leadership skills such as managing people, organizing different events and activities, writing different reports, and public speaking. These skills have given me an enthusiastic spirit of leading people and have changed my way of thinking to be a positive one (I have become a positive thinker).

On top of that the STS club has developed me with the spirit of volunteering in counseling and testing. When I voluntarily get tested, it enabled me to understand well my health status and it was when I decided to take precautions to avoid risk behaviors which can lead me into HIV infections. I have participated in voluntary blood donation under the national voluntary blood donation campaign to serve life of people who are in need of it.

Furthermore, through STS I have learnt a lot about commitment which is an important aspect in my daily life as a human being. By understanding this it has helped me to be committed in different issues such as serving the Lord (God), leading people, doing my home duties and so on. Commitment has led me into a good relationship with my God, my parents, my teachers, my peers, and my society in whole.

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Essay 5 Continued

Frankly speaking the STS club has contributed a lot of things in my life as they have been discussed above. For just a short period I have been in STS club my life style has absolutely changed to be better than before. However, in Tanzania STS club is not known to many schools since it has not been introduced. As a great stakeholder, I suggest that STS club should be extended to many schools in Tanzania so as to reach and meet the needs of different people in our country.

Indeed, I am pleased to give my thanks to all STS founders and coordinators for bringing this brilliant idea of meeting people's needs. Really you have touched my life!

God bless you.