

# STEPPING STONES

## WITH CHILDREN

Acquiring HIV may no longer be a death sentence, but its effects are still profound. Many people living with HIV face rejection and are unsure about their futures, and these anxieties may be felt all the more keenly by children and young people. *Stepping Stones with Children* equips organizations and individuals with materials with which they can engage children affected by HIV and their caregivers, using powerful exercises to convey information, explore norms, discover their abilities, and individually and jointly create happier, healthier and safer ways of being.

The training sessions cover a wide range of topics with a gendered and child-rights focused framework including psycho-social wellbeing and resilience, assertiveness, bereavement, HIV testing, living well with HIV, preventing sexual abuse, and supporting survivors of abuse. They cover issues facing all young people growing up, which might be particularly challenging for those affected by HIV – from friendships at school, to relationships, sexuality, and livelihoods. Each of the sessions clearly explains its overall purpose, and sets out the aim and method for each activity. Most activities are carried out with the participants working in their three separate peer groups of younger children (5-8 year olds), older children (9-14 year olds) and caregivers. Sometimes each peer group works in gendered-sub groups. The three peer groups sometimes work together, or come together to share what they have learned and to negotiate new ways of relating to one another.

*Stepping Stones with Children* follows on from *Stepping Stones* and *Stepping Stones Plus*, which are training materials widely used in workshops with older youth and adults affected by HIV.

*Stepping Stones with Children* is essential reading for social workers, community workers, health workers and NGO staff working on programmes with people affected by HIV; also researchers and academics teaching and advising in this field.

Gill Gordon has 50 years' experience of working in the development sector, and is a social development and health promotion specialist with particular expertise in gender, sexuality, reproductive health (and its integration with HIV), community-based participatory approaches and curriculum development.

'Stepping Stones with Children provides a way that communities can support and nurture children and build their resilience.'

Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS

'This is a very important manual for children and caregivers.'

Martha Tholanah, Global Chair, International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS

STEPPING STONES WITH CHILDREN

Gill Gordon



A transformative training for children affected by HIV and their caregivers



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TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT HIV

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Gill Gordon

# Stepping Stones with Children

## **Praise for the book**

'AIDS is about social justice. We cannot achieve our goals to end AIDS by 2030 until we meet the needs of the most vulnerable in society, often children and adolescents who are living with HIV and those affected by the virus. Stepping Stones with Children provides a way that communities can support and nurture these children and build their resilience. This is what we must do first -- care for the most vulnerable.'

Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS

'This is a very important manual for children and caregivers. It will help support the building of closer relationships through meaningful communication that helps children and caregivers overcome barriers and build a close and supportive family unit.'

Martha Tholanah, Global Chair, International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS

'I wish that all children aged 5 to 14 years and their caregivers affected by HIV could have an opportunity to experience Stepping Stones with Children. I am confident that it will help them realize their dreams and overcome their challenges. It is unique because it works with peer groups separately and together and covers so many issues – psychological, physical, sexual, material and spiritual – that matter deeply to us all.'

Vincent Mwale, Minister for Youth, Sport and Child Development, Zambia

'Programmes and manuals like Stepping Stones with Children can make the difference for a human being between a healthy development and a vision of a world with possibility and, in the most extreme cases, life overshadowed by death.'

L'Orangelis Thomas, a young woman living with HIV

'Gill Gordon is to be congratulated for writing a highly readable and applied manual. Stepping Stones with Children is full of practical 'how to' tips, and most importantly, contains a rich repertoire of practical exercises. The book will make an excellent resource for any practitioner working with vulnerable children and young people.'

Morten Skovdal, Associate Professor, Department of Public Health, University of Copenhagen

'It is wonderful to see the culmination of such important thinking and practice around working with children affected by HIV. This resource provides a rich programme of training that builds on the immense success of Stepping Stones. If we can give this resource the similar time and commitment to its methodology SSWC has the potential to address key gaps in our response for children affected by HIV.'

Kate Iorpenda, Senior Advisor, Children and Adolescents, International HIV/AIDS Alliance

'At first when PASADA introduced Stepping Stones people thought they were mad. Later on they realized it was an important and powerful tool for society. If my voice can be heard all over the world, I'll tell people to use Stepping Stones with Children as it will change their life and the way they think about HIV and AIDS.'

Mrisho Mpoto, poet, actor and musician

'Gill Gordon has a great talent for writing manuals which trigger self-understanding and at the same time build confidence, assertiveness, and lots of useful life skills. She brings her wealth of experience working with young people on so many different issues. I will certainly use these exercises and adapt them for work with kids in other contexts.'

Ross Kidd, Participatory Trainer and author of several manuals, including Understanding and Challenging HIV

'We strongly recommend Stepping Stones with Children as unique in helping in the implementation of children's sexual and reproductive health and HIV and AIDS.'

Zikhalo Phiri, CEO of Young, Happy, Healthy and Safe, Zambia

# **Stepping Stones with Children**

**A transformative training for children  
affected by HIV and their caregivers**

Gill Gordon

with Nelson Chiziza, Sue Holden,  
Florence Kilonzo, Pfiriaeli Kiwia,  
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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Gill Gordon has nearly 50 years' experience of working in the development sector, and is a social development and health promotion specialist. She has particular expertise in gender, sexual, and reproductive health and rights (and its integration with HIV); community-based participatory approaches; and curriculum development. She is the author of several popular books and learning materials including *Choices: a guide for young people*. Working as a freelance consultant, she gained experience of using participatory methodologies for planning, health education and promotion, monitoring and evaluation; in using performing arts, including *Stepping Stones*, to explore choices and change; in working with young people; and in addressing issues of gender, sexuality and equity. At the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, she provided technical support to programmes working with young people in and out of schools, with a focus on Southern Africa. Gill also worked in health promotion and primary health care in rural Ghana for 10 years and with IPPF, supporting Family Planning Associations to integrate HIV into their programmes. During her career she has worked in a number of countries across Africa, Asia and The Caribbean.

## **DEDICATION**

To all the children affected and orphaned by AIDS around the world, their mothers, their fathers and their caregivers: we dedicate this book to you all with gratitude for all you have taught us about life.