Challenging Discrimination
Hiroki Takeda, peer educator, Tokyo

Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health and spiritual well-being...

Earth Charter Principle 12

Japan is an advanced economy with one of the highest levels of education in the world. Yet the vulnerable are often subject to social exclusion.

A few years ago, Hiroki Takeda’s uncle died of AIDS at the age of 34. “When I heard he had died, I shuddered. I was angry at how cold people were to him. I’m sure the stress of this discrimination shortened his life.”

Hiroki was himself suffering from hemophilia, HIV and hepatitis C and came close to death. But his friends constantly encouraged him, and this gave him the courage to fight his illness. When new treatment became available, he made a dramatic recovery.

Now Hiroki devotes himself to supporting individuals with chronic and incurable diseases including HIV/AIDS. He travels throughout Japan to introduce peer counseling, whereby meeting in groups, such people can finally talk openly and relieve their isolation. Every presentation Hiroki makes is a battle to convince others of the value of this kind of human contact and communication.

“Discrimination can cause more pain than the illness itself.”

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