

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.



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



ENDANGERED ANIMALS

KALINGA ORNATA

The Kalinga Ornata sea slug is found in the Indian and West Pacific Oceans and lives on the muddy sea bottom. It can grow as big as 13cm in length and glows when stimulated.

PHOTO: THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN



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Protesting the Japanese government's failure to screen blood products for HIV, which resulted in widespread infection, 1995