

Seventh Working Group meeting on EFA

**19 – 21 July 2006
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Room X (Fontenoy)**

Session 4:

Response to HIV and AIDS: Role of Education in Prevention and Mitigation

Background Note

Why should the education sector engage in HIV and AIDS responses?

The HIV and AIDS epidemic is increasingly recognised to be one of the most serious threats to global stability and progress. Striking primarily young adults who drive economic growth and raise subsequent generations, AIDS is unravelling hard-won development gains and is having a crippling effect on future prospects. Unless strong action is taken, particularly in massively expanded and intensified prevention efforts, the epidemic will continue to threaten the delivery of sustainable quality education and the achievement of EFA.

Education has a critical role to play both in preventing HIV and in mitigating the effects of HIV and AIDS on individuals, families, communities and nations. Experience demonstrates that in order for the education sector be a full partner in the national response to HIV and AIDS, its strategy on HIV and AIDS must be embedded in a sector-wide approach covering content, curriculum and learning materials, educator training and support, policy management and systems, and ensuring quality and the full utilisation of approaches and entry points, both formal and non-formal.

How ready is the education sector to respond to HIV and AIDS?

The first ever global survey on the readiness of the education sector to respond to HIV and AIDS¹ found that ministries of education and civil society were making progress toward institutionalising effective responses. The report found that encouraging efforts had been made; for example, HIV and AIDS education components have been integrated into primary and secondary curricula in 79% and 89%, respectively, of participating countries.

Unfortunately, much more is still required. While nearly three-quarters of the participating ministries have dedicated HIV and AIDS management structures in place, only one-third have adopted a sector-specific education policy. There also remains a continuing emphasis on HIV prevention, with comparatively little attention to issues of care and support, workplace issues, and management of the impact of HIV and AIDS.

Moving toward a comprehensive response

Several key elements must be in place, as part of a sector-wide approach, in order for the education sector to fulfil its maximum potential. These include coverage, intensity, quality, inclusiveness, impact and sustainability. Comprehensive education sector responses can be grouped into five essential components, all of which are key to impact and success:

1. **Quality education** is fundamental to effective learning. To be of quality, education must be rights-based (including the rights of those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS), gender-responsive, scientifically accurate, culturally appropriate and adapted to the age and group of learners.
2. **Content and materials** must be accurate and complete, and focused on all aspects of HIV and AIDS, including stigma, discrimination, care, treatment and support. Materials also must be available for everyone, with a special focus on vulnerable groups and individuals, and adapted to all education levels and modalities, including both formal and non-formal.
3. **Trained educators with adequate support** are the third component for a successful response. To achieve this, educators require pre- and in-service learning opportunities, adequate didactic materials, supportive management and supervision, and links with communities and other groups.
4. Adequate **policies and management systems** must be in place, not only at national levels but all administrative entities—including regions, districts and schools. Planning for HIV and AIDS responses needs to be embedded in national plans that are discussed and negotiated with other ministries, therefore in collaboration with other sector initiatives such as EFA, MTEF and the like.
5. Finally, HIV and AIDS responses need to include, address and work with other **approaches and entry points** to the education system that have related concerns or objectives, such as life skills approaches, school feeding, communication strategies dealing with young people in and out of school, among others.

While achieving this may seem a daunting effort, evidence shows that piece-meal interventions of a limited scope and duration are at best partially successful. Moving toward a comprehensive response is the only way that the education sector can fulfil its responsibility to prevent new HIV infections and mitigate the impact of the epidemic.

Relevant initiatives supporting education sector responses

Launched in March 2004 by the UNAIDS Committee of Co-Sponsoring Organizations, EDUCAIDS is a multi-country initiative to support the implementation of comprehensive national education sector responses to the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Led by UNESCO, with the collaboration of key stakeholders, it takes fully into account the UN division of labour and all existing development mechanisms and agreements. This includes linking closely to EFA, the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI), the MDGs, the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD), the Teacher Training Initiative for sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA), the Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), the UNAIDS IATT on Education, and other relevant efforts.

EDUCAIDS aims to support countries² through the elaboration of implementation support tools, consisting of briefs on key issues for decision makers, overviews of practical resources, and other decision-support materials; technical support and capacity building to support needs assessments and strategic planning for comprehensive responses; and resource mobilisation to identify funding sources and ensure that education gets its appropriate share in funding for HIV and AIDS prevention and support activities.

The Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education, a network of UNAIDS Cosponsors, bilateral agencies, private donors and civil society partners supports accelerated and improved education sector responses to HIV and AIDS. Activities undertaken by the IATT include strengthening the evidence base to inform decision-making and strategy development; encouraging information and materials exchange; and bridging the education and AIDS communities to ensure harmonised responses.

A collaboration between the ILO and UNESCO has resulted in the development of HIV and AIDS workplace policies for the education sector in the Caribbean and Southern Africa.³ These policies are based on, and include key concepts from, the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work. This initiative is being expanded to other regions, recognising that workplace policies are essential to providing appropriate prevention and protection mechanisms for teachers—often the largest component of countries' civil servant populations—and other education sector staff.

EFAIDS, implemented by Education International, Education Development Centre, and the World Health Organization is another relevant initiative aiming to: prevent new HIV infections among teachers and learners; mitigate the negative effect of AIDS on achieving EFA goals; and increase the number of learners completing a basic education.

Challenges and way forward

While the continued coverage of the AIDS crisis in the media and general acknowledgement on the part of decision-makers of the need for active engagement against the epidemic is encouraging, much remains to be done. Education about AIDS is very often spotty and incomplete, and curriculum that is developed is not appropriately adapted or implemented. An alarming ignorance about the causes of HIV infection and refusal to recognise the rights of infected people or vulnerable groups still prevents efforts for widespread testing and treatment.

The Working Group is invited to stimulate political commitment and policy reform to support comprehensive education responses by considering the following questions:

- ◆ How can we ensure improved coordination and mobilisation at the country level to education sector responses to HIV and AIDS?
- ◆ What lessons have we learned from prior experience? What are elements of good practice that should be scaled up or replicated?
- ◆ How can we best integrate education sector responses into national frameworks including PRSPs, MTEFs, and National Action Plans for AIDS to ensure multisectoral engagement?
- ◆ What elements need to be in place in order to ensure sufficient coverage, intensity, quality, inclusiveness, impact and sustainability of the response?

References:

1. UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education, *Education Sector Global HIV & AIDS Readiness Survey 2004: Policy Implications for Education & Development*, Paris, UNESCO, 2006.
2. UNESCO, *EDUCAIDS: towards a Comprehensive Education Sector Response. A Framework for Action*, Paris, UNESCO, draft 2006.
3. ILO/UNESCO, *HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy for the Education Sector in the Caribbean*, Geneva, ILO, 2006; ILO/UNESCO, *HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy for the Education Sector in Southern Africa*, Geneva, ILO, 2006.

Other relevant resources:

- UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education, *Quality Education and HIV&AIDS*, Paris, UNESCO, 2006.
- UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education, *HIV/AIDS and Education: A Strategic Approach*, Paris, UNESCO, 2003.
- UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education, *HIV and AIDS Treatment Education: A Critical Component of Efforts to Ensure Universal Access to Prevention, Treatment and Care*, Paris, UNESCO, 2006.
- UNESCO and WHO, *HIV and AIDS Treatment Education Technical Consultation Report, 22-23 November 2005*, Paris, UNESCO, 2006.