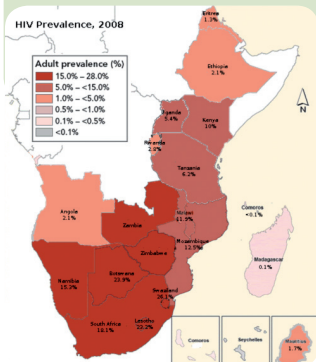


# East and Southern Africa: Building regional partnerships to reinvigorate the education sector's response to HIV and AIDS

# EDUCAIDS Country Snapshot

## General HIV and AIDS information for the region

East and Southern Africa remains at the epicentre of the global HIV epidemic with 16.1 million people living with HIV. The region has only 5.4% of the global population but accounts for 48% of all people living with HIV worldwide. HIV prevalence among young people in the region range from 0.70% in the United Republic of Tanzania to 14.20% in Swaziland.



## How the education sector response to HIV and AIDS has been supported

In East and Southern Africa, UNESCO has forged a strategic partnership with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat and UNICEF at the regional level to plan and implement key activities

aimed at reinvigorating education sector responses to HIV and AIDS. HIV and AIDS is a priority area of action for the 15 SADC countries, which include Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This partnership provides a powerful platform to conduct joint evidence-based advocacy on the central role of the education sector in the multi-sectoral response to the epidemic in the region. It seeks to address the need to intensify the education sector responses in the SADC countries, especially following the results of the latest Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) survey which showed alarmingly low levels of knowledge on HIV and AIDS issues among young people. As part of the strategic thrust of the partnership to generate evidence for this intensified response, UNESCO, UNICEF and the SADC Secretariat commissioned several studies in 2009-2010:

1. A review of the status of education sector HIV and AIDS policies and strategies in the SADC countries
2. A review of the status of education sector HIV and AIDS policy and strategy implementation
3. An assessment of the monitoring and evaluation of the education sector response to HIV and AIDS

The review of education sector responses to HIV and AIDS reveals that while the SADC region has made substantial progress in developing HIV and AIDS policies, plans and programmes, a number of challenges remain: HIV is still not properly mainstreamed in education sector policies and systems; policies and strategies are not always implemented; systems to monitor and evaluate the contribution of the education sector to the response to the HIV epidemic are non-existent or weak; delivery of life skills-based HIV and AIDS and sexuality education is limited and teacher preparation is inadequate.

Two proposed regional initiatives in 2011-2012 to address some of these gaps are:

- UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF and the Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division (HEARD) jointly organised a regional training on sexuality education in May 2011 for curriculum developers from ministries of education from 10 countries in the region (Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe). This will provide a common base for a subsequent joint scale-up of sexuality education in these countries. Other agencies and bilateral development partners have also expressed an interest in being involved in the process.

However, significant declines in HIV prevalence of more than 25% among young people have been documented in 9 of the 20 countries in the region over the last decade. Young people's knowledge levels on HIV continue to remain low, with less than 40% of young people having sufficient knowledge on HIV prevention. The HIV epidemic is generalised throughout the region with heterosexual sex as the main route of HIV transmission except for the concentrated epidemics present in the Indian Ocean islands.

(Source: UNAIDS Country Data 2010 from <http://www.aidsinfoonline.org/> and the UNAIDS Regional Profile for Eastern and Southern Africa)

- A series of consensus indicators identified by the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education, in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, will be field-tested in four countries in the region: Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. This is being done in collaboration with Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) units and HIV focal points from the ministries of education, National AIDS Councils and UNAIDS monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff in the region in each country.

## What was achieved

This partnership ensured that a common regional agenda on education and HIV and AIDS was being implemented across the region. The agendas of UNESCO, UNICEF and the SADC Secretariat complement each other very well, with the SADC Secretariat providing the political will for the joint activities through its regional mandate while UNESCO and UNICEF carried out the country-level work.

- As the regional partnership between UNESCO and UNICEF has steadily strengthened, a natural cohesion between the agencies at country level has also developed.
- The strength of the partnership and a cohesive joint response has attracted more agencies into becoming involved in certain thematic aspects of the work such as the sexuality education roll-out and the M&E indicators field test.
- A forthcoming publication on the reinvigoration process with specific two-page country briefs is going to be presented by the SADC Secretariat at the next high-level ministerial meeting, with highlights and recommendations for the ministries of education.

*"Consensus was reached on how to mainstream HIV and AIDS in our countries' national education sector response, effectively addressing HIV prevention, care and support through learning institutions. We have reached a better understanding of what needs to be done - or done differently - to reinvigorate the HIV and AIDS EDSEC response."* (Closing remarks made at the SADC ministerial meeting in September 2010 by the SADC Chair, represented by Mr Raimo Dengeinge, Chief Education Officer, EMIS, Namibia)

## What we learned

- Tailoring the joint work to the identified needs of ministries of education in the region, and not per agency agenda, proved to be the cornerstone for a collaborative, meaningful partnership. Steady dialogue and open communication between the partnering agencies also ensured that they moved forward jointly on the planned activities.
- The role of the SADC Secretariat in the partnership cannot be underestimated; it convenes the ministerial meetings in the region thus increasing member country ownership of the joint activities and ensuring that essential linkages are made with other ongoing initiatives.

EDUCAIDS is a UNAIDS multi-country initiative – led by UNESCO – to support the implementation of comprehensive education sector responses to HIV and AIDS



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