

Armenia: United efforts and continuing advocacy reinforces education sector response to HIV and AIDS

EDUCAIDS Country Snapshot



Training of trainers on reproductive health issues

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

The strategies and activities aimed at an effective response to the HIV epidemic in Armenia are part of the *National Programme on the Response to HIV Epidemic* adopted for 2007-2010. In order to reinforce the implementation of the National Programme, the Ministry of Education and Science adopted in 2008 a formal decree on the inclusion of a new element into the national curricula, a "Healthy Lifestyle" course for the students aged 13-14. A task force, comprising national experts, representatives of the ministries of education and science and healthcare, health workers, teachers and specialists from UN agencies meticulously elaborated and examined the course. Later in 2008, the Scientific Association of Medical Students of Armenia (SAMSA) developed and published a teachers' guide, "Healthy Lifestyle", for teachers of these grades. In 2010, the "Healthy Lifestyle" course became a part of the curriculum for 10th and 11th grades as well. Therefore, students are now exposed to these topics within the classroom for two to four years and their learning can be further reinforced in subsequent years. This enables them to improve their knowledge on topics including personal hygiene, reproductive health, sexual life and relationships, HIV, other STIs, birth control, abortion and gender related issues.

At the same time, the launch of the "Healthy Lifestyle" course uncovered the lack of a skilled cadre of professionals in schools who are capable of effectively delivering the course. To address this issue, UNESCO supported training of teachers on the "Healthy Lifestyle" course in 2008. The UNESCO initiative was upheld in 2010, when SAMSA, the Ministry of Education and Science, UNICEF and UNFPA united their efforts and conducted a training programme for 1,200 secondary teachers. At present, national partners

Information about HIV and education in Armenia

Armenia has a low level HIV epidemic, with a very low prevalence in the general population. The primary modes of HIV transmission are injecting drug use and heterosexual sex. Among young people aged 15-24 years, the prevalence was 0.1% as of 2007. 75-80% of those aged 15-24 years were able to both correctly identify ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission in 2008. It is not known how many schools in the country provide life skills-based HIV education. For more information: http://www.unaids.org/en/dataanalysis/monitoringcountryprogress/2010progressreportsubmittedbycountries/armenia_2010_country_progress_report_en.pdf

endorsed by UNESCO and enlisted by the Ministry of Education and Science are going to develop and test a system for pre-service teacher training on this topic in three pilot universities of the Republic.

What was achieved

- Due to the strong Government commitment, the Republic of Armenia is the only country in Eastern Europe and Central Asia which has prevention education included in the national curricula for secondary and high schools.
- The "Healthy Lifestyle" course adopted in 2008 immediately resulted in improvement of knowledge among young people. In 2008, 75-80% (versus 36.4% in 2007) of young people aged 15-24 correctly identified ways of prevention the sexual transmission of HIV and rejected major misconceptions about HIV transmission.

What we learned

Despite everything that has been accomplished, there are still many challenges. The shortage of skilled teachers to deliver the "Healthy Lifestyle" course can be attributed to the lack of a system for pre-service training of teachers in pedagogical universities and institutions. The Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia considers this training one of the priorities for the effective implementation of the course in grades 8-11. It has also become clear that comprehensive teaching of the "Healthy Lifestyle" course should be accompanied by appropriate textbooks, audiovisual and other supporting materials.

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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