

Belarus: Effective strategies for improving HIV knowledge among young people

EDUCAIDS Country Snapshot



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Volunteers of the HIV prevention auto marathon in Baranovichi, Belarus, May 2011

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

HIV prevention among young people was one of the priorities of the Belarus National HIV Prevention Programme in 2006–2010. To operationalise this priority, the Ministry of Education developed a concept for HIV Prevention in educational institutions, with technical assistance from UNESCO. Adopted in 2008, this conceptual framework provided the basis for further development of several training curricula and materials for both students and teachers. It unified the approaches to HIV prevention in schools, vocational training schools and universities and became a basis for a number of activities in the field of prevention education. For example, the Belarus academy for post-graduate teacher education as well as regional education development institutes developed three new training programmes on HIV prevention: for primary school pupils, for parents' engagement in school-based activities and for teacher education on HIV. Teachers' guides and learning materials were also developed and published. In addition, in cooperation with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, 300 teachers were trained using these materials to deliver quality prevention education. More than 1,200 teachers were trained in 2011. Support from the Global Fund also enabled 241 classrooms nationwide to be equipped with materials to run interactive training sessions on HIV prevention.

UNESCO has also been using cultural and communication resources, notably the 'Forum Theatre' methodology, to promote healthy lifestyles and HIV prevention in Belorussian schools and youth clubs. To build capacities of young people vulnerable to HIV and youth workers, UNESCO assisted its principal partner, the Belorussian Association of UNESCO Clubs, to develop and promote an interactive online course and to organise an automobile marathon across all regions of the country aiming at preventing stigma and discrimination towards people affected by the epidemic. UNICEF has also been working in this area, supporting the publication of tutorials on healthy lifestyles for primary school students.

Information about HIV and education in Belarus

Belarus has a concentrated HIV epidemic, with a low prevalence in the general population. The primary mode of HIV transmission is injecting drug use. 66% of all HIV cases are concentrated among young people (15–29 years). 70% of young people are able to both correctly identify ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission. 86% of schools in the country provide life skills-based HIV education. For more information: <http://www.aids.by>

What was achieved

This education sector response has been marked by the following key achievements:

- The conceptual framework for HIV prevention in educational institutions developed with the technical support of UNESCO became the theoretical basis for varied activities and provided a framework for the further development of several training curricula and materials.
- As a result of combined efforts of national policy-makers and development partners, Belarus has progressed in scaling up HIV prevention education. Notably during the 2006–2009 period, Belarus reported an increase in the percentage of schools delivering HIV prevention education from 80% to 86% and improved knowledge among young people. In 2009, 70% (versus 68% in 2006) of young people aged 15–24 correctly identified ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and rejected major misconceptions about HIV transmission (UNGASS Country Report 2009–2010– Belarus).

What we learned

- Building education sector capacity for a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS is a phased process which begins with policy and strategy adoption, followed by conceptualisation of key approaches to prevention education and educator capacity building.
- United and well-coordinated efforts of national policy-makers and development partners (UN agencies, the Global Fund) provide synergies to enhance the education sector response to HIV and AIDS and maximise its impact.

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