



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNESCO Bangkok and HIV/AIDS




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Adolescents, especially girls, can be vulnerable to HIV if they have not been educated about sex, relationships and HIV prevention.




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Who we are and where we work

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is one of the ten co-sponsoring agencies of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Within the UN family, UNESCO has responsibility for promoting and increasing access to HIV education - the most powerful tool we have in halting the spread of HIV.



UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) works with partners in the region to achieve this goal and to promote school health and adolescent reproductive and sexual health by focusing on UNESCO's core mandates:



EDUCATION
SOCIAL SCIENCES
CULTURE
COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

UNESCO Bangkok works across the Asia and Pacific region, and has dedicated HIV and AIDS focal points and education programme officers in the following UNESCO offices: UNESCO Apia, Beijing, Dhaka, Hanoi, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kabul, New Delhi, Phnom Penh, and Tehran.

What we do and why we do it

All children should be in school so that they receive HIV prevention messages while their beliefs and behaviour are still forming.



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HIV PREVENTION EDUCATION


HIV is preventable, and preventive education, if done properly, WORKS. Schools are in an ideal position to reach children and young people with prevention messages while their beliefs and behaviour are still forming. Yet across the region, education systems struggle to do what is needed to address the epidemic.

UNESCO Bangkok works with partners at the regional, national and local level to scale up HIV preventive education and promote adolescent reproductive and sexual health by:

- Advocating for the need to address HIV and adolescent and reproductive health in and out of schools;
- Increasing the capacity of the education sector to integrate HIV prevention information and related attitudes and skills into strategic planning, curriculum development, teacher training and monitoring and evaluation;
- Expanding the use of balanced and accurate media reporting in HIV prevention;
- Developing and adapting school curricula and teaching and learning materials on HIV prevention and adolescent reproductive and sexual health;
- Funding research and community based care and support with the aim of retaining and increasing access to education for orphans and vulnerable children;
- Enhancing collaboration between ministries of education, schools, NGOs, and academic institutions;
- Developing evidence based advocacy materials for ministries, schools and others in the education system.
- Providing education and advocacy support to policy makers and programme managers to promote adolescent reproductive and sexual health; and
- Developing tools to monitor the impact of HIV and AIDS on education at the national and international level.

HIV SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH


HIV and AIDS is not just a medical problem. Socio-cultural factors such as gender, poverty, mobility, ethnicity and sexual norms and practices play a huge role in determining vulnerability to HIV. Yet too often both HIV research and HIV prevention efforts focus narrowly on individual behaviour change.




To make real inroads into reducing HIV transmission, a greater understanding is needed of the social and cultural determinants of HIV vulnerability, and how these factors intersect with preventive interventions. UNESCO Bangkok promotes the conduct and use of high quality social science research on HIV by:

- Working alongside NGOs, local research institutions and individual researchers to conduct in-depth, qualitative social science research, analyse existing data and monitor and evaluate ongoing projects;
- Co-financing, with like-minded institutions, qualitative research to help understand why key populations behave as they do, their networks and beliefs and which interventions will best support them in preventing HIV; and
- Organising forums for researchers, programme implementers, donor agencies, NGOs, government bodies and other members of the UN family to discuss possible gaps in HIV social science research in the Asia-Pacific, and how such research can be used to design effective policies and programmes.

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE HIV INTERVENTIONS




Within the Asia-Pacific region, there are certain minority populations which are at higher risk of HIV. UNESCO Bangkok focuses on two types of population - men who have sex with men (MSM) and ethnic minorities - who are often ignored by mainstream prevention programmes and are desperately in need of HIV education tailored to their cultural and linguistic contexts.



MSM constitute a significant proportion of new HIV infections in the region. In recognition of this, UNESCO Bangkok is:

- Bringing together people working on MSM issues, to share learning, experience and outcomes, identify obstacles and propose standardised and agreed upon solutions;
- Piloting innovative ways of educating MSM about HIV;
- Advocating for national governments to make MSM a priority in their HIV strategies; and
- Providing training and facilitating capacity building on MSM and HIV.






Ethnic minorities are also highly vulnerable to HIV for many reasons, including poverty, mobility and statelessness. In our work with ethnic minorities, we focus on:


- Building the capacity of local organisations to use data and geographic information systems (GIS) mapping to examine the interrelationship between HIV, culture and issues such as trafficking and non-traditional drug use;
- Developing research-based, culturally and linguistically appropriate prevention materials, using media such as radio and traditional performing arts; and
- Conducting research on vulnerable, neglected and mobile populations.

Additionally, UNESCO Bangkok works with religious and cultural leaders across the region, to encourage them to play a role in addressing HIV and adolescent reproductive and sexual health issues within their communities.

HIV INFORMATION DISSEMINATION



UNESCO Bangkok disseminates information and promotes knowledge sharing on HIV prevention and adolescent reproductive and sexual health to ensure access to the most up to date evidence on these issues. We do this specifically by:



- Developing and maintaining various databases of bibliographic information and e-materials on HIV education and adolescent reproductive and sexual health;
- Providing information alert and enquiry services, and literature searches;
- Undertaking projects related to HIV-related information management;
- Facilitating interactive networking and referral services; and
- Participating in the UNESCO HIV and AIDS clearinghouse.

Cross-cutting strategies

UNESCO works with ethnic minorities, including on the issue of HIV and AIDS



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HIV and AIDS Education and UNESCO Bangkok

ADVOCATING for

- The education sector to take a lead role in preventing HIV;
- Sound research to underpin HIV policy and programme development;
- Attention to particular vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities and men who have sex with men.

BUILDING CAPACITY

of the education sector and other groups to respond to HIV and AIDS, adolescent reproductive and sexual health in the areas of

- strategic planning;
- curriculum development;
- teacher training; and
- monitoring and evaluation.

SHARING INFORMATION on

- What works and doesn't work in HIV education and promoting adolescent reproductive and sexual health.

CONDUCTING AND SUPPORTING RESEARCH to

- Understand the social and cultural aspects of HIV transmission, including poverty, gender, sexuality and mobility; and
- Inform and develop culturally appropriate prevention materials.

Families, teachers, and communities need to play a greater role in promoting HIV prevention and adolescent reproductive and sexual health.



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Who we work with

Partnership is a guiding principle for all UNESCO Bangkok activities. The HIV/AIDS Coordination and School Health Unit and its focal points collaborate with diverse partners in promoting HIV education and adolescent reproductive and sexual health, including:

- Ministries of Education, Provincial Authorities, schools and teachers;
- Local and international non-governmental organisations and research bodies;
- Donor agencies; and
- Multilateral institutions, including other members of the UN family.



Further information



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