



## International Women's Day 2012

On 8 March 2012, International Women's Day (IWD) will be celebrated around the globe. Thousands of events are being organised to mark the political, economic and social achievements of women, as well as to highlight continuing needs. UNESCO's events to mark the day will be based on the theme *Empowerment of rural women to end poverty and hunger*. Gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty, and IFPRI estimates that 60% of chronically hungry people are women and girls. In many developing countries, women and girls are the main producers, processors and traders of food. By improving women's and girls' productive potential in agriculture, they can play a key role in fighting hunger.

During the 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission

on the Status of Women at the UN in New York, UNESCO hosted a side event on "Rural Women and Girls: Education for Empowerment". The discussion focused on the need to expand educational opportunities and outcomes for rural women and girls as both a fundamental human right and an essential condition for sustainable development. For further information on UNESCO's efforts for rural women [click here](#).

To coincide with International Women's Day, UNESCO has recently published a *World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education* which reviews through sex disaggregated data the access of women and girls to formal education. The Atlas enables readers to visualise the educational pathways of girls and boys in terms of access, participation and progression from pre-primary to tertiary education. For further information [click here](#).



### Inside this Issue:

- International Women's Day
- High Level Taskforce to tackle gender inequality
- UNESCO leads a landmark anti-bullying initiative
- Recent publications
- IFMSA World AIDS Day
- UNESCO at ICASA

## High-Level Taskforce to tackle gender inequality

A new African *High-Level Taskforce for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV* was officially launched at the 16<sup>th</sup> ICASA Conference. The taskforce was created to advocate for scaled-up actions in areas where the region is lagging behind: women, girls, gender equality and HIV. Taskforce members include senior government officials and civil society organisations representing three African Regional Economic Communities (SADC, COMESA and the EAC), a group of eminent persons and the four Regional Directors of UNAIDS, UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF. The objectives of the Taskforce are to conduct high-level political advocacy in support of accelerated country actions and to monitor implementation of key commitments in the region and, in particular, the implementation of the draft Windhoek Declaration (<http://unaidspcbngo.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Windhoek-Draft-Declaration-FINAL-DRAFT-13th-April.pdf>). In 2011-2012, the Taskforce will focus on six priority countries: Uganda, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Swaziland.

## UNESCO leads a landmark anti-bullying initiative

UNESCO convened the United Nations' first-ever international consultation to address bullying against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and inter-sex (LGBTI) students in educational institutions. The landmark event, held in Brazil on 5-9 December 2011, brought together experts from UN agencies, NGOs, ministries of education and academia from more than 25 countries around the world.

Every day, students around the world are routinely denied the basic, universal human right to education because of discrimination and violence they experience in school on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity. The consultation was

organized to explore methods for ensuring all people receive a quality education. Experts took an integrative approach to the issue, examining the connections between homophobic bullying, development goals and human rights. The participants agreed on a [statement](#) that calls upon governments to eliminate the unacceptable and devastating prevalence of LGBTI bullying in educational institutions and settings around the world.

Examples of good policy and practice from around the world will be published by UNESCO in May 2012 to share and expand on the outcomes of the consultation. This consultation is the first event within an on-going process through which UNESCO, in partnership with others, is seeking to ensure safe, secure and inclusive learning environments for all.



## UNAIDS Guidance for partnerships with civil society

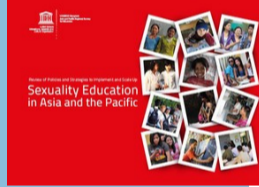
The UNAIDS publication, *UNAIDS guidance for partnerships with civil society, including people living with HIV and key populations* provides guidance on how The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), its Cosponsors and Secretariat (working at national, regional and global levels) should strengthen and operationalize meaningful and respectful partnership work with civil society. It should enable the UN to deliver the targets and elimination commitments agreed in the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.



## Recent Publications

### Review of policies and strategies to implement and scale up sexuality education in Asia and the Pacific

Sexuality education provides young people with critical information and skills to safeguard their sexual and reproductive health. This review examines the existing frameworks present in the Asia-Pacific region to implement and scale up sexuality education. It includes a systematic review of over 300 national policies, laws, strategic plans on HIV, education, population and reproductive health, and youth in 28 countries in Asia and the Pacific. The review finds that there are still significant gaps across the region in terms of legal and policy frameworks. Of all types of policy documents analysed, education policies and laws were least likely to include content on sexuality education. National strategies and plans on HIV and reproductive health more consistently address the role of sexuality education; however, critical interventions such as research, monitoring and evaluation, and youth engagement are underrepresented. The review finds that important progress has been made in curriculum development and delivery; however this is primarily being delivered at secondary level and significant gaps remain in teacher preparation. The review concludes with recommendations to strengthen the policy and legal frameworks in the region to better prepare youth for a healthy sexuality.



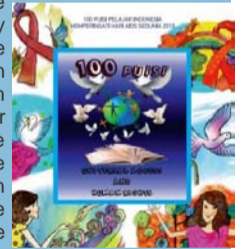
## IFMSA World AIDS Day

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) which represents over 1.2 million medical students from 99 countries across the globe is an active network of young people engaged in their communities in order to contribute to achieving global health. To mark World AIDS Day, medical students around the world gathered at the local, national and international level, and organised conferences, lectures, peer education training sessions, flash-mobs, parties and concerts in order to spread awareness and knowledge about HIV/AIDS, with one common theme, "Getting To Zero!" To mark the day they produced an IFMSA World AIDS Day 2011 [video](#) and posters in which medical students from 27 countries represent the number of new HIV infections per year in their countries.



## Universal access and human rights

UNESCO (Jakarta) has just published a poetry book entitled "Universal Access and Human Rights." The poetry book is a compilation of 100 poems produced in the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, by students and youth who participated in the poetry design and writing competition sponsored by UNESCO in collaboration with the Indonesia National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM). Up to 700 youth were invited to participate in the competition. The event was held to mark World AIDS Day in December 2010, aiming to increase awareness amongst youth and encourage their active participation in HIV prevention to support peer-education programmes. The competition is one of many approaches used by UNESCO and its partners to engage youth to gain appropriate knowledge on HIV and AIDS.



## UNESCO at ICASA

Addis Ababa - The elimination of mother-to-child transmission, treatment as prevention and the global funding crisis were some of the major themes debated at the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) in December in the Ethiopian capital. With over 12,000 delegates present, this was a major gathering of researchers, activists, health workers, policy-makers, implementers and leaders in the HIV response in Africa. UNESCO was represented by staff from Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, South Africa and France and delivered a series of presentations (poster and oral) and skills-building sessions with a particular focus on sexuality education and young people. Over one hundred people participated in one UNESCO skills building session "Let's Talk About Sex, Relationships and HIV: School-Based Sexuality Education for Young People", where small group sessions enabled participants to consider the topics necessary in a curriculum to enable young people to make healthy decisions, and to debate the age at which these topics should be taught. "Some of the advocacy messages/recommendations developed during the session include: gather more evidence on the benefits of comprehensive sexuality education and share this information widely with key stakeholders, highlighting the key points that advance your advocacy agenda; avoid projecting adult sexuality onto children and teenagers as children/teen and adult

sexuality is different.; wherever possible, initiate parent education programmes on HIV/AIDS and sexuality education so that parents maybe better informed to cooperate with the education sector and help with information dissemination on sexuality issues" (Lucas Halimani, NPO Zimbabwe).

Sexuality Education was mentioned in a number of key note speeches as a critical intervention for young people and was passionately endorsed during the opening ceremony in a speech given by a woman living with HIV. "There is increasing recognition of the importance of sexuality education as a key feature of broader prevention efforts for young people, and in particular of the role that UNESCO plays in facilitating this" said Joanna Herat, HIV programme specialist. "However, it was disappointing to see so few young people and people living with HIV meaningfully represented at the conference." Lethola Mafisa (NPO Lesotho) said: "One of the highlights for me was the discussions around sustainable financing for HIV and AIDS in the light of dwindling resources and possibilities of findings ways of raising local resources got me thinking of how we could apply this in Lesotho especially for the education sector. Aligned to that was the whole issue of prioritising interventions and not doing anything and everything".

The overall theme of the conference was "Own, Scale-Up and Sustain" which echoes with UNESCO's goals of seeing strengthened and scaled-up HIV responses within the education sector.



L. Halimani & J. Herat

**HIV & AIDS eNewsletter 12 will be available in French and Spanish on [www.unesco.org/aid](http://www.unesco.org/aid)**

Questions or comments? [aid@unesco.org](mailto:aid@unesco.org)  
To unsubscribe visit [www.unesco.org/aid](http://www.unesco.org/aid)