

Namibia: Meeting the needs of teachers affected by HIV and AIDS and protecting the core functions of the education system

EDUCAIDS

Country Snapshot



Launch of the 'EduSector Support Network on Health and HIV/AIDS' (Dec. 2009)

Some statistics on HIV and education in Namibia

The HIV prevalence rate for the 15-24 age group is 10.6%, slightly lower than the adult (15-49) prevalence rate estimated at 13.3%. An estimated 64.9% of females and 61.9% of males in the 15-24 age group can both correctly identify ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission. 85% of primary schools and 50% of secondary schools reported providing life skills-based HIV education in the last academic year. (UNGASS Country Report 2010). *UNAIDS Country Profile for Namibia*: <http://www.unaids.org/en/Regionscountries/Countries/Namibia/>

How UNESCO supported the education sector response to HIV and AIDS

As many teachers and learners live with or are affected by HIV and AIDS, which adversely affects the education system, the Ministry of Education has developed a **Workplace HIV&AIDS Policy for the Education Sector** (2007), in collaboration with other stakeholders including UNESCO. This policy is based on the model of the policy framework developed by UNESCO and ILO for Southern Africa in 2006.

An implementation plan for this policy was developed for the period 2009-2011. It is being overseen by the HIV and AIDS Management Unit (HAMU) in the Ministry of Education and is being carried out through a comprehensive **Workplace Wellness Programme**. A key intervention under this programme was the launch of an 'Education Sector Support Network on Health and HIV and AIDS' by the Ministry of Education in partnership with teacher unions and UNESCO in 2009. This initiative is being piloted in five regions of Namibia to promote a supportive environment, including through the establishment of self-support groups for education personnel affected by HIV. UNESCO and its partners also provide specific assistance for the development of support groups for adolescents affected by HIV and AIDS, with UNICEF focusing on health systems-based approaches and UNESCO on school/community-based responses. This is linked to the progress made in Namibia in meeting the needs of people living with HIV who need antiretroviral treatment: 83% of adults and 95% of children with advanced HIV infection are currently receiving antiretroviral therapy (Namibia country UNGASS report 2010).

Activities in Namibia are funded by the Virginio Bruni-Tedeschi Foundation and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), amongst other partners.

What was achieved

The implementation of the strong HIV and AIDS workplace policy and wellness programme, with technical support from UNESCO and other EDUCAIDS partners, is expected to have many benefits for education personnel, teachers, learners and the education system as a whole for years to come. Thus far, about half of the 13 regions and 35% of the teaching workforce have been reached through the progressive roll-out of 'EduSector Health Days' – an innovative intervention facilitating access to HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT) and other health services among education personnel. A national secretariat and regional coordination structures have also been set up to support the piloting of the 'Education Sector Support Network on Health and HIV and AIDS'.

'I truly believe that we are now moving into the right direction under this project, with the Ministry of Education taking direct responsibility for the initiative, in partnership with teacher unions, UNESCO and other development partners...We should be able to provide adequate support to affected colleagues, without them facing the risk of being stigmatised, and through them, to better reach out to learners and communities that find themselves in similar circumstances.' (Mr Ben Muleko Coordinator of the EduSector Network on Health and HIV&AIDS, Namibia)

What we learned

- Support groups for education personnel affected by HIV and AIDS create a safe space for individuals to share their personal experiences and coping strategies. Through these interactions members motivate each other, reduce self stigma, isolation and hopelessness in life. They also share information on access to treatment.
- Through school-community collaborations, teachers, learners and other education personnel are linked with community support structures.
- Continuous efforts are required to ensure that these interventions are brought up to scale and sustained over time and to ensure that these programmes are mainstreamed in the routine operations of the education system.

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