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A FRESH perspective on HIV and Education in Guyana: using the integrated school health approach

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<http://www.unesco.org/aids> ; <http://www.worldbank.org/education> (ED/UNP/HIV/IAC2008/POSTER/6)

Lessons learned:

Contextualizing school-based responses to HIV and AIDS in an holistic health approach serves to de-stigmatize the epidemic and provide a platform for coordinated health-education interaction. This mutually strengthens education systems in achieving the goals of Education for All and health systems in achieving Universal Access, beyond HIV to include communicable and non-communicable diseases demanding comparable attention and resources.

Recommendations:

The development of national policies and operational plans should be based on available evidence and a participatory approach, engaging diverse stakeholders in the identification of priority actions to respond to the epidemic.

Background:

Research has shown that education has the potential to reduce the risk of exposure to HIV. Good health and nutrition are not only essential inputs but also important outcomes of quality basic education.

The Ministry of Education, Guyana has positioned HIV Prevention within the context of an holistic programme of School Health and Nutrition (SHN). The Ministry, with support from UNESCO, the World Bank and the Partnership for Child Development, has developed an education sector policy and strategic plan on SHN and HIV and AIDS.

Methods:

The Policy and Strategic Plan were informed by a rapid situation analysis of the education sector's response to the epidemic within the context of SHN. This involved broad stakeholder consultation and enacted the principles of the Greater Involvement of People living with HIV and AIDS. The approach responded to priorities of the Ministry of Education in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the National AIDS Programme.



Figure 1. Minister of Education Guyana, Hon. Shaik Baksh (centre), chairs a meeting of local and international development partners and senior officials of the Ministry of Education to discuss current and recommended actions for a comprehensive education sector response to HIV and AIDS. Source: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, GUYANA

Results:

The draft *School Health and Nutrition and HIV Prevention Policy* aims to promote and facilitate the implementation of health and nutrition programming and HIV Prevention throughout the education sector in Guyana. The draft *Guyana Education Sector School Health, Nutrition and HIV&AIDS Strategic Plan (2008-2012)* identifies four objectives:

- (i) to strengthen institutional capacity to manage SHN and HIV at the central and decentralized levels of the education system;
- (ii) to mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS on the education system;
- (iii) to improve the delivery quality of HIV education, health and nutrition and expand access to services;
- (iv) to improve school safety, hygiene and sanitation.

Implementation of the Policy and Strategic Plan will be guided by a framework for a comprehensive education sector response to HIV and AIDS and school health. This will include health promotion education through a life-skills based curriculum, workplace and teacher training programmes on HIV and AIDS and SHN. One recommended framework to guide the response is the school health initiative for Focusing Resources for Effective School Health (FRESH).

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