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Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS into primary and secondary education programmes

Experiences from the CEMAC countries in Central Africa

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Lessons learned:

- The prior definition of a comprehensive sub-regional framework and strong political commitment were instrumental in ensuring effective implementation of HIV and AIDS curricula;
- Close collaboration between the education and health sectors facilitated national ownership and the coordination of HIV and AIDS related interventions;
- Teachers and educators expressed the need to access comprehensive, accurate and reliable information about HIV and AIDS;
- Satisfaction among young people visiting health clinics positively influences the frequency of their visits to such clinics and listening centres.

Recommendations:

- Mainstreaming education on HIV and AIDS in school settings is an asset which must be strengthened;
- HIV and AIDS education should start in the first grade of primary school and should also be mainstreamed in secondary school, in non-formal education and literacy programmes. Parents and communities need to be fully involved in the process;
- The content of HIV and AIDS education should be culturally relevant, gender sensitive, age-appropriate, and context-specific ; it should have a particular focus on behaviour change and the promotion of values among young people ;
- Teacher training programmes need to cover appropriate pedagogical approaches, basic knowledge about HIV and AIDS and also more in-depth information about treatment, care and support as well as legal and administrative frameworks.



Figure 1. Materials developed under the IEC/CCC/SRA project, "Projet d'Appui au Programme National de la Santé de la Reproduction" (Project supporting the National Programme on Reproductive Health; Cameroon)

Methods:

- Full involvement of the education sector in the countries concerned, from the initial development of curricula and manuals to the training of teachers, administrators and national experts;
- Use of resources and tools developed by the UNESCO International Bureau of Education and others already available at country level;
- Sharing of experiences, good practices and research results through national and sub-regional workshops;
- Alignment of technical and financial partners to support the process and optimize related actions;
- Collaboration with local behaviour change communication organizations, health centres, and community radio programmes.

Results:

- Adoption of a harmonized framework for school-based HIV and AIDS education programmes;
- Establishment of a strategic partnership with technical and financial partners supporting HIV and AIDS interventions in the sub-region;
- Curricula and pedagogical guides for HIV and AIDS education adapted for each country and now being implemented in 6 countries;
- 137 experts and education officers trained in the development of school-based HIV and AIDS education programmes.

In Cameroon, close collaboration between the Ministries of Health and Education has resulted in "Projet d'Appui au Programme National de la Santé de la Reproduction" which resulted in the:

- Training of 1,900 teachers from 399 educational institutions, ultimately benefiting approximately 60,000 students;
- Development of programmes, manuals and training materials for peer educators, journalists and community radio;
- An increase in the number of young people seeking information and guidance about HIV and AIDS from health centres on project sites.

Background:

- The sub-region is characterized by a generalized HIV epidemic, with national HIV prevalence rates fluctuating between 3.2% and 10.7% among countries concerned. In 2006, the total population of the sub-region was 36 million people. Students, teachers and other education personnel account for more than 20% of the population in the sub-region.
- Education Ministers from the CEMAC* countries have recommended the introduction of HIV and AIDS education at school, guided by a sub-regional framework. (* CEMAC includes Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon).