

Guinea-Bissau: Developing a national HIV and AIDS policy for the education sector

EDUCAIDS Country Snapshot



National stakeholders at policy & strategy validation workshop

Information about HIV and education in Guinea-Bissau

Guinea-Bissau is marked by a generalised HIV epidemic, with an overall HIV prevalence of 2.6% and 4.3% for pregnant women aged 15-24 years. Young people are of particular concern, as only 13% of this age group were able to both correctly identify ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission. No schools are reported to have provided age specific life skills-based HIV education in the last academic year (UNGASS 2010). For more information: http://www.unaids.org/en/CountryResponses/Countries/guinea_bissau.asp

How the education sector response to HIV and AIDS has been supported

In late 2007 an adapted South-South cooperation project was developed between the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Africa (BREDA) and UNESCO Brasilia to provide support to the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, in particular to Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. Under the project framework and in collaboration with the Brazilian Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, UNESCO sponsored a national workshop in order to mobilise Guinea-Bissau's education sector to participate more effectively in the national AIDS response. The workshop brought together the Guinean Ministries of Health and Education, the National Institute for the Development of Education (INDE), UNAIDS Co-Sponsor agencies and the heads of teacher training institutes for the drafting of the *National HIV & AIDS Policy and Strategic Plan for the Education Sector*.

Political instability and internal ministerial changes in Guinea-Bissau slowed the advancement of the policy process from the time of initial drafting. In early July 2010, a two-day national workshop was held that reunited the initial participants involved in the drafting (2007), as well as representatives from national NGOs and civil society organisations (faith-based and youth-based), for the technical and social validation of the *National HIV & AIDS Policy and Strategic Plan for the Education Sector*. Through the on-going technical and financial support afforded by the South-South Cooperation initiative, the policy and strategic plan documents were finalised in late 2010 and are now awaiting political validation by the government. Due to strong advocacy on the part of INDE, the Minister of Education stands strongly behind the policy document and is keen to move forward with resource mobilisation to assure rapid implementation of the strategic plan.

As a result of the Ministry of Education's partnership with the *Secretariado Nacional de Luta Contra SIDA* (National AIDS Commission), the policy plan is well-aligned with the National AIDS Strategic Plan (PEN II). Similarly, the activities of the policy plan lend support to the new National Education Sector Plan, developed with support from UNESCO and UNICEF, to jointly strengthen the education system.

What was achieved

Through a joint effort, the policy and strategic plan were both unanimously validated by all participants in the national workshop, an essential step before presentation of the final document to the Minister, and subsequently the Council of Ministers, for approval.

The process of developing and finalising the policy has created valuable partnerships at the national level between national partners, ministries and UN agencies. The in-country support of UNESCO tied the policy activities more closely to the work of the Joint UN Team on HIV and AIDS and has strengthened relations for future joint programming. UNFPA, a long time supporter of INDE and educational HIV programming in the country, and UNESCO will work together to deliver joint support to the national process of curriculum revision, already in process and identified by stakeholders as a priority activity of the HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan. Similarly, the Ministry of Health has expressed the need for more HIV prevention within the broader context of sexuality education and is open to working more closely with the Ministry of Education on HIV prevention programming.

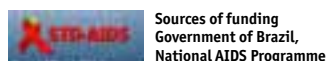
What we learned

- It was essential to focus on country ownership in developing the policy in order to guarantee that the policy content was a true blend of the national reality and global standards, as well as to ensure on-going participation of key partners during future implementation.
- The transfer of financial and technical support through South-South partnerships must take into consideration the cultural and social realities of recipient countries in order to ensure a true exchange and adaptation of activities to the local context.
- Success in implementation is also dependent on political will at all levels of government and must outlast successive changes in heads of Ministries.
- Processes must be based on strong collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders, with long-term, reliable funding sources secured as soon as possible.
- Continuous efforts are required to ensure that the response to HIV and AIDS forms an integral part of the education sector's priorities and that it is consistently included in budget planning and fund raising.

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



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