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Education sector responses to HIV and AIDS in Burkina Faso and Togo

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Lessons learned:

- In both Burkina Faso and Togo, HIV is highly stigmatized in the school environment leading to strong discrimination of affected pupils and teachers.

Recommendations:

- Education ministries should prepare HIV and AIDS sectoral guidelines in consultation with partners.
- AIDS education should be strengthened at primary level.
- Care and support for education sector workers living with HIV and for orphans and other vulnerable children should be improved.
- More consultation, collaboration and co-ordination between partners is necessary.
- A culture of monitoring and evaluation needs to be developed.

Background:

- Research highlights the importance of education in responding to the AIDS epidemic. However, less attention is given to the impact of the epidemic on education systems in West Africa.
- In 2005 and 2006, the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning conducted studies on the impact of HIV and AIDS on the organization, functioning and performance of the education systems in Burkina Faso and Togo.

Methods:

In both countries the methodology consisted of:

- a review of national documents and statistics;
- in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions with senior education ministry officials, teacher unions and organizations, and technical and financial partners;
- in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions with staff and students in primary and secondary schools of two districts.



Results:

- HIV is highly stigmatized in the school environment, leading to discrimination of affected pupils and teachers.
- Misconceptions tend to decline as students advance in the education system at secondary level.
- Peer educators, at secondary level, are a vital link in the prevention chain.
- Teachers are insufficiently prepared to teach HIV prevention education: too few have been trained.
- Practices of granting good grades to pupils in exchange for sexual favours exist and require attention.

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