

Lesotho: Promoting the Greater Involvement of Teachers living with HIV and AIDS to strengthen the education sector response

EDUCAIDS Country Snapshot



Consultative workshop towards the establishment of LENETEREHA

Information about HIV and education in Lesotho

Lesotho is classified as a hyperendemic country, in which more than 300,000 people, out of a total population of just over two million, are living with HIV. The HIV prevalence is estimated at 18.7% for young people (15-24 years), slightly lower than the 23.6% adult prevalence (15-49 years). Only about 26% of young women and 18% of young men can both identify ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and reject major misconceptions about transmission. According to the most recent data, life skills-based HIV education is reportedly delivered at 88% of schools. For more information: <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/lesotho/>

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

In Lesotho, more than 130,000 children and adolescents are orphaned due to AIDS, which together with AIDS-related sickness affects enrolment and retention rates. The education system is also weakened by HIV-related workforce attrition and absenteeism. To address these challenges, UNESCO and other development partners have provided support and technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Training and other stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive education sector response to HIV and AIDS within the EDUCAIDS framework. One of the five components of the framework is 'educator training and support' as it is particularly important to support education personnel who live with HIV, including teachers, so that they remain in schools.

An effective approach to support teachers living with HIV is to mobilise and empower them so that they advocate for their needs, defend their rights and address stigma and discrimination in the education sector. This in turn helps them access prevention, treatment, care and support services. In collaboration with the Lesotho Network of People living with HIV and AIDS (LENEPWHA), teachers' unions and the Ministry of Education and Training, a number of working group consultations were conducted in 2010 that resulted in the decision in December 2010 to establish the Lesotho Network of Teachers Responding to HIV and AIDS (LENETEREHA). This national network is designed to empower and support those teachers affected by HIV and facilitate their access to HIV services. Its creation was informed by a similar network in Kenya, which three members of the Lesotho working group visited for best practice sharing.

UNESCO has also helped to facilitate increased participation and contributions from teachers living with HIV during the formulation of the draft education sector policy on HIV and AIDS, and in the development of related teaching and learning materials. This is in line with the principle of Greater Involvement of People living with HIV and AIDS (GIPA) as this helps to realise the rights and responsibilities of people living with HIV, including their rights to self-determination and participation in

decision-making processes affecting their lives. These efforts have been made possible thanks to the financial support provided to UNESCO by the Virginio Bruni-Tedeschi Foundation and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), amongst others.

What was achieved

The greater involvement of teachers living with HIV enhances the quality and effectiveness of the education sector's HIV and AIDS response in Lesotho. The partnership established with LENEPWHA in late 2009 resulted in the following achievements in the first year:

- The Lesotho Network of Teachers Responding to HIV and AIDS was established in 2010. It provides improved access to social and health services for teachers.
- The Network also serves as a platform through which HIV-positive teachers can advocate for their needs in the education sector.

What we learned

- Very few programmes exist that meet the specific needs of teachers and other personnel living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. The increasing availability of treatment, which prolongs the lives of people living with HIV, means that the education sector must be prepared to deal with an increasing number of HIV-positive staff.
- Establishing adequate social protection and community support structures can empower teachers living with HIV and AIDS to disclose their status. This can also address stigma and discrimination – the main barriers to accessing essential HIV services – and help teachers reach out to positive learners.
- People living with HIV represent an important, but largely untapped, resource for achieving Universal Access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services.

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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