

Introduction

As the United Nations specialised agency for education, the UNESCO Harare Cluster Office participated in Zimbabwe's commemoration of World Teachers' Day on 3 October 2008. The commemorations held at Queen Elizabeth High School honoured teachers for their commitment and hard work. Under the theme "*Teachers Matter*", the celebrations drew attention to the vital contribution that teachers have made and continue to make in developing the country.



Participants

Representatives from the Harare City Council, UNESCO Harare Cluster Office, Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), Zimbabwe Teachers Association (ZIMTA), and Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ), non-governmental organisations and teachers attended this momentous event.



Key Messages

All messages highlighted the important role teachers played in developing sound and progressive societies.

Addressing teachers at the ceremony, the Deputy Mayor of Harare, Mr Chiroto noted that teachers bear the responsibility of imparting knowledge and in place of parents become the main source of values to children. However, the teaching profession faces numerous challenges including the impact of the AIDS epidemic. To mitigate some of the challenges faced by teachers in the country, the Harare City Council has embarked on a scheme to enable teachers to acquire houses in the city.



The Deputy Mayor of Harare Mr Chiroto addressing the teachers and other key stakeholders at the commemorations.



Roselyn Wabuge-Mwangi, Education Programme Specialist delivering the UNESCO Director General, Koichiro Matsuura's speech to the delegates at the commemoration.

Echoing similar sentiments, the Director General of UNESCO Koichiro Matsuura highlighted that the teaching profession faces the challenge of providing quality education to meet the new demands of the 21st century. In a speech read on his behalf by Roselyn Wabuge-Mwangi, Education Programme Specialist in the Harare Cluster Office, the Director General identified economic, social, scientific and technological needs and the AIDS epidemic as some of the factors that continue to adversely affect the profession. He called for well articulated policies which will foster a motivated, valued and effective teaching force.

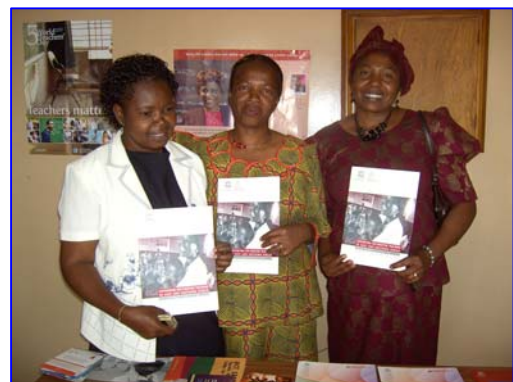
Workers representatives from ZIMTA and PTUZ expressed appreciation for the recognition of the key role teachers have in society. However, they also noted that teachers felt undervalued, insufficiently supported and ill equipped professionally to cope with challenges in their work environments. To ensure that teachers played their role in the achievement of the Education for All goals, the representatives called for more programmes to improve the lives of teachers.



Raymond Majongwe, Secretary General for the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (left) and Tendai Chikowore (right), President for the Zimbabwe Teachers Association speaking to fellow teachers who attended the commemorations.

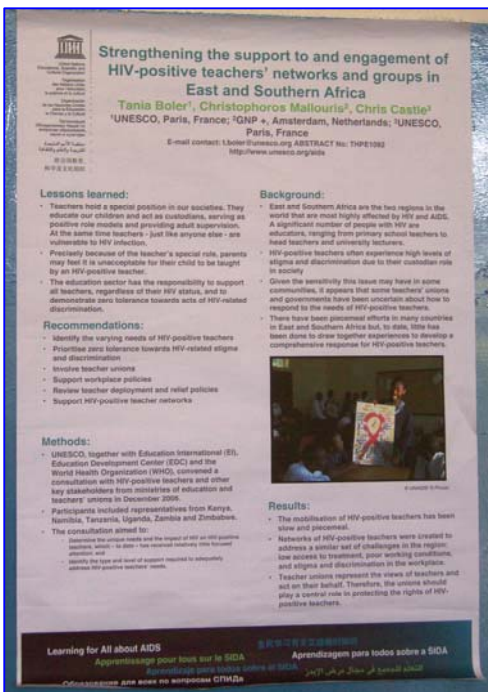
UNESCO's Participation

The Harare Cluster Office participated in the commemoration to affirm the importance of teachers and promote programmes and policies to ensure the existence of an effective teaching force. Most importantly, World Teachers Day provided the Harare Cluster Office with an opportunity to advocate for the recognition of the rights of HIV positive teachers and creation of supportive environments for them. HIV positive teachers who have disclosed their status are stigmatized by their communities resulting in barriers to accessing services. High levels of stigma and discrimination lead to a decrease in numbers of teachers testing for HIV. Meanwhile, the quality of education is compromised due to teacher absenteeism because of HIV-related illnesses and death. World Teachers Day provided a platform to highlight the plight of positive



teachers as well as the key role they could play in preventing the further spread of HIV and reduction of stigma and discrimination.

Further to delivering the Director General's, UNESCO had an exhibition of the organization's materials on education and HIV & AIDS. These included the UNESCO's Strategy for Responding to HIV and AIDS, the Technical Consultation Report for Supporting HIV Positive Teachers in East and Southern Africa and the EDUCAIDS Resource Pack among others.



In addition, the Organisation showcased the poster from the 17th International AIDS Conference held in Mexico in August 2008. Entitled ***“Strengthening the support to and engagement of HIV positive teacher networks and groups in east and southern Africa”***, the poster discusses the engagement of HIV positive teachers as part of the solution in the response to HIV and AIDS. Other elements covered include recommendations on how inclusion of HIV positive teachers in the response can be achieved as well as the role teachers’ unions play in this framework.

Key Observations/Recommendations

- Teachers unions welcomed UNESCO's participation in the World Teachers Day commemoration and its focus on HIV positive teachers.
- Participation in planning phases for the commemoration enhanced UNESCO's areas of focus and paved the way for future collaborations with teachers unions and the two ministries of education.

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