

Mainstreaming HIV in Education

Advocacy Briefing Note

Advocacy Briefing Notes have been developed by the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education aim to assist education professionals to advocate for issues related to education sector responses to HIV.

The first four in the series (2008) address:

- Girls' Education and HIV Prevention
- HIV and AIDS Education in Emergencies
- Mainstreaming HIV in Education
- Teachers Living with HIV

About the UNAIDS IATT on Education

The UNAIDS IATT on Education was created in 2002 to support accelerated and improved education sector responses to HIV and AIDS.

It is convened by UNESCO and includes as members UNAIDS Cosponsors, bilateral agencies, private donors, and civil society partners.

It has as specific objectives to promote and support good practices in the education sector in relation to HIV and AIDS and to encourage alignment and harmonisation within and across agencies to support global and country-level actions.

For more information on the IATT on Education: <http://www.unesco.org/aids/iatt>

Introduction

Education and HIV & AIDS are inextricably linked. On the one hand, the chances of achieving crucial education goals set by the international community are severely threatened by HIV and AIDS. On the other hand, global commitments to strategies, policies and programmes that reduce the vulnerability of children and young people to HIV will not be met without the full contribution of the education sector.

Preventing and mitigating the impact of the AIDS epidemic through the education sector is critical, yet all too often responsibility for education and HIV has fallen under different spheres of

authority. HIV and AIDS is frequently an add-on to the existing education system, rather than an integral part of education planning.

A comprehensive sector-wide approach which mainstreams HIV and AIDS into existing education sector programmes – taking account of the underlying causes of vulnerability to HIV infection and the longer term consequences of AIDS – is a crucial step towards addressing the epidemic. In addition, early mainstreaming actions in low prevalence countries may help to stem the surge of AIDS epidemics and reduce the likelihood that concentrated epidemics become more generalised.

Current Situation

One of the key challenges in addressing HIV and AIDS continues to be the level of denial around the disease. In many countries and contexts, HIV and AIDS has not traditionally been regarded by the educational establishment as a substantial problem. Lack of awareness is often closely followed by stigma and discrimination.ⁱⁱ

HIV and AIDS continue to be seen predominantly as a health issue. Other key sectors, such as education, are given insufficient attention by governments and their development partners, and are not consistently considered in HIV and AIDS policy, plans and funding mechanisms. In 2004, for example, 60% of funding to education for HIV was not going through National AIDS Coordinating mechanisms.ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover, many education organizations or ministries of education are unaware of the various sources of HIV funding available to them in their countries as part of multisectoral responses to the epidemic.

Although the political will to tackle HIV and AIDS has grown enormously over recent years, there is still a yawning gap between the global agenda and actual implementation. Around one-third of key non-health sectors worldwide are starting to implement AIDS plans.^{iv} However, where such plans do exist, they are often not being

implemented at the school level because they have been developed in isolation from other policy and budgetary processes. HIV and AIDS priorities have not been mainstreamed into overarching educational plans – such as Education for All (EFA) priorities or Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Without feeding into mainstream educational policy changes, an HIV and AIDS strategic plan is likely to become redundant, and difficult to implement.^v

In order to encourage ministries of education to take more responsibility for HIV and AIDS, the donor community has supported the creation of AIDS-related structures within education ministries, and the employment of a designated person to coordinate work on HIV and AIDS. However, these units tend to be isolated, under-resourced and lacking in institutional leverage. Often they do not have access to the evidence base they need to formulate effective policies on HIV and AIDS. They are ineffective at getting ministries of education to take AIDS more seriously and have poor lobbying powers vis-à-vis ministries of finance, which hold the resources needed. In fact, having one designated individual responsible for HIV and AIDS may serve to hinder the effective mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS by effectively relieving other departments of HIV and AIDS responsibilities.^{vi}

Advocating for Change

Mainstreaming HIV prevention and HIV and AIDS mitigation activities within education sector plans should be a priority in each country. Mainstreaming ensures that addressing HIV and AIDS is not an add-on or separate activity, but becomes an integral part of education sector policies, strategies and actions. Education sector

stakeholders, in collaboration with other key actors such as the health sector and the National AIDS authority, should take the lead on all HIV and AIDS activities in the education sector, including projects and programmes implemented by external partners.^{vii}



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- **Country context:** any response to HIV and AIDS needs to take account of the fact that the character and state of the epidemic differs between countries. The epidemic is a moving target; social, economic, cultural and political factors determine the speed at which it spreads and its impact. These contextual factors must guide the strategic response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic in each given country. For example, in Mozambique the new school curriculum includes a specific amount of time for a “local curriculum”, which has been used to include locally specific content on HIV prevention.
- **Harmonisation:** country and education sector plans, as well as strategies for combating poverty and for addressing HIV and AIDS, must constitute the basis for all HIV and AIDS interventions in education. The universally accepted ‘Three Ones’ principle should be supported and promoted – i.e. one agreed HIV and AIDS framework; one national AIDS coordinating authority; and one country-level monitoring and evaluation system. Harmonisation with other cooperation partners to implement common arrangements, simplify procedures and reduce transaction costs is an important priority. It is critical that all support is aligned with national sector plans and that financial support is provided as part of harmonised funding arrangements.
- **Comprehensive approach:** a comprehensive approach to HIV and AIDS in education that promotes and protects

human rights requires attention to prevention, care and support (including access to treatment), impact mitigation, workplace issues and management of the response. Commitment to longer-term interventions is essential, as is the involvement of people living with HIV and AIDS. Promoting a better understanding of factors that put people at risk of HIV (such as unsafe sexual practices, substance abuse, etc.), of factors that drive stigma and discrimination, of gender and equity issues, of sexual and reproductive health and rights, of school community linkages, and of the special education needs of children affected by HIV and AIDS, are all part of a comprehensive approach.

- **Support modalities:** the preferred support modality for international cooperation agencies is coordinated sector programme support. This provides an excellent opportunity for ensuring that HIV and AIDS are mainstreamed and addressed throughout the education system. At the international level, the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) provides an example of an opportunity for ensuring that HIV and AIDS are integrated into policies and practice in education. In addition, other education projects and programmes, including direct HIV and AIDS interventions, have a crucial and complementary role to play in ensuring effective implementation of education plans.

Key Questions

1. Has the Ministry of Education (MoE) and/or the Ministry of Health (MoH) developed a Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS and education? Is it integrated into annual sector workplans? Is the Strategic Plan aligned with national sector plans and is financial support provided to the plan as part of harmonised funding arrangements?
2. What can be done to ensure that plans are in place to guide the MoE’s response to HIV and AIDS in all departments, and that they are incorporated and monitored as part of the sector’s annual planning processes?
3. What kind of dialogue or action should be supported to strengthen the MoE response and to ensure that attention is paid to HIV and AIDS?
4. Have processes been established to identify and support leaders and partners who can help prioritise mainstreaming? How are HIV and AIDS focal points, if they exist, handling this workload?
5. Have commitments been made to longer term HIV and AIDS interventions? Do they meaningfully involve people living with HIV?
6. What support and recognition have been offered to teachers, who are at the forefront of HIV prevention and mitigation?
7. Have HIV and AIDS been integrated into the school curriculum? How effective has integration been? What preparation do teachers receive to deliver this curriculum?

Looking Forward

Strong leadership is needed to advocate the message of HIV and AIDS mainstreaming in education and to motivate others to integrate HIV and AIDS initiatives and messages into existing policies and programmes. Mainstreaming requires a process of long-term commitment to institutional change that affects norms, values and systems, and tackles stigma and discrimination.

The role of governments, development agencies and partners is ensuring that advocacy and leadership are part and parcel of approaches to HIV and AIDS, that every effort is made to coordinate actions on the ground, and that environments are truly supportive of emerging leaders so that advocacy activities are generated. Partnerships will often be new and less traditional in nature, including with, for example, the business community, religious leaders or people in entertainment.

Overview of IATT Activity

- UNAIDS IATT on Education. 2008. *Toolkit for Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in the Education Sector: Guidelines for Development Cooperation Agencies*. Paris: UNESCO.
- IATT Symposium on “Mainstreaming HIV & AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights in Education: Challenges in Reality”, 6 November 2006, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Hosted by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- UNAIDS, World Bank, UNDP. 2005. *Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in Sectors and Programs – An Implementation Guide for National Responses*. Geneva: UNAIDS.
- UNAIDS, World Bank, UNDP. 2005. *Mainstreaming AIDS in Development Instruments and Processes at National Level – a Review of Experiences*. Geneva: UNAIDS.

ⁱ “Mainstreaming is a process that enables development actors to address the causes and effects of HIV and AIDS as they relate to their mandate in an effective and sustained manner, both through their usual work and through their workplace.” UNAIDS, 2006. *Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*. Geneva: UNAIDS.

^{ii, iii, iv} HIV prevalence data for India from UNAIDS and WHO. 2007. *2007 AIDS Epidemic Update*. Geneva: UNAIDS and WHO. Assessment of the education sector response in India from IATT Symposium on “Mainstreaming HIV & AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights in Education: Challenges in Reality”, 6 November 2006, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

^{v, vi} Boler, T. 2003. *The Challenge of Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into Education*. PowerPoint Presentation

^{vii} UNAIDS IATT on Education. 2008. *Toolkit for Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in the Education Sector: Guidelines for Development Cooperation Agencies*. Paris: UNESCO.