

**Report on a Seminar in Abuja with the Federal Ministry of Education and Niepa, Ondo with Education Representatives of the Enugu, Kaduna, Oyo, and Taraba States, 16 – 20 June 2003 Abuja, Nigeria and 23 – 27 June 2003 Niepa, Ondo, Nigeria. *Accelerating the Education Sector Response to HIV/AIDS in Nigeria.***

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In the continuing absence of a medical cure, prevention of HIV/AIDS demands a ‘social vaccine’ of which an effective education response is a key component. During July 2003, two seminars were held in Nigeria by the Federal and State Governments to strengthen the roles of the education sector in Nigeria. These seminars were developed within the framework of an ambitious but urgently needed initiative to Accelerate the Education Sector Response to HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

This initiative is being operationalized through a series of sub-regional seminars which aim to catalyze intensified action by the education sector within the national strategic framework for an HIV/AIDS response. It works through partnerships to maximize synergy, lesson learning, effective co-ordination and collective activity. International leadership and technical guidance are provided through the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education which is convened by UNESCO and includes all UNAIDS cosponsors, representatives from bilateral development agencies such as USAID and DFID and from international NGOs.

The Nigeria seminars were based on an approach to workshop delivery developed at sub-regional seminars for Eastern Africa, held in November 2002 at Mombassa, Kenya and for Central Africa, in May 2003 in Libreville, Gabon. Observers from Nigeria participated in both seminars and requested that the approach be implemented in Nigeria.

The workshops for Nigeria were necessarily different from the multi-country precursors having to cater for the complexities of a large multi-jurisdictional state. Accordingly, a twin track approach was taken initiated at the Federal Government level in Abuja (16-20 June) and followed up at State Government level at the National Institute for Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA) in Ondo (23-27 June). Teams from four states (Enugu, Kaduna, Oyo and Taraba) participated in the Ondo workshop. NIEPA is charged with offering similar workshops to all 36 States in Nigeria over the next 12 months. A criterion for selection of the first group of States was inclusion in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme which will be supported by the World Bank and DFID. The UBE programme also includes provision for supporting HIV/AIDS interventions.

The purpose of the workshops was to share and build on existing education sector HIV/AIDS interventions in order to accelerate a comprehensive and strategic response at both Federal and State Government levels. The workshops were supported by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) and the National Action Committee against AIDS (NACA), and coordinated jointly by the FME HIV/AIDS Unit and NIEPA. Facilitation and technical support for the participatory processes was provided by Nigerian and international development professionals from 17 agencies, including UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, UNFPA, UNESCO, the World Bank, DFID and PCD. The workshops enabled the distribution of technical resources to participants and key institutions in the sector, including more than 7000 key documents in both print and CD-ROM formats.

The starting point for the workshop discussions were the NACA HIV/AIDS Emergency Action Plan, the FME National Action Plan, and the FME/UNAIDS/UNESCO Preventive Education Initiative. Attention was given to four thematic areas, in particular, as a focus for group work in both workshops. These were:

- planning and impact mitigation;
- prevention;
- education access for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC); and
- policy development, including workplace policies.

Group work included tasks to assess the current situation regarding responses in the four thematic areas, the identification of achievements and promising practices, the identification of gaps in policy and implementation and finally the specification of objectives and activities to be taken forward at both Federal and States levels after the workshops, including priority actions to be completed within 90 days.

Significant outcomes of the workshops were the prioritization of the components of the FME National Action Plan and the identification of important gaps (e.g. OVC, education sector specific policy). Proposed actions to accelerate the education response to HIV/AIDS in Nigeria included the following:

***Development of management capacity:*** strengthen the FME HIV/AIDS Unit, NERDC and NIEPA, together with HIV/AIDS Units within the State Ministries of Education.

***Planning and impact mitigation:*** accelerate the collection, analysis and use of data, through district level EMIS and the inclusion of HIV/AIDS specific indicators, and stronger partnerships with NACA, SACA and the health sector.

***Prevention:*** implement the Family Life and HIV/AIDS Education (FLHE) curriculum, developed by NERDC, at primary and secondary levels, through the development and dissemination of teaching and learning materials together with a proposed strategy for cascade in-service teacher training and accelerating the establishment of Anti-AIDS Clubs in secondary schools, taking into consideration the lessons learned from promising approaches currently being piloted in a number of states.

***Ensuring education access for OVC:*** identify and remove barriers to primary and secondary education for OVC, and ensure closer collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Youth.

***Policy:*** develop, in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour and other stakeholders, a national policy on HIV/AIDS in the education sector, and support its dissemination, adoption and adaptation at state level, including the development of workplace policy informed by the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS.

In conclusion, the hard work and strong commitment to address HIV/AIDS evidenced by the participants in these two workshops promises the development of a more comprehensive and strategic policy and programme response to the epidemic in Nigeria. The FME has made a firm commitment to accelerate the response to HIV/AIDS, and plans to present the progress made over the next 90 days at the International Congress for AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa in Nairobi in September 2003.

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