CONSULTATION ON HIV/ AIDS AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

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HIV AND EDUCATION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This is a Crisis. Increasing numbers of countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, are facing one of the great crises of human history. other countries in Eastern Europe and the Asia and Pacific regions will confront similar challenges as the pandemic spreads. Despite the difference in the nature of HIV and AIDS pandemics in the Americas and Europe, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific, it should be possible to extrapolate common ideas about what works and what doesn't in the fight against AIDS.

HIV/AIDS the Virus and HIV/AIDS the Pandemic. The ***virus*** known as HIV/AIDS has been around since the late 1970s. Responses to it have been largely biomedical, focused on preventing the spread of the disease. Rising prevalence rates worldwide indicate that strategies to contain the virus have not been effective. As HIV/AIDS spreads, individuals, families, communities and nations have to learn to live with the disease. But HIV/AIDS is no longer just a disease. It is now a ***pandemic***, an entirely different though clearly linked phenomenon that needs understanding in far broader geographical, demographic, environmental, economic and social terms. The full complexity of this phenomenon is not yet understood. Governments and communities are only starting to define its social, economic and cultural characteristics. The fight against 'HIV/AIDS the virus' will continue while the battle with 'HIV/AIDS the pandemic' is joined.

The Education Sector. As the pandemic snowballs, health-driven national strategies are being replaced by multisectoral strategies in which ministries of education are now taking responsibility for identifying and driving education's response to HIV, as in Botswana, Namibia, Rwanda and South Africa. for example. Ministries of education alone do not have the capacity to respond to the challenges HIV/AIDS poses for education. It is clear they can only achieve their strategic goals in partnership with others. The capacities of partners within the education sector as a whole need to be strengthened, and policy and regulatory frameworks established for effective collaboration.

The Role of the Education Sector in Fighting AIDS. HIV/AIDS is raising four principal questions for the education sector for which answers are only starting to emerge:

1. What is the role of the education sector in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS among young people?
2. How can the sector ensure that all young people, especially orphans and other vulnerable children, achieve their full potential?
3. How can the sector, which is the biggest employer in most countries, protect the viability of the education service, and therefore the quality of education provision?
4. How can the education sector continue to improve access to and quality of education services in the face of HIV/AIDS?

General agreement has emerged over the past three years (USAID, 2001; Coombe and Kelly, 2001; Inter-Agency Working Group, 2001, for example) that there are three principal areas of concern for sector partners:

1. *Prevention*: helping prevent the spread of AIDS
2. *Social Support*: working with others to provide a modicum of care and support for learners and educators affected by HIV/AIDS, and
3. *Sustaining Education Quality and Provision*: protecting the education sector's capacity to provide adequate levels of quality education – by stabilising the sector, and responding to new learning needs.

In addition, an effective response will require *capacity in the sector to manage* this crisis.

Clearly the education sector cannot be responsible for 'solving' the immense challenges raised by this pandemic. The sector can, in a very focused way, define exactly what educators can and should be responsible for doing in support of the nation's fight against HIV/AIDS, and then take effective action on defined short- medium- and long-term strategic priorities.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'HIV AND EDUCATION'?

Education can no longer be 'business as usual'. Our understanding of curriculum development will never be the same again. Our educational support services can no longer focus narrowly on children with special learning needs while ignoring those of vast numbers of orphaned, abused and suffering children affected by HIV and AIDS. The lack of school-based support systems will now cost lives, rather than merely perpetuating inadequate teaching and learning. Our managers cannot rely on the models of the past to drive education into the future.

The paradigm of education is shifting, and we must change our concepts and planning principles, or watch the achievements registered by EFA being steadily undone. We must move from a narrow 'HIV education' curriculum campaign towards a broader 'HIV and education' paradigm.

What does 'HIV and education' mean? The pandemic-as-phenomenon is vastly complex, and individual educators, researchers, policy makers and analysts, planners and funders each confront this plague from a different perspective.

A broad multidisciplinary approach by educators to the pandemic is essential. The following 'HIV and education' construct is a work in progress. It attempts to set out particularly significant issues for education practitioners and researchers coming to it from different perspectives. There are clearly more facets to be added.

*General issues***:** Learning to contend with the pandemic's impact on the education sector; identifying (1) the nature and extent of education's responsibility for fighting HIV/AIDS and caring for those affected; (2) at what point educators should transfer responsibility for learners in difficulty to social services; and (3) the extent to which schools and other educational institutions are (or should be) part of communities' response to the pandemic.

*Education and training subsectors***:** In higher education (for example), protecting learners and staff as well as the institution itself; understanding within the university community how the pandemic will affect national and community life, and revising taught curricula in all faculties appropriately; creating a knowledge bank about the pandemic capable of serving national development and security; training for predicted labour shortages starting with teachers, health workers, and social welfare staff; undertaking research in priority areas, on orphanhood and thanatology for example, on the psycho-social roots of the pandemic, on economic impact.

*Management, policy and planning issues***:** Understanding and predicting the pandemic's implications for management and development within the education sector; managing the pandemic in a way that protects learners, educators and institutions; developing appropriate policies and strategic plans, and implementing them; systematically collecting and disseminating information and data as a basis for informed decision-making; establishing partnerships for action; mobilising and allocating resources effectively within the sector.

Pedagogical issues: Mainstreaming life-skills curricula in all learning institutions, and developing and evaluating appropriate materials; improving educator knowledge and skills; providing appropriate support to educators; evaluating content, implementation and outcomes of life skills curriculum; developing teacher competencies in care and counselling.

Psycho-social and care issues: Learning to be more sensitive to learner wellbeing, including children of trauma – those who are abused, harassed or victims of incest, who are vulnerable and at-risk, who are orphaned, who are heading households, or are caregivers; understanding adolescent sexuality, customary and imported behaviours, homosexuality and bisexuality and HIV/AIDS-related sexual behaviour; understanding 'orphanhood' and responding to it; learning from our past experience with school hostels, institutional care, and homebased care; analysing and planning for homebased care and school feeding schemes; defining the school's links with the community's response to the pandemic.

Educator development and support issues: Establishing HIV workplace policies in all learning institutions; supporting educators infected or affected by HIV; creating and applying appropriate codes of conduct; understanding the limitations of teachers as mentors, care-givers and guides and supplementing their efforts from social and health sector resources; reconstituting a culture of care and respect in learning institutions.

Gender concerns: Keeping issues related to the girl-child at risk at centre stage; recognising schools as unsafe places for girls and taking action; closely linking gender and HIV programmes for maximum efficiency; continuing advocacy, research and action on violence, abuse and rape in learning institutions.

Values, and moral and ethical issues. Understanding how values and customary and religious beliefs can either profoundly inhibit our understanding of this pandemic, or empower educators and learners to challenge the pandemic.

HIV and international agreements, legislation and application of the law, regulations, codes and human rights issues: Reviewing existing international and national conventions, education legislation and policy; establishing an appropriate legislative and regulatory framework; analysing issues of testing; identifying and protecting the rights and responsibilities of teachers; dealing rigorously with harassment and abuse, stigmatisation and discrimination in learning institutions; establishing codes of conduct and applying them.

Training, manpower and economic implications of HIV: Understanding the ramifications of HIV/AIDS for the teaching service including teacher attrition, replacement and deployment; identifying new teacher competencies required to cope with complex cohorts of learners; enabling training institutions to produce appropriately qualified teachers; helping to mitigate HIV's consequences for economic growth through education and training.

This broader concept of HIV and education means in practice that each educator is responsible in his or her own domain to make sense of what is happening, and to react appropriately. We are moving into unknown territory here, for few of the right questions and answers have as yet been tabled.

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