

Short report of the UNESCO workshop – supported by IIEP and the World Bank

Strengthening the Role of Education Ministries in the Government's Response to HIV/AIDS in Central Asia

Almaty, Kazakhstan, 22-24 October 2003

Background

UNESCO Almaty in collaboration with UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok supported by UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and the World Bank organised a regional workshop on the role of education ministries in the government's response to HIV/AIDS in Central Asia.

The workshop advocated for a stronger and more comprehensive response by Education Ministries in the countries of the Central Asian region: Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – focusing on preventive education and life skills in a wider school health context as well as in non-formal settings, planning and anticipating the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education sector, and on enhanced collaboration with other Ministries as well as UN and NGO partners.

Participants

26 representatives of the education and health sectors, national AIDS bodies, and NGOs from five countries participated in a regional workshop on HIV/AIDS prevention in Central Asia, organised by UNESCO and held in Almaty from 22nd to 24th October 2003.

There were three country delegates from Afghanistan, nine from Kazakhstan, four from Kyrgyzstan, five from Tajikistan, and five from Uzbekistan. The participants were MOE HIV/AIDS focal persons or equivalent and/or MOE Planning department representatives and/or MOE curriculum department representatives as well as national AIDS council/secretariat, MoH, or NGO representatives. In addition, delegates from UNICEF, UNIFEM and UNESCO participated in the workshop which was facilitated by a team (the Workshop Team) consisting of an independent consultant and representatives from UNESCO Almaty, UNESCO Bangkok, the IIEP, and the World Bank.¹

Workshop goals

The overall goal of the workshop was to develop a better understanding and enhanced commitment and engagement of education ministries throughout the region in regard to HIV/AIDS. More precisely, the goals of the workshop were

1. To review and analyse to what extent Ministries of Education are acting against HIV/AIDS, and what kind of policies, strategies and partnerships with other ministries or organizations are in place (for instance, with UNICEF, UNESCO, UNAIDS, World Education, World Bank).

¹ Please consult the annex for a detailed list of participants.

2. To advocate for stronger involvement of the Ministry of Education in the countries' national response to HIV/AIDS, by presenting and discussing possible actions the Ministry could take.
3. To discuss essential steps for enhancing the education sector's response to HIV/AIDS; for instance, how to plan and implement for curriculum changes needed to provide HIV preventive and life skills education to young people in and out-of-school
4. To identify needs and gaps for integrating HIV/AIDS related peer education and life skills based education into educational programmes
5. To promote the UNESCO Advocacy toolkit and its adaptation in the participating countries

To a certain extent, all these goals were achieved during the workshop. Follow-up efforts will help to keep the momentum and strengthen the commitments made.

Next steps envisaged by the country delegations

Towards the end of the workshop, the country delegates came to the following conclusions about how to strengthen their education sector's response:

Afghanistan

- Would like to install an MoE focal point responsible for “communicable diseases and drugs”²;
- Will develop an Education sector strategy for communicable diseases and drugs and needs UN cosponsor assistance for this;
- Would like to review the Advocacy kit in a workshop and implement it with UNESCO and other co-sponsor support;
- Needs (more) teaching-learning materials on HIV/AIDS and technical support to develop these.

Kazakhstan

- Said that a focal point for HIV/AIDS and drug addiction who performs the role of a coordinator, regulator, and organiser has been appointed already;
- Regards the advocacy kit as a potent tool and would appreciate its adaptation and implementation;
- Mentioned that a national strategic programme on HIV/AIDS is in place, based on a situation analysis and outlining target approaches and key activities;
- Is currently reviewing all aspects of teaching; a training of experts on HIV/AIDS would be especially welcomed at this stage.

Kyrgyzstan

- Would like to install a focal point in the MoE focusing on HIV/AIDS and substance abuse ;
- Points out that a national strategic programme on HIV/AIDS is in place and operational but that no exclusive Education sector document exists yet;

² In the two countries where a focal point for HIV/AIDS and substance abuse already exists (Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan), the mechanism has proven very useful. However, no single country – even if there is a focal point - seems to have a designated HIV/AIDS budget at the MoE.

- Would highly appreciate it if the Advocacy kit could be adapted and implemented in the national context;
- Would be happy to share its experiences in developing a curriculum in a regional ToT workshop. Such a workshop should involve teachers, NGOs, and health specialists.

Tajikistan

- Would welcome a focal point for HIV/AIDS and Education that also targets STIs and substance abuse;
- Will review and enhance the existing HIV/AIDS and Education sector plan;
- Sees the Advocacy kit as a very useful tool and would like to adapt and introduce it (after a focal point has been established);
- Would like to extend current pre- and in service teacher training classes on HIV/AIDS and recommends that medical staff should be included in a possible workshop;
- Would like to benefit from regional programmes for the training of trainers.

Uzbekistan

- Said that there already is a focal point for HIV/AIDS and Education but that no funds would be available to appoint another focal point;
- Mentioned that a strategic HIV/AIDS and Education programme exists but some gaps need to be filled (and recommends to include preschools and work with parents);
- Would like to adapt and implement the Advocacy toolkit and use it, among other things, to enhance the budget and focal point structure;
- Mentioned that UNESCO is currently supporting the development of a reproductive and family health curriculum, with strong involvement of other UN co-sponsors (especially UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO);
- Would welcome more regional activities to develop and strengthen regional collaboration.

To sum up, country delegates expressed that they would strongly appreciate the facilitation by UN cosponsors of:

1. Technical assistance for policy and planning development (including for workplace issues);
2. Technical assistance for curriculum development;
3. Increased advocacy efforts (including adaptation and implementation of the advocacy toolkit);
4. (Sub-regional level) core trainer training courses;
5. Strengthened (sub-regional) collaboration and exchange of technical expertise between countries.

Remarks

- Evaluation by questionnaire showed that overall satisfaction with the workshop was very high. Relevance of the activity to both current and future work was rated particularly high and so was the participants' satisfaction with the facilitators.

- The delegates expressed a strong willingness to work on strengthening the Education sector's response to HIV/AIDS and a strong appreciation of technical and financial support from UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA, UNAIDS, the World Bank, and other UN agencies for this purpose. The idea of establishing a technical support team consisting of experts from inside and outside the region was welcomed.
- The hiring of a full-time NPO, who will work to facilitate regional collaboration and information sharing in the field of HIV/AIDS and Education was welcomed.