

04 THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN FIGHTING THE EPIDEMIC

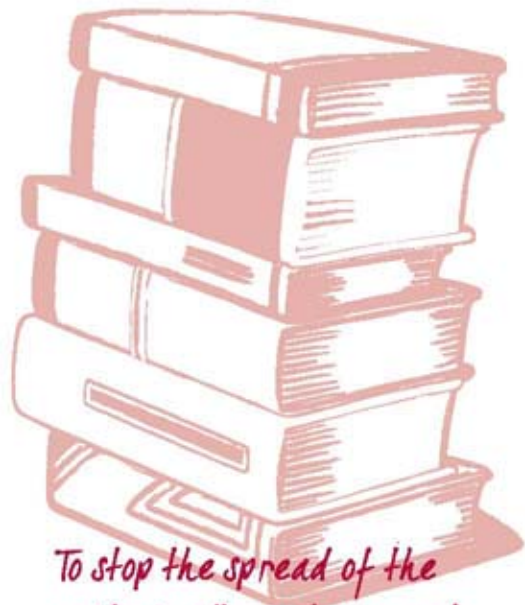
Given the absence of a cure and a vaccine, education is the most effective tool to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Why education can combat HIV/AIDS

The education system has the advantage of reaching out to many children and young people early, at a time when few are infected and before they engage in behaviour that may put them at risk of getting HIV. It can help prevent infection among young people, in both the long term and the short term.

Young people are in the process of acquiring knowledge and developing a set of values and life skills that will guide them through life. A fully inclusive education system can help young people to develop life skills to better protect themselves. Since education shapes attitudes and values, it can also help reduce discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

Studies from around the world show that young people provided with correct information, knowledge, and skills will not only delay starting their sexual activity, but once they start having sex, they will also be more likely to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.



To stop the spread of the epidemic, all countries must emphasize prevention in education, nutrition, information and health-care services.

paragraph 18, UNGASS declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, 2001



- There is no medicine to prevent and/or cure HIV/AIDS
- Education is the most important tool to fight HIV/AIDS
- Ministries/Departments of Education need to recognize their responsibility and be proactive

What the education sector can do

The Ministry/Department of Education¹ can do a number of things to prevent HIV/AIDS from spreading, to help the people who are already affected or infected, and to alleviate the impact of HIV/AIDS on society at large, and on the education sector in particular.

Ministries of Education recognise the fact that HIV/AIDS is a serious problem and that sexually active young people are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

In order to protect young people and education personnel from HIV/AIDS, education ministries will need to develop effective policies, leading to the development of comprehensive and appropriate curricula, and ensure that they are properly implemented.

Planning and managing HIV/AIDS education

- Ensure strategic, operational, and anticipatory planning processes which lead to early warning of impact and realistic and realisable operational plans and policies
- Reserve adequate budgetary provision with streamlined access to resources
- Appoint full-time mandated HIV-and-education officers within major institutions and make sure that their responsibilities regarding HIV/AIDS are clearly laid out in their job descriptions

Remember that the Education Ministry/Department is responsible for incorporating preventive education in the curriculum and facilitating implementation.

Incorporating HIV/AIDS prevention and care in the national curriculum

- Integrate HIV/AIDS issues in a broader health education approach, also including malaria, tuberculosis, reproductive health, substance abuse, and sexually transmitted infections
- Train teachers on how to deal with HIV-positive students and colleagues and how to teach about HIV/AIDS, life skills, and related issues, and integrate this content into the teacher training curriculum
- Develop adequate teaching and learning materials related to HIV/AIDS knowledge and skills based on a life skills approach and with supporting materials for use outside the school setting
- Consult the attached checklist for details on policy and planning needs



¹ Hereinafter Ministry/Department of Education refers to institutions at both National and State/Regional levels.