

A photograph of two young students in a classroom. The student in the foreground is a girl with short dark hair, wearing a brown and white checkered shirt, with her right hand raised high. Behind her, a boy in a tan shirt also has his right hand raised. They are both looking towards the camera with neutral expressions. The background is a chalkboard with some faint, illegible writing. A bright blue rectangular box is overlaid on the top right of the image, containing white text.

**ACCELERATING
EDUCATION'S RESPONSE
TO HIV AND AIDS**



“ The education sector has a special place in [the national multi-sectoral] response because it not only helps form the thinking of the next generation – especially addressing stigma and prevention – but also is responsible for the care and support of some 60 per cent of the public sector workforce. ”*

–Peter Piot, Executive Director, UNAIDS

Accelerating Education’s Response to HIV and AIDS

Contributing to a better future
for children in Africa

Background

The education sector has come to play an increasingly important role in preventing AIDS. School-age children have the lowest HIV infection rates of any population sector. Even in the worst-affected countries, the vast majority of schoolchildren are not infected. For these children, there is a **window of hope**, a chance to live a life free from AIDS, if they can acquire knowledge, skills and values that will help protect them as they grow up (see ‘Education and HIV/AIDS: A window of hope’, The World Bank, 2002). Young people, particularly girls, who fail to complete a basic education are more than twice as likely to become infected, and the Global Campaign for Education has estimated that 7 million cases of AIDS could be avoided by the achievement of Education for All.

*From foreword in the report ‘Accelerating the Education Sector Response to HIV and AIDS: Five Years On’



But adolescents and young people are not getting enough information. Simply supplying facts about sex and HIV is not enough to reduce vulnerability or alter risky behaviour. Knowledge must be supplemented with life skills to better decide among life's opportunities and to act upon these decisions.

Furthermore, education will not change the course of the epidemic unless it empowers young girls. Gender disparities are a significant factor placing women at increased risk of HIV infection and causing them to bear the greater burden of the disease. Education can reproduce social imbalances and inequities, or it can transform societies.

Education is essential to preventing HIV infection among young people, especially girls. It helps them live free from HIV and AIDS by imparting knowledge, skills and values to help them protect themselves as they grow up. At the same time, preventing HIV infection is essential for ensuring the supply, demand and quality of education.

Because of the impact of the AIDS epidemic, some countries are beginning to experience a reversal of hard-won educational gains,



Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS

The Accelerate Initiative is taking place at the same time that the *Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS* campaign is providing a child-focused framework of national programmes incorporating specific targets for 2010 and concentrating on the 'Four Ps': *Prevent* mother-to-child transmission of HIV, *Provide* paediatric treatment, *Prevent* infection among adolescents and young people, and *Protect* and support children affected by HIV and AIDS.

The Accelerate Initiative focuses on the last two Ps, namely, *Prevent* infection among adolescents and young people, and *Protect* and support children affected by HIV and AIDS.

(See <www.uniteforchildren.org>.)

Fostering 'Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS' (GIPA) in the Accelerate Initiative

In line with the GIPA principles, the Accelerate Initiative seeks to actively involve teachers and education staff living with HIV and AIDS. Teachers living with HIV and AIDS have been a key part of the Accelerate Initiative. They have been active participants in Cameroon, Ghana and the United Republic of Tanzania, and their personal experiences have been particularly valuable in helping to shape effective sectoral responses to HIV and AIDS, in terms of policy, planning and implementation. The Accelerate Initiative is presently working with teachers living in Africa with HIV and AIDS on utilizing their real-life experiences within the education sector to plan programmes to mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS on teachers.

while others are being further set back. **AIDS limits the capacity of education sectors to achieve Education for All (EFA) and of countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).**

Partnerships – in the form of a working group established by the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education – have proved to be key in accelerating the education sector's response to the epidemic.

The Accelerate Initiative

The education sector has a central role in the multi-sectoral response to HIV and AIDS. It is now apparent that it has a key role in reducing stigma and in promoting prevention, and an important role in providing access to care, treatment and support for teachers and staff, a group that represents more than 60 per cent of the public sector workforce in many countries.

Until recently, the response by stakeholders in countries had often been slow and inadequate. This does not appear to reflect a simple lack of resources: Although overall resources may have been insufficient, available resources had been underutilized by the education sector. Indeed, few education systems were addressing AIDS systematically, and many countries had yet to develop a formal strategy for an education sector response to the epidemic.





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In 2002, the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education established a working group – known as the ‘Accelerate Initiative’ – to address these challenges and support countries in sub-Saharan Africa as they “accelerate the education sector response to HIV and AIDS.” Key partners of the initiative include: governments, United Nations agencies, bilateral partners and civil society, as well as key stakeholders, including people living with HIV and AIDS, teachers’ unions and the media. During the following five years, education sectors of 37 countries, responsible for more than 200 million, or 85.5 per cent of, school-age children in sub-Saharan Africa and 2.6 million, or 74.3 per cent of, primary and secondary schoolteachers in the region, participated in this demand-led initiative of subregional and national processes, resulting in extensive information sharing and significant achievements.

Review of the Accelerate Initiative: Five Years on

Changes are happening at the country and subregional levels since they have taken ownership of the Accelerate Initiative. HIV and AIDS Focal

The Group for the Study and Teaching of Population Issues (GEEP): An experiment to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS among schoolchildren

'Accelerate' means both to quicken something that is already in motion and to hasten into motion something that is initially stationary. The Accelerate Initiative helped give impetus to existing organizations, such as the Group for the Study and Teaching of Population Issues (GEEP), a multidisciplinary, not-for-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) created in May 1989 in Dakar (Senegal). In November 1994, GEEP launched the 'Promotion of Family Life Education' (FLE) programme in middle and secondary schools in Senegal. The programme targets teachers and 12- to 19-year-old pupils and aims to promote responsible sexual behaviour through training activities, peer education, social mobilization, and the provision of support materials and equipment (audio-visual and information technology). There are now more than 200 FLE clubs established in Senegal.

(See www.geep.org for further details.)





Point Subregional Networks have been established throughout Africa, and they are now the primary driving force behind all such activities.

Five objectives have been identified by the working group, along with key results since 2002:

1. Leadership by the education sector and sectoral demand for a response to HIV and AIDS.

The ministries of education in 37 countries in sub-Saharan Africa participated in subregional workshops to better understand the role of

The Inter-Agency Task Team on Education

The UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education was created in 2002 with the aim of supporting accelerated and improved education sector responses to HIV and AIDS. It is convened by UNESCO and is a strategic clustering of the UNAIDS co-sponsoring agencies, bilateral agencies, private donors, and civil society organizations committed to working for congruence in policy dialogue at the international, regional and national levels.

The IATT seeks to achieve its aim by:

- Promoting and supporting good practices in the education sector related to HIV and AIDS
- Encouraging alignment and harmonization within and across agencies to support global and country-level actions.

Specific activities undertaken by the IATT include:

- Strengthening the evidence base and disseminating findings to inform decision-making and strategy development
- Encouraging information and materials exchange
- Working jointly to bridge education and AIDS communities
- Ensuring stronger education sector responses to HIV and AIDS.

In 2006, UNESCO issued the EDUCAIDS Framework of Action, guiding a comprehensive education sector response to HIV and AIDS.

(See <www.portal.unesco.org> for further information.)

Responses at the country level

Federal Republic of Nigeria: Faced with governing the most populous country in Africa and the need to implement programmes in 36 semi-autonomous states and the Federal Capital Territory, the Government of Nigeria established a national centre of excellence for training government education teams. With support from the Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program (MAP), the Federal Education HIV and AIDS Unit developed the training capacity of the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). Within three years, 33 out of 36 states had established education responses to HIV and AIDS.

Sierra Leone is a country emerging from war. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Technology, concerned about the potential impact of HIV and AIDS on the education sector, recognized HIV and AIDS as a priority. In an effort to protect its teachers and pupils, Sierra Leone elaborated and launched an Education Sector HIV and AIDS Policy and has developed its implementation guidelines. In the area of prevention, the Ministry has integrated HIV and AIDS, along with life skills education, into the curricula at the primary and secondary levels and in teachers' training schools. Teachers' guides for the implementation of the curricula have also been produced.

The Government of **Eritrea** is implementing a sector-wide national program, which includes early childhood development and primary and secondary school education. The government has moved forward on integrating and decentralizing age-appropriate HIV and AIDS education sector responses. The education sector has taken leadership in cascading the



programme through the *zobas* down to the community and school levels. At the district and school or community level, the Government has made progress on effectively monitoring and evaluating strategies through its Education Management Information System. Education and Health workers work collaboratively to monitor children's health and nutrition status, identifying cases for referral and collecting data on HIV and AIDS responses, coverage and scope for further planning of programmes.

In **Mozambique**, where an estimated 510,000 children have lost one or both parents due to AIDS and the orphan/non-orphan school attendance ratio is 80 per cent, school health is part of the



larger Direct Support to Schools (DSS) programme, whose aim is to provide a small grant to primary schools to buy essential classroom materials. Financed by an International Development Association (IDA) credit for education and fully administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture, DSS already reaches 10,000 schools serving about 3.5 million children. The annual cost of the DSS is about US\$6 million, plus about US\$1.5 million, which is earmarked for the school health programme.

The education sectors in **the United Republic of Tanzania** (mainland and Zanzibar) provide examples of implementing sector-wide mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS responses. In addition to the fully staffed AIDS Coordinating units,

all units, departments and institutions in the education sector, through their participation in the well established AIDS Technical Committees (TAC), plan, budget and monitor the implementation of the HIV and AIDS responses. The mainstreaming of the responses has also been included in the Government's Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), a national budgetary allocation and expenditure framework within the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSPs). At the district level, education offices have been mandated to oversee the implementation of HIV and AIDS in the education sector.

In **Zambia**, where AIDS has severely affected the ranks of schoolteachers, the Ministry of Education has made access to antiretroviral treatment (ART) a priority for school staff, working through teachers' unions to help reduce fear about revealing their HIV positive status. Mobile voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) units were made available by the Ministry of Health and unions at selected schools. Since the programme began, the number of teachers on ART rose from 40 to around 2,000 (approximately 15,000 teachers have been tested).

The Primary School Action for Better Health (PSABH) in **Kenya** is a partnership between the non-governmental organization International Child Support (ICS), Kenya's National AIDS Control Council (NACC) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). The programme is unusual in the sense that it equitably equips girls and boys with behavioural skills to protect themselves and others from HIV and AIDS infection. This is a multi-pronged programme to build girls' self-esteem that involves teachers, parents and students to deliver prevention education modelled on the academic and traditional behavioural values.



education in the national response to HIV and AIDS. Twenty-six of these countries went on to develop and implement actions at the national level.

2. Harmonized support among development partners in order to better assist countries and reduce transaction costs.

A total of 76 agencies, civil society organizations and development partners has worked together in the Accelerate Initiative over the past five years. Twenty-four subregional and national workshops were supported by consortia of representatives from nine UNAIDS co-sponsoring agencies, 15 bilateral donors and 52 civil society organizations.

3. Coordination with the national AIDS authorities and enhanced access to AIDS funds.

All 37 participating ministries of education entered into dialogue with their national AIDS authorities, and 26 subsequently received funds from the National AIDS Councils.

Civil society's role in accelerating the education sector response to HIV/AIDS

Civil society can support the education sector response to HIV by:

- Providing a useful communication link between the community and schools, as well as informing policy development through their knowledge of the situation in schools and the community
- Using combined knowledge from linkages between teachers' unions and education and health groups to inform policy decisions and monitor government action, campaigning for the rights of the vulnerable
- Providing programme implementation and design expertise to the education sector, under the coordination of Ministries of Education.

The Partnership for Child Development and the Global Campaign for Education are examples of civil society organizations coordinating actions of partners at the international level, as well as with a plethora of country-level civil society organizations.

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4. Enhanced availability and sharing of information on HIV and AIDS that has specific relevance to the education sector.

Key documents on AIDS and education (95 titles) have been made available to educators in English, French and Portuguese. A total of 250,000 printed copies have been distributed at educator training sessions, and 322,000 copies have been downloaded from <www.schoolsandhealth.org>. Subregional HIV and AIDS networks within the education sectors have been created within these established regional entities: Eastern Africa Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP).

5. Strengthened technical content and implementation of the education sector response to HIV and AIDS.

Analysis of the sector plans of a sample of 11 countries before and after their participation in an Accelerate Initiative workshop shows that the plans were enriched in terms of policy, management, teacher training for prevention, life skills education, and ensuring education for orphans and vulnerable children. Evidence suggests that a majority of these plans were then used to guide implementation.

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

Launched in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is a partnership of organizations committed to the goals of gender parity and equality in primary and secondary education and ensuring that, by 2015, all children complete primary schooling, with girls and boys having equal access to free, quality education. As the flagship of the Education for All movement that focuses on girls' education, UNGEI embraces the United Nations system, governments, donors, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, communities and families.

The UNGEI framework has provided the gender context for the Accelerate Initiative. It promotes the mainstreaming of gender into the HIV and AIDS responses by the education sector and strategies that give priority to the needs of the most disadvantaged, especially girls and women.

(For more information, visit <www.ungei.org>.)





Moving forward

Partners are moving forward through the Accelerate Initiative to help countries achieve the Millennium Development and Education for All goals.

Actions for building momentum:

- Governments should make the education sector one of the key sectors in the national HIV and AIDS response.
- Governments should encourage 'Education for All' to reach children, especially girls, by abolishing both direct and indirect costs of education.
- Within the education sector, prevention should be set as a priority for the most at-risk and marginalized adolescents, such as girls, young women, orphans and other children made vulnerable by AIDS, both within and outside the formal education system.
- Strengthen the education sector leadership, through partnership and within a framework of multi-sectoral approaches that specifically address gender, to incorporate the HIV and AIDS responses into national policies – such as poverty reduction strategies, medium-term expenditure frameworks, sector-wide approaches and national AIDS strategies.
- Scale up and harmonize resource mobilization and expenditures for HIV and AIDS within the education sector and channel more resources and appropriate services to the treatment, care, support and protection of the affected and infected teachers, pupils and other education sector staff.
- Mainstream the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) data to assess the impact of HIV and AIDS on the education system.

The HIV/AIDS Education Focal Point Networks

The countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) – Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo – as well as Mauritania, have shown political leadership in responding to HIV in the **West Africa** region. ECOWAS adopted a control strategy on HIV and AIDS in West Africa in December 2000, and it subsequently established the West Africa Network of HIV and AIDS Education Sector Focal Points in 2004.

In **Eastern and Southern Africa**, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania (mainland and Zanzibar), Uganda and Zambia have formed the HIV&AIDS and Education Network for Eastern Africa, launched at the 2005 ICASA – International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa – Abuja (Nigeria). Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania (mainland and Zanzibar) have initiated collaborative arrangements under the leadership of the Eastern African Community (EAC).

Five Portuguese-speaking countries – Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome and Principe – established the **Lusophone Africa** Network of HIV and AIDS Education Sector Focal Points in 2004. The political umbrella for this network is Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa (PALOP). Because the composition of this network is based on language, these countries also belong to other networks based on their geographical locations.

Seven countries of **Central Africa** – Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon – established the Central Africa Network of HIV and AIDS Education Sector Focal Points, which was launched in Douala (Cameroon) in 2006. The political umbrella for this network is the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).



Notes

A review was conducted to assess key achievements of the Accelerate Initiative, lessons learned and possible ways forward. The output of this review is a technical paper titled 'Accelerating the Education Sector Response to HIV and AIDS: Five Years On', which describes how UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and other partners have been working together since 2002 to help countries in sub-Saharan Africa develop strong leadership in the education sector response to HIV and AIDS.

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES:

Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania (mainland and Zanzibar) and Zambia

PARTICIPATING DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS:

United Nations

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); International Labour Organization (ILO); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI); United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); World Bank; World Food Programme (WFP); World Health Organization (WHO).

Bilateral partners

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); Coopération Française; Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA); Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ); European Union (EU); Governments of Belgium, Finland, the Royal Netherlands and Sweden; International Organization for Migration (IOM); Irish Aid; Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD); Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA); United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID); United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Inter-governmental organizations

Commonwealth Secretariat; Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (CEMAC); East African Community (EAC); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Civil Society organizations and institutions

ActionAid International; Action Health Incorporated, Nigeria; Africa Consultants International (ACI); African Development Bank (ADB); Aga Khan Foundation; Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo (ADPP-Mozambique); Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA); Association of African Universities (AAU); British Council; CARE; Catholic Relief Services (CRS); Centre for British Teachers (CfBT); Christian Children's Fund (CCF); Classiques Africains; Commonwealth of Love, Nigeria; Concern Worldwide; Education Development Center Inc. (EDC); Education International (EI); Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA); Family Health International (FHI); Fédération Nationale des Associations de Parents d'Elèves du Sénégal (FENAPES); Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE); Foundation for Research on Women's Health, Productivity and the Environment (BAFROW); Global Campaign for Education (GCE); Groupe pour l'Etude et l'Enseignement de la Population (GEEP); Harcourt Education; Health and Development Africa; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; Macmillan Education; Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF); Mobile Task Team on the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Education (MTT); Nova Scotia-Gambia Association (NSGA); Partnership for Child Development (PCD); Pathfinder International; Plan; Planned Parenthood Association of Sierra Leone (PPASL); Policy Project; Population Council; Pro-Link; Save the Children USA; Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP); Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW); Trendsetters, Zambia; Uganda Network of AIDS Service Organizations (UNASO); World Vision; and others. In addition to this, representatives from teachers' unions and associations, women's associations, networks of people living with HIV and AIDS, and members of the national and regional press have participated in the Accelerate Initiative.

UNAIDS Secretariat
20, avenue Appia
CH-1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland
Tel.: (+41 22) 791-3666
Fax: (+41 22) 791-4187
unaids@unaids.org
www.unaids.org

Partnership for Child Development
Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology
Imperial College Faculty of Medicine
St. Mary's Campus, Norfolk Place
London W2 1PG, UK
Tel: (+44 20) 759 43292
Fax: (+44 20) 726 27912
www.schoolsandhealth.org
www.child-development.org

United Nations Children's Fund
3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel.: (+1 212) 326-7000
pubdoc@unicef.org
www.unicef.org

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
BREDA, Regional Office for Education in Africa
BP 3318 Dakar
12, avenue L. S. Senghor
Dakar, Senegal
Tel.: (+221) 849.23.23
Fax: (+221) 823.83.93
dakar@unesco.org
www.dakar.unesco.org/en_index.shtml

The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20433, USA
Tel: (+1 202) 473-1000
Fax: (+1 202) 477-6391
www.worldbank.org

