

# The UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education

## Supporting the education sector's response to HIV

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### Education and the HIV response

Substantial progress has been made in the last decade as new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths have fallen to the lowest levels since the peak of the epidemic. New HIV infections were reduced by 21 per cent since 1997, and deaths from AIDS-related illnesses decreased by 21 per cent since 2005 (UNAIDS, 2011). However, major challenges remain. In 2010, 1.8 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses, and there were 2.7 million new HIV infections (ibid.).

Education has a key role to play in the global response, as affirmed in the 2010 Millennium Summit, which concluded that: 'Ensuring children's access to school is an important aspect of HIV prevention, as higher levels of education are associated with safer sexual behaviour, delayed sexual debut and overall reduction in girls' vulnerability to HIV' (UNESCO, 2011: 10). Education contributes towards the knowledge and personal skills essential for the prevention of HIV and the mitigation of the impacts of AIDS. Education also helps to overcome the conditions that facilitate the spread of HIV, including poverty, ill health, violence and abuse, particularly against girls and women. Beyond this, education can create the conditions of understanding and tolerance that contribute to reduced stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

### The UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education

The UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education was created in 2002 to support accelerated and improved education sector responses to HIV and AIDS. Membership includes UNAIDS co-sponsors, bilateral agencies, private donors and civil society partners supporting education sector responses to HIV and AIDS (see Box 1 for list of current and past members). Member organisations are characterised by: education being part of their 'core business', including support for comprehensive education sector approaches to HIV and AIDS; they are committed to achieving the goals and targets of Education for All (EFA) and to addressing the challenges HIV and AIDS pose to realising these; they are committed to HIV and AIDS education, including preventive education that is informed by scientific evidence and that respects human rights, gender equality and choices; and they operate at the global level – the exception being associations of ministers of education, which might be regional, in light of the IATT's focus on education.

UNESCO convenes and provides the Secretariat of the IATT on Education. The Secretariat is housed in UNESCO's Education Sector, Division of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, Section of HIV and Health Education. A rotating Steering Committee, established in 2006 at the recommendation of a 2005 external review of the IATT, provides guidance, support and

#### Box 1

##### IATT members and contributors

Action Aid/Global Campaign for Education (GCE)  
Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)  
American Institutes for Research (AIR)  
Association of African Universities (AAU)  
Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAid)  
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)  
CARE International  
Commonwealth Secretariat  
Department for International Development (UK) (DfID)  
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)  
Education Development Center (EDC)  
Education International (EI)  
EduSector AIDS Response Trust (ESART)  
European Commission (EC)  
FHI360  
Global Partnership for Education (GPE)  
International Labour Organization (ILO)  
International Save the Children Alliance  
Irish Aid  
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)  
Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)  
Partnership for Child Development (PCD)  
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)  
United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)  
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)  
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)  
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)  
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)  
World Health Organization (WHO)  
World Bank  
World Food Programme (WFP)

direction to the IATT Secretariat on the implementation of activities agreed on by the membership at the biannual meetings.

The IATT seeks to reach and work with the following priority stakeholders:

- Government education ministries, school administrators and teachers' organisations.
- Other ministries involved in the AIDS response (e.g. labour, women's affairs, youth).
- Development co-operation partners involved in HIV and AIDS and education (this includes multilateral and bilateral agencies and NGOs and other civil society organisations).
- International and regional partners and networks in HIV and AIDS, education, youth and development.
- Governments' national AIDS councils and ministries for development, planning and finance.

## IATT's approach

The IATT's approach is informed by the evidence, priorities and recommendations documented in its publication, *A Strategic Approach: HIV & AIDS and education* (IATT on Education, 2009). Focus is placed on supporting and contributing to the implementation of the UNAIDS 2011–2015 strategy of Getting to Zero, which reaffirms the role of education as part of the multi-sectoral response, particularly to enhance biological prevention interventions and to mobilise communities for the prevention revolution (UNAIDS, 2011).

The goal of the IATT is to achieve 'an accelerated and improved education sector response to HIV and AIDS' by promoting and supporting good practices in the education sector and encouraging alignment and harmonisation within and across agencies to support global and country-level actions. The expected outcomes are:

- Increased political and leadership support and resource allocation to the education sector response to HIV and AIDS at country level.
- Enhanced evidence base identifying and supporting good practice in the education sector response to HIV and AIDS at country level.
- Improved alignment, harmonisation and collaboration within and across agencies to support global and country-level actions.

The Commonwealth Secretariat became a member of IATT in 2008 and hosted the last IATT Symposium and internal meeting, which took place in April 2012 at Marlborough House, London.

## IATT initiatives and symposia

In addition to its general advocacy and harmonisation work, the IATT is currently managing three major initiatives: the Global Progress Survey; the development and implementation of HIV-specific monitoring and evaluation indicators; and the development of communication tools for advocacy. The IATT also convenes two topical symposia per year bringing together members and other stakeholders. Past symposia covered HIV in the school health

context, cost-effectiveness of HIV education programmes, and technical guidance on sexuality education.

## Education sector responses to HIV and AIDS: the Global Progress Survey

The 2011 HIV and AIDS Global Progress Survey (GPS) was commissioned by the IATT and funded by UNESCO and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The primary purpose of the 2011 GPS is to provide insight into country-level education sector responses to HIV and AIDS around the world in the seven years since the 2004 Global Readiness Survey (GRS) baseline study.

Individuals from ministries of education and civil society were identified to participate, and independent facilitators were hired to administer the survey instrument and guide the discussions. The aim of the discussions was to achieve a working consensus and fill out the survey instrument. All minority or dissenting views were duly recorded. Data were collected in this manner in 39 countries, including 17 Commonwealth countries<sup>1</sup>. Data collection, input and cleaning have now been concluded, and individual country reports have been finalised and were validated by country teams. It is hoped that the reports will act as a catalyst to revitalise the education sector's response by initiating discussion among stakeholders on the situation in-country and how the response can be improved.

Thirty of the 39 countries in the GPS had participated in the 2004 GRS, thereby enabling a robust trend analysis that will be published at the end of 2012. The aim of the provisionally titled *30-Country Education Sector HIV & AIDS Response Trend Report* is to provide participating countries and their development partners with a comprehensive analysis of their education sector HIV and AIDS response by focus area in order to guide future joint planning, funding and implementation.

Initial findings of the GPS indicate progress on certain aspects, such as on the enabling environment. This has seen significant improvements since 2004, especially with regards to the development of education sector HIV and AIDS policies and workplace policies. There was similar improvement in pre-service training of teachers, which is now present in 70 per cent of countries; however, it is short of the goal of 100 per cent. There is also a marked increase in the number of countries with life-skills curricula. However, the number of countries reporting having HIV and AIDS management structures fell by 28 per cent. This *could* signal a move to mainstreaming, or declining Ministry of Education (MoE) interest and commitment. There is insufficient related evidence of mainstreaming to confirm this, however, while the limited functionality of HIV and AIDS response management in evidence in several countries – particularly in generalised HIV settings – does suggest declining interest and oversight. Yet there were large increases in senior staff representation in these structures, as well as in training, dedicated budgets and divisional representation. The trend report will contextualise these and other findings. The report will therefore assess the role of the sector within the overall response to HIV and AIDS; identify implementation bottlenecks and impediments affecting its engagement in national responses; and identify trends, lessons and good practices from the sector.

## Supporting the global and national monitoring and evaluation efforts

Building on the work conducted by the IATT to identify a list of core indicators to measure education sector responses to HIV and AIDS since 2008, in 2010–2011 UNESCO engaged in a series of consultations to develop the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, drawing on initiatives on M&E of education and HIV in East and Southern Africa, the Caribbean and Vietnam. Following the endorsement of the M&E framework by the IATT in December 2010, the proposed core school-based indicators have gone through a process of field-testing in four countries in East and Southern Africa, in the Caribbean and Vietnam.

The indicators have been piloted in a number of different Commonwealth countries. The most advanced piloting is taking place in Namibia, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, where data collection, entry and cleaning have already taken place and data analysis is now starting. Jamaica has also started to pilot the indicators and should be finished by the end of 2012, while piloting in Dominica is planned for 2013.

The IATT is building on these significant efforts and achievements to support the core indicators' integration at country level and into the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS). To

this end, and based on the pilot experiences, the IATT is developing and providing technical guidelines and tools for integrating the HIV-sensitive core indicators into the national education management information system (EMIS) and supporting the generation of relevant data and monitoring reports from the improved EMIS, focusing on selected UNAIDS Strategy priority countries.

## Communication tools

The IATT commissioned a literature review to identify, compile and analyse key primary research studies and policy papers that comprise the most current evidence and advocacy base. The review provided a synthesis of key findings from these resources in order to make recommendations for the development of communication tools for effective advocacy for investments in HIV and AIDS in the education sector. The tools are currently being finalised.

The IATT, through its members, will assist countries to reproduce, adapt, disseminate and utilise the communication tools to advocate for stronger support for the education sector response to HIV and AIDS.

### Box 2

#### IATT technical products

The IATT commissions technical products that aim to advance the evidence base and inform decision-making and strategy development. Key materials (available in English, French and Spanish) include:

- *Global Progress Survey on HIV&AIDS Impact and Response* (forthcoming)
- *Communication Tools to Advocate for Increased Support for HIV Education* (forthcoming)
- *A Strategic Approach: HIV&AIDS and Education* (2009), also available in Portuguese and Russian
- *Toolkit for Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in the Education Sector: Guidelines for development cooperation agencies* (2008) and *User's Guide for the Toolkit* (2010)
- *Improving the Education Response to HIV and AIDS: Lessons of partner efforts in coordination, harmonisation, alignment, information sharing and monitoring in Jamaica, Kenya, Thailand and Zambia* (2008)
- 'Review of the Evidence: Girls' education and HIV prevention' CD-ROM (2006)
- 'Education Sector Readiness to Respond to HIV and AIDS', CD-ROM (2006)
- *Quality Education and HIV & AIDS* (2006)

These and other materials are available for download on the IATT website at [www.unesco.org/aids/iatt](http://www.unesco.org/aids/iatt) or can be ordered free of charge from [info-iatt@unesco.org](mailto:info-iatt@unesco.org)

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## The future

The IATT keeps up to date with new evidence emerging from the field and identifies priority issues for further enquiry and research through biannual symposia and research. Where identified and agreed by the IATT members, necessary and feasible research is commissioned and technical consultations or online forums are organised to further the current deliberations, discussions and debates. The IATT is also reviewing linkages and synergies between HIV and AIDS and education and school health and nutrition to ensure more effective national and global responses are implemented.

The IATT is informed by lessons learned, by an analysis of the perceived opportunities and challenges ahead and by the needs identified by the Global Progress Survey. It aims to draw on the strengths of its members to safeguard recent gains and to redouble efforts to prevent new infections and support those who are infected and affected by HIV.

## References

IATT on Education (2009). *A Strategic Approach: HIV & AIDS and Education*. Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001627/162723e.pdf>

UNAIDS (2011). *How to Get to Zero: Faster. Smarter. Better.* UNAIDS World Day Report 2011. Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

UNESCO (2011). *UNESCO's Strategy for HIV and AIDS*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh, The Gambia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.