

Dear all,

Young people are considered being more vulnerable to HIV & AIDS because of lack of guidance and information on sexuality and on safer sex behavior. They are at high risks due to multiple factors. In Pakistan to talk safer sex is not easy and due to cultural and social values parents and even friends cannot communicate on issues like HIV/AIDS.

Today we are sharing with you an article which describes the role of education sector in preventing HIV & AIDS.

Education sector and HIV

The education sector is critical to HIV prevention for young people and can also play a vital role in support for orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV. Simply ensuring young people's access to school or other educational opportunities is an important aspect of HIV prevention. Not only are higher levels of education associated with safer sexual behaviors and delayed sexual debut, but school attendance provides students the benefits of school-based sexuality education and HIV prevention programming.

However, the HIV epidemic is having a serious impact on education systems in many of the hardest-hit countries, limiting their ability to meet the Education for all goals set in 2000. A key factor is the loss of teachers and other education professionals to the disease in their most productive years. Mitigating the impact of HIV on the education sector entails a number of priority actions. These include ensuring that HIV is addressed at every level of the education sector and that capacity is built within the sector. The international community has initiated a number of initiatives such as the 'Education for All—Fast Track Initiative' to accelerate progress towards quality primary education by facilitating financial support to low-income countries.

Strengthening school systems to meet the pressures posed by HIV and other problems must be based on evidence of the actual conditions in the educational sector in order to apply scarce resources. In a recent study of conditions, it was found that three-quarters of the responding countries had established management structures dedicated to coordinating the response of ministries of education to the epidemic. However, only 59% of these structures had a dedicated budget, calling into question the effectiveness of these structures.

Cooperation between education systems and social protection initiatives provides opportunities for improving the effectiveness of both and enhances the capacity of schools to support children affected by HIV. In Namibia, for example, a project in the school system to enhance the involvement of local school board members in improving schools collaborated with a social protection project that creates "circles of support" for orphans and other vulnerable children. By working together, the projects avoided working at cross purposes and helped participating schools assist children made vulnerable by HIV to stay in school.

friends and colleagues.

Education in schools

Young people in many parts of the world are denied sex and health education in schools because parents and other authorities fear it encourages early sexual activity. But there is compelling evidence from studies conducted around the world and in many different cultures that, in fact, sex education encourages responsibility.

Knowledgeable young people tend to postpone intercourse or, if they do have sex, to use condoms.

Experience shows, however, that information is not enough. Young people also need life skills such as decision-making, communication and negotiation. They need to understand the concepts of risk behavior, such as unprotected sex and the use of alcohol and drugs, the possible consequences of such behavior and how to avoid them. And they need to know where to go for services and help.

AIDS education should cover all these aspects

Among the most effective approaches to sex and health education in schools are the use of role play to personalize issues, and peer education, in which young people are trained to spread messages and promote responsible behaviors

Education outside school settings

Out-of-school youth are a diverse group that includes young people who have dropped out of school or college, children kept out of school by families who cannot afford to send them or who need their labor at home, and children living on the streets. Such youngsters are often especially vulnerable to HIV. Bored, alienated and sometimes hopeless at finding themselves excluded from the mainstream, they may seek escape and thrills in drugs, alcohol or sex.

Providing them with the information and skills they need to protect themselves from HIV is a special challenge. The fact that they are not part of an institution such as a school or workplace makes them difficult to reach. Moreover, their levels of literacy vary.

Experience shows that peer education, which involves training representatives among out-of-school youth to convey information, is one of the most effective strategies.

Source: UNAIDS

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