

UNAIDS COSPONSOR | 2014

UNESCO

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UNESCO

“Young people continue to be a priority target for global action. This group still requires effective HIV and sexuality education programmes, access to high-quality and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, and the elimination of sexual violence against young women and girls.”

Irina Bokova
UNESCO Director-General

WHAT IS UNESCO?

The United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations. It was founded with the mission of contributing to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science and culture. With 195 Member States and nine Associate Members, UNESCO is governed by a General Conference and Executive Board, and the decisions of these two bodies are implemented by the Secretariat under the leadership of the current Director-General, Irina Bokova.

UNESCO is one of the six founding UNAIDS Cosponsors. Under the UNAIDS Division of Labour, UNESCO is responsible for leading efforts to support countries in scaling up the education sector response to HIV. With over 70 offices, institutes and regional bureaux around the world, UNESCO has more than 50 staff members dedicated to working on HIV and health education. Of these, the majority are National Programme Officers based in countries that UNAIDS has prioritized for high-impact interventions. The agency draws on its unique spectrum of competencies across the diverse spheres of education, the sciences, culture, communication and information to push for a truly multisectoral and comprehensive response to HIV.

WHAT UNESCO DOES FOR THE AIDS RESPONSE

Education is seen as the cornerstone of an effective response to HIV and contributes to fostering economic growth, reducing poverty and improving general health. UNESCO believes that education can transform lives, and has the capacity to create globally minded citizens able to thrive in their environment, take healthy decisions and build a more just, inclusive, safe and sustainable world. The role of the sector includes providing learners and staff with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that can, in the long-term, contribute to safer behaviours and enable them to stay healthy and free of HIV.

UNESCO's work on the response to AIDS is guided by multiple strategies and results frameworks. HIV and health education have been defined as an expected result of UNESCO's 2014–2021 Medium-term Strategy. The organization is also guided by the UNAIDS Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework 2012–2015, the UNAIDS 2011–2015 Strategy and the 2011 United Nations Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS. UNESCO also has its own strategy for HIV, which defines three key areas of focus:

building country capacity for successful and sustainable responses to HIV in the education sector; strengthening comprehensive HIV and sexuality education; and advancing gender equality and protecting human rights.

UNESCO's policies and programmes on HIV and health are part of its overarching efforts to achieve the Education for All goals, which aim to meet the learning needs of every child, youth and adult by 2015. The organization plays a leading role in EDUCAIDS, the Global Initiative on Education and HIV & AIDS, which promotes a holistic, sector-wide approach to the epidemic. It also convenes the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education, which encourages a strengthened and coordinated response to the epidemic and forms part of the United Nations' push to ensure access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for all. The Inter-Agency Task Team includes UNAIDS and its Cosponsor agencies, multilateral and bilateral agencies, private donors, civil society and academics. UNESCO's work also contributes to Focusing Resources on Effective School Health, a partnership of United Nations agencies, national governments and civil society working to make schools healthy places and to provide learners and staff with the tools to lead healthier lives.

The agency promotes good policies and practices in the education sector, helps partners create safe learning environments and encourages life skills based instruction through modern, interactive teaching methods. UNESCO supports responses to HIV that are inclusive, especially of people living with the virus, key populations and young people in school settings. It believes that effective responses to the epidemic should also be gender and age responsive, culturally appropriate, evidence-informed and firmly based on human rights.

In 2013, UNESCO was instrumental in bringing about a landmark commitment from the health and education ministers of 20 countries in eastern and southern Africa to support sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and young people.

Other recent efforts have included providing technical guidance on sexuality education, supporting responses to gender-based violence in school settings (including homophobic bullying) and strengthening the monitoring systems of national school health programmes.

Additional information is available [here](http://unesco.org/aids) (unesco.org/aids).

