

Three out of ten teachers die in some places

Schools Orphaned by HIV/AIDS

Asia also presents the potential for a full-blown crisis – if not on the same scale – unless urgent action is taken. Eastern Europe has seen an alarming rise in AIDS related to drug abuse. No region can afford to ignore the threat the HIV/AIDS virus represents and its implication for education systems. The AIDS problem has become so critical that the United Nations Security Council addressed it in January 2000 – the first time in its history that it has ever treated a pandemic as a global security crisis.

In certain African communities 30 per cent of the teachers have died. In Zambia 1,300 died in 1998 alone. A study carried out in Côte d'Ivoire revealed that 140 teachers died of AIDS and 519 were HIV positive in the 1996/97 school year. Estimating that the schooling of almost 38,000 primary school pupils would suffer, the study said that if the rate of infection stayed the same, at least 71,000 children would have poor-quality schooling in the year 2000.

Apart from the devastating psychological effect of illness and death among teachers and pupils, the long-term structural effects of AIDS on education systems are dire. "As AIDS continues to take its toll, there will be schools with no head teachers and inspectors," a recent UNICEF study points out. "This has a negative impact on the education system's ability to plan, manage and implement policies and programmes."

Half of all the new cases of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, occur in young people between 15 and 24 years of age. "We learn to be responsible about sex only by being taught," says 16-year-old Bradley Mauff of Western Samoa. "A child who knows nothing of the consequences of unprotected sex is most at risk." Bradley and 500 other young people speak out on sexual and reproductive health in a

Families composed of only grandparents and grandchildren; households run by adolescents; dying parents nursed by their children. As well as devastating entire economies, HIV/AIDS is transforming the structure of both families and education systems in Africa, where a staggering 11,000 people contract the virus daily. It is also wiping out social and economic gains that Africa has worked towards for decades.

recent booklet from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). All of them demand accurate information on sex, HIV/AIDS, family planning, marriage and child care. They bring home the lesson that quality education should not only meet learning needs, it should advance human rights, including reproductive rights.

"The time is now to put the HIV/AIDS crisis at the centre of our national education agendas," insists educationist M. J. Kelly of the University of Zambia in a recent analysis of HIV/AIDS in education. "School in an AIDS-infected world cannot be the same as school in an AIDS-free world."



Prevention against... silence

When HIV prevalence in Uganda reached nearly 10 per cent of adults, the government instituted urgent national measures to raise awareness, support behavioural change and address the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. HIV prevalence has now dropped substantially among young people.

In other parts of the world preventive projects are mushrooming. Since 1993, Sri Lanka has included "population and family life education" in the school curriculum. Cambodia has translated preventive educational material into Khmer and intensively trained teachers on a national level.

In Thailand, the Daughters of Education project provides funding for girls who would otherwise be sold into the sex trade so that they remain in school. In Latin America, Brazil has embarked on an ambitious US\$50 million national prevention programme targeting young people both in and out of school, especially those difficult to reach, from prostitutes to prisoners. Honduras, Mexico and the Dominican Republic are all running teacher training workshops within the UNAIDS framework. Thanks to effective information campaigns, industrialised countries show a high level of awareness of the risks attached to HIV/AIDS.

However, immigrant populations and ethnic minorities, who contract the virus at higher rates, are still vulnerable. Preventive education continues with some success. In Western Europe, 60 per cent of young people now use condoms the first time they have sex – a six-fold increase since the early 1990s. This is a good illustration of how responsibly young people behave when they are properly informed.

"The first battle to be won in the war against AIDS is the battle to smash the wall of silence and stigma surrounding it", says UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Rwanda

Effective Post-war Reconstruction Through Decentralisation

After the 1994 genocide, the Ministry of Education in Rwanda was faced with an almost impossible situation – how to reconstruct the education system which had been almost totally destroyed, leaving no more schools, supplies, teachers, programmes, nor administration? The first step was to re-open the schools. As many students had not been able to complete the previous school year, a 'special semester' was initiated at primary level so that the children could finish their studies and sit the relevant end-of-year exams. "Once the population saw that the schools had re-opened, the refugees and displaced people began to return to their villages in Rwanda and new life was injected into the country", says Mr Musabeyewu Narcisse, Director of pre-school, primary and special education and National EFA Coordinator.

At the beginning of 1995 the Ministry and all its partners put education on the agenda during a special conference on education policy and planning in order to establish the "what", "when", and "how" for the reconstruction of education. Priority was given to the creation of infrastructures, equip-

ment and implementing emergency plans for teacher training at all levels. A special fund was created for children who were orphans of the genocide, so that they would not be excluded from the school system. The government also used an innovative approach in the decentralisation of the process of reconstruction and administration to the villages. On one hand, each village was to elect a management committee with one person designated responsible for education in that village. On the other, parents were mobilised and asked to participate in the construction of the schools – not with financial contributions but more with their labour.

Five years later, the progress is remarkable and the atmosphere optimistic, confirmed Mr Musabeyewu. The numbers of both students and teachers have increased. At the end of 1994 there were 16,825 teachers and 820,238 students in 1,283 education centres. At the end of 1997/98, there were 22,638 teachers, 1,167,274 students and 1,991 education centres. Moreover, the education programme has been harmonised, and administrative structures (inspectors, examination boards) established.



ECHOES

STAR: Yesterday afternoon, the conference hall at the Meridien President hotel was literally overrun with English-language journalists who had covered the opening ceremony of the World Forum on Education For All from a Press Room without access to translation. Curious and eager to find out what made the audience applaud when President Wade was merely making an address, they rushed en masse to pick up the English version. In his speech, the President of Senegal criticized international institutions, which he wasting considerable amounts in programmes aimed at supporting developing countries. He especially criticized funding of studies whose conclusions led nowhere.

ANNAN: Wednesday in Dakar, on the sidelines of the World Forum on Education, 1,500 youths presented UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan with a statement calling for greater cooperation between the different actors in the field of education and the legalising of ACAPES, a Senegalese NGO active in the education sector, as an educational and training organisation.

DEMONSTRATION: Staging a demonstration yesterday in front of the Meridien President hotel, which hosts the World Forum on Education, a group of students from the national coordination of teacher training schools in Senegal (CONEFI) expressed their concern about hiring policies. According to their spokesman, Ibrahima Mbodji, "at the current time, there are 700 student teachers in teacher training schools in Senegal. When we complete our studies, the state will only hire 500. That will leave 200 unemployed teachers while over 2,000 classrooms are closed for want of teachers". The sign-waving student teachers also called out for "the right to education for all children by building and equipping classrooms in all the country's rural areas".

XAWAARE: A cultural evening on Monday took the delegates from the International NGO Consultation to Théâtre National Daniel Sorano. With this event, CONGAD, a consortium of Senegalese NGOs, gave its guests a taste of a "Xawaare", a typical Senegalese celebration, combining all forms of artistic and cultural expression. Les Frères Guissé, a local band, played during the first half of the African-style get-together. The names of Nelson Mandela, Benjamin Moloise and Martin Luther King, often repeated in their songs, were enough for their cosmopolitan audience to understand the gist of their committed repertoire.

The Ensemble Lyrique Traditionnel and the La Linguère dance company, a living expression of Senegalese musical tradition, followed with a show combining music, dance, theatre, and poetry in perfect harmony. The NGO "Xawaare" had already received applause on Sunday, at Maison de la Culture Doua Seck, where Les Frères Guissé, Suzanne Camara and Cheikh Lo treated their audience to a wonderful evening.

RAP: On the afternoon of Wednesday, 26 April, local rap groups had taken over. With this final show, the organizers sought to involve the youths and teenagers who are the first and foremost concern of the Forum. The rap concert on the theme of "equal opportunity, equity, and universal access to school, and keeping the promises of Jomtien" included Positiv Black Soul and Pee Froiss, the two leading rap groups in Senegal.