

The impact of HIV/AIDS on teachers and other education personnel in West and Central Africa: A synthesis of the literature from 2000 to 2004.

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Description:

This paper examines the literature on how HIV/AIDS has impacted teachers and other education personnel in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal. The findings show that the HIV/AIDS situation is serious in all the countries studied although the prevalence rates range from 0.5 in Senegal, 5.8% in Nigeria and 11.8 % in Cameroon (UNAIDS, 2003). Generally, it was found that infection rates in the education system reflect the national rates. However this was not the case in Ghana where the education sector has a prevalence rate of 9.2 % while the national rate is 3.0. Factors contributing to the infection of education personnel are varied; they include higher disposable incomes; temporary separation from spouses while working in remote areas; frequent transfers from school to school and issues of multiple sex partners HIV/AIDS infection among teachers results in higher mortality rates, an increase in early retirements and lower productivity. All these factors compromise the effective delivery of education by accentuating problems of access, equity, efficiency and management. If this situation continues to go unchecked then education targets such as Education for All (EFA) will never be attained. Responses aimed at tackling the epidemic have come from diverse stakeholders in the education sector. Teachers themselves (through trade unions) carry out Information Education and Communication (IEC) and teach HIV/AIDS preventive education. The authorities have had to recruit teachers to replace those who have died, introduced HIV/AIDS preventive education and assigned sick teachers to less demanding tasks. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations have also initiated and sustained the teaching of HIV/AIDS preventive education. Recommendations have been made for further research to generate statistics on the infection rates among teachers and to explore issues surrounding their sexuality. In the area of policy and practice, the authorities need to factor in projected deaths and retirements in human resource planning, generate a workplace policy to care for infected and affected personnel and formalise HIV/AIDS education throughout teacher training colleges and school systems.

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