

HIV and AIDS: responding to a threat to education for sustainable development

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Description:

The article seeks to sensitize the development community, particularly outside the education sector, about the issues surrounding education as a vehicle for promoting sustainable development in an AIDS environment in Africa. By illustrating how the epidemic impacts education sector staff as well as parents and students at all levels, the article intends to suggest how national authorities, NGOs and donor agencies can work out strategies to enhance the role of education in promoting sustainable development in Africa. Analysis will demonstrate how the AIDS epidemic weakens the education sector, particularly in countries with a generalized epidemic (defined as more than 3% of the adult population being HIV-positive), undermining the sector's ability to contribute to general literacy and sustainable development. The article will demonstrate that HIV and AIDS is still not fully accepted as an educational issue, which has hampered efforts to deal with its ravages in the educational sector. The need for holistic policy frameworks for supporting teachers and administrators living with HIV and AIDS will be discussed as well as how changes in curriculum and better relations with the community are important in addressing the needs of students. The article will highlight options for developing innovative responses to HIV and AIDS in African education, showing how different forms of education can serve as vehicles for responding to the challenges of the epidemic. The examples emphasize the importance of learner-centered instruction and partnerships with the health sector and other resources needed in an AIDS-affected environment. Key messages of the article are that the HIV and AIDS epidemic is a multi-sectoral problem and that responding to it effectively in the education sector requires coherent responses that address the needs of learners and instructors, including those who are personally affected or infected by HIV and AIDS. Adapting the Education for Sustainable Development initiative to address the challenges posed by the epidemic must be supported by policy development, leadership and advocacy. Diverse partnerships are essential, as the education sector alone cannot deal with the challenge of HIV and AIDS to sustainable development.

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