

Workshop 6: AIDS, Health and ESD

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Conference Objective 1: To Highlight the Essential Contribution of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to All of Education and to Achieving Quality Education

Why is ESD relevant?

There was common agreement among the workshop participants – 29 participants from 22 countries in four world regions – that sustainable development cannot be achieved while the health needs of millions of people around the world remain unmet. On the basis of the Expanded Commentary on the Dakar Framework for Action and the discussions held during the conference, it is possible to describe three ways in which health relates to Education for Sustainable Development. First, health can be considered as an input and condition necessary for learning and working, as demonstrated by the numerous studies and clear data on the impact of illness on cognitive abilities and working performances, with a potential spiral of causes and effects between health and ESD which subsequently increases the vulnerability of societies. Secondly, health can be seen as an outcome of effective quality Education for Sustainable Development: a clean and safe environment, solid economic performances that allow basic needs to be met, strong and constructive social and cultural relations represent all together a veritable “social vaccine”. Thirdly, health should be considered as a sector that must collaborate with Education for Sustainable Development in promoting an inclusive approach across fields of specialisation, encouraging comprehensive and lifelong learning processes directed to the full development of human potential.

Conference Objective 2: To Promote International Exchange on ESD

What can we learn from each other?

Common challenges were the basis for a dialogue among the workshop participants, who focused on the main obstacles and difficulties as well as mutual understanding in ESD and health, and on the exchange of practices and potential solutions. The discussion raised a number of important issues, which were later analysed in order to establish a shared set of priorities and objectives. Participants inter alia discussed the relations and reciprocal influences between transfer of

knowledge, empowerment and changes in attitudes in the field of health and ESD, especially within the framework of formal education. Moreover, participants debated the challenges of prevention education and the confrontation with potential social and cultural obstacles like gender inequality, national and local power dynamics, generational gaps, language and cultural and religious beliefs, with particular attention to understanding and challenging the social stigma of HIV and AIDS. Finally, workshop participants discussed the impact of poverty, conflict and corruption on the development and implementation of effective strategies in promoting health and ESD, and the difficulties of reaching isolated or remote populations.

Conference Objective 3: To Carry out a Stock-taking of DESD Implementation

What have we achieved so far, what are the lessons learnt?

Answering the challenges and questions raised in the first part of the workshop, participants agreed that global progress has nevertheless been made in several fields, with the main achievements being the result of both the specific lessons learnt and a strong and influential political will. Among the positive and constructive experiences shared was the effectiveness of an inclusive approach across sectors, linking the governmental efforts in the field of health and education with the initiatives led by different ministries and departments, as well as civil society actors, and international partners, in the ESD fields of environment, economy, society and culture. In particular, it was not-



Workshop coordinators moderating participants' interventions

ed that free education should also be supported by targeted assistance for the most vulnerable children to meet their basic needs and avoid drop-out effects while the inclusion of health and ESD subjects in the curricula of primary, secondary and tertiary level education can guarantee that school enrolment becomes a determinant variable reducing the exposure of children to HIV and AIDS and other diseases.

Moreover, participants underlined the relevance and complementarity of non-formal education processes and mass media participation, with specific examples ranging from the use of community radio to raising awareness about health and nutrition issues, to traditional theatre performances as a tool to discuss, demystify and overcome the social stigma of HIV and AIDS.

Finally, the relevance of value-driven examples and role models as important support for ESD and health policies was reflected in the cooperation between the health and education sectors and cultural and religious leaders in prevention education; the establishment of community health centres also giving space to traditional knowledge and medicine; the recognition and valorisation of voluntary efforts at grassroots level.

Conference Objective 4: To Develop Strategies for the Way Ahead

Where do we want to go from here?

When defining **strategies** to tackle the challenges of HIV and AIDS and health within the framework of Education for Sustainable Development, priority was given to the following four key issues:

1. The importance of addressing the assets and resistance deriving from the diversity of cultural attitudes and beliefs, considering in particular the processes of stigmatisation and the function of cultures and religions in the definition of gender roles and power dynamics;
2. The need to encourage the complementary use of non-formal education in raising awareness and enhance prevention education, promoting a community learning approach and underlining the potential effect of mass media in health education through ESD;
3. The reciprocal advantages of inclusive partnerships and cooperation between different sectors of the Government and with different civil society actors, both at national and international level;
4. The importance of ensuring appropriate and continuous leadership and stimulating political will at all levels of society.

Five **specific objectives** for the second part of the Decade were then defined as follows:

1. To position health education, including HIV and AIDS, higher on the agenda of sustainable development and ESD, stimulating partnerships and exchanges at national and international level to tackle the complexity of the issue. To stimulate at the same time a multi-sectoral approach, encouraging and supporting the role and work of international institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector in this field. The creation of permanent structures facilitating this process should be encouraged at national and regional level;
2. To acknowledge and promote the positive role of culture, using traditional, scientific and religious knowledge, beliefs and practices as vehicles of change in continuity and Education for Sustainable Development and health, building value-driven role models open to cultural diversity at local, national and international level (with a particular role for the UN). There should be a specific focus on young people and gender equality;
3. To adapt the messages and tools for the promotion of health education and ESD to diverse contexts and target groups, maximizing the use of formal, non-formal and informal channels of education and therefore ensuring the pertinence and quality of education. The use of both traditional and modern forms of communication – from theatre and music to radio, mobile phones, television and internet providers – should be encouraged in order to raise awareness, stimulate critical access to and use of information and run prevention education campaigns and activities;
4. To focus on building the capacity of politically and technically responsible persons to monitor, evaluate and influence ESD and health education programmes and projects, with particular attention being paid to young people, community ownership and leadership as a guarantee of long-term commitment and sustainability;
5. To invite the media to play a more active role in ESD and health education activities, recognising and emphasising their important function and building common ownership of and engagement for the success of the programmes and projects.

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