

Chapter 6

The Policy Context for HIV and Gender Education

East African countries declared HIV and AIDS a national disaster during the 1990s; for Uganda this declaration was as early as 1992, while in Kenya and Tanzania it took place as late as 1999. These declarations were followed by a number of policies, plans and institutional structures to lead and co-ordinate prevention and care.

The initial response to the epidemic was primarily a medical one. However, during the 1990s the realisation that HIV is a multi-sector issue became evident in policies and plans. In these it was recognised not only that the education sector had been severely affected by HIV, but also that education has the strongest potential to improve prevention and care. Policies and plans recommend that HIV education should be mainstreamed by integrating it into the school curricula at both primary and secondary levels. They also refer to the need for HIV and AIDS education for teachers. Of the three countries under review, Kenya's policy is most explicit on integrating such education into its teacher training curricula.

Kenya

Kenya launched an education sector policy on HIV in 2004, emphasising the responsibility of all learning institutions to address HIV through education by developing skills and values and changing attitudes to promote positive behaviour. It recommends mainstreaming HIV education in school curricula and co-curricular activities, and preparing teachers 'to respond to HIV and AIDS within their own lives and as professionals to build positive attitudes and skills for HIV and AIDS prevention and control among their learners' (MOEST, 2005).

Kenya's national gender and development policy was formulated by the

Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services (MGSC&SS) in 2000, with the purpose of mainstreaming gender into development projects as well as reviewing previous strategies which were based on traditional assumptions of the roles and responsibilities of women and men (MGSC&SS, 2000, p. 6). The policy recognises current gender disparities in Kenya, and recommends measures to eliminate gender disparities in access, retention, transition and performance in education for both boys and girls. In 2001, a Technical Sub-Committee on Gender and HIV and AIDS Task Force recommended gender mainstreaming in all initiatives to respond to HIV.

Tanzania

Tanzania developed a national policy on HIV in 2001. This policy recommends that non-examinable information on HIV, reproductive and sexual health should be included in primary and secondary school curricula. A national multi-sectoral framework developed in 2003 expects the education sector to require primary and secondary schools to provide *'education and opportunities for young people to develop and maintain orientations, values, attitudes and activities which safeguard their sexual and reproductive health'*. The framework also proposes integration of sexual health for young people into the curricula for teacher training.

Uganda

In Uganda, the national overarching policy on HIV and the national strategic plan framework urge the development of sector-specific policies. The education sector policy and guidelines, drafted in 2004, set out some principles, goals and strategies for prevention, treatment and care and support. The principles include mainstreaming HIV into every policy, procedure and programme in the education sector and providing universal access to education, information and communication about the issue to reduce the vulnerability of learners and education sector personnel. The policy recommends mainstreaming and integrating life skills education and HIV into the curricula of all learning institutions and building capacity for providing basic AIDS education.

Each of the three countries have also formulated national gender

policies that aim to guide the initiatives to redress gender imbalance, ensure equal access to resources and to promote recognition of women's role in development. Various policies, including the education policy in each country, express a commitment to taking initiatives to increase and improve girls' and women's participation in education.