

## Opening of the Symposium: Background and Introduction

The Chair of the opening ceremony, Dr Roli Degazon-Johnson, Education Adviser at the Commonwealth Secretariat, welcomed local and foreign participants. She explained that the symposium was the third in a series launched in 2006 that focused on the single most critical human resource for the achievement of education goals — the teacher. The symposia had been held in direct response to the request of Commonwealth ministers of education for research that monitored the status and mobility of teachers since 2004, when the *Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol* was adopted. Dr Degazon-Johnson advised that the outputs of the first symposium informed a report tabled at the 16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (16CEM), held in Cape Town, South Africa in December 2006. The second symposium, held in March 2007, saw for the first time the participation of the Education Sector Bureau of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and brought to the table research on teacher qualifications and professional registration presented by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). This third symposium was being held for the first time in a developing Commonwealth country, in conjunction with Education International and with the assistance and support of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Mozambique.

Mr Dennis Sinyolo, Education Co-ordinator at Education International delivered a brief message of welcome, noting that EI was a global union confederation of organisations representing 30 million teachers worldwide. He acknowledged the collaboration and partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat education programme that had led to this joint initiative. Welcome messages were also given by Mr Alipio Siquisse, Secretary General of the Mozambique National Organisation of Teachers (ONP) and Ms Samidha Garg of the UK National Union of



Father Michael Kelly

Teachers (NUT) and Commonwealth Teachers Group. UNESCO's Representative in Mozambique, Mr Benoit Sossou, stated that the available evidence indicated that HIV/AIDS was exacerbating the gender-based disparities that already existed in the education sector. For the most part, this put girls at a disadvantage in accessing quality education and put women at a disadvantage in finding employment opportunities as educators and administrators. As a result, HIV/AIDS was affecting the aim of achieving not only education for all, but also gender equity, by 2015.

The symposium was then formally declared open by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Culture of Mozambique, Ms Maria Albertina da Conceição Bila, who said that it was a singular honour that Mozambique had been chosen as the venue for the symposium. She highlighted aspects of the current education policy being implemented by her ministry. Among these

was a strategy of ‘positive discrimination’ to encourage women to join the teaching profession. This had been successful both in helping Mozambican women realise that teaching did not have to be a male-dominated profession and in showing that women teachers could act as role models in their communities, encouraging girls to enrol in school and improve their educational qualifications.

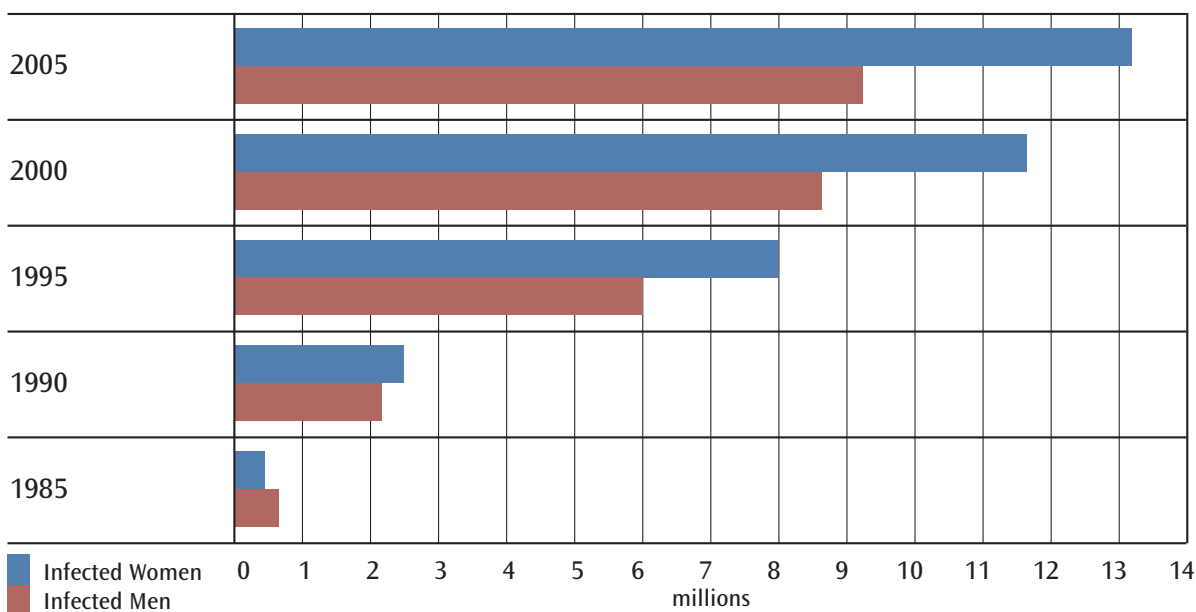
Professor Michael Kelly, Jesuit priest and internationally recognised champion of education as the most effective vaccine against HIV/AIDS, was invited to present the keynote address. Professor Kelly came to Zambia from Ireland in 1955 and taught at all levels of the education system before becoming Professor of Education, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Zambia, posts which he held at various times between 1975 and 2002. The Chair stated that Professor Kelly was the author of numerous publications, including *Planning for Education in the Context of HIV/AIDS*, *HIV/AIDS and Education in the Caribbean* and *Challenging the Challenger*. She said that Professor Kelly had received the Association of Commonwealth Universities Award for

Distinguished Service for his contribution to work on the relationship between education and HIV/AIDS, and honorary doctorates from the University of the West Indies and University College Dublin, Ireland.

Professor Kelly presented a wide-ranging address on the symposium theme of ‘Gender, HIV/AIDS and the Status of Teachers’. He said that the Commonwealth was the world’s most seriously infected grouping of countries and that although it contained less than one-third of the world’s population, at the beginning of 2006 it accounted for almost two-thirds of people living with HIV. On the basis of data for individual Commonwealth countries in the 2006 *Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*,<sup>1</sup> the HIV infection rate across Commonwealth countries was approximately 1.2 per cent, compared with a global figure of 0.6 per cent. This meant that 12 of every 1,000 people in Commonwealth countries were living with HIV.

Noting that slightly more than half of those infected are women, Professor Kelly said that female infection rates were much higher in sub-Saharan Africa, where 59 per cent of adults living with HIV were women and there were 14 HIV-positive adult women for every 10

**Figure 1: More Women than Men are becoming HIV Infected in Sub-Saharan Africa**



1 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic. Geneva: UNAIDS, June 2006.

men. He pointed out that this situation had implications for the teaching profession and the delivery of educational services, since a high percentage of teachers, especially those in pre-schools and primary schools, were female. He said that HIV/AIDS affected women and men in different ways. On physiological and health grounds, women were at a higher risk of infection; physiological and health factors made HIV transmission from men to women seven times more likely than transmission from women to men.

Turning to gender inequality in the area of sexual expectations, he expressed the view that gender-conditioned behaviour compounded the biological vulnerability of women. He said that although the documentation was not very precise, as many as 50 per cent of schoolchildren in some countries reported having been physically or sexually assaulted while at school. Pupil abuse tended to be inflicted mostly by male teachers on girls, although cases had been reported of boys being abused by both male and female teachers.

Professor Kelly quoted Albert Einstein's maxim: 'What can be counted does not necessarily count, what counts cannot necessarily be counted'. He proposed that in the context of

HIV/AIDS and teachers, what really counted might be teacher status in relation to the epidemic, the multiple demands on female teachers, protecting educational quality, the sexual norms and expectations of society, and the culture within the school.

Pointing to the evidence of teachers who were victims of HIV/AIDS, Professor Kelly noted that a survey conducted in 2004 found that 12.7 per cent of over 17,000 teachers who gave specimens for testing were HIV positive.<sup>2</sup> This was similar to the prevalence rate in the general population. However, unlike the situation in the general population, HIV prevalence rates among men and women educators were the same. He called for national level HIV surveys in other countries to disaggregate the information on teachers so that there could be better understanding on whether or not teachers constituted a special category that was at high risk of HIV infection. He also indicated that teacher mortality due to AIDS did not much differ from rates for other similar occupational groups, nor did mortality rates for teachers seem to be unduly high. Notwithstanding this, in some countries male teachers had a higher mortality rate than female teachers, even though female teachers were more likely to be HIV-positive. (For the full text of the keynote address see Appendix 1.)

---

2 *HIV Prevalence among South African Educators in Public Schools*, Fact Sheet No. 6, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and Medical Research Council (MRC) of South Africa, 2005.