

UNAIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD WORKING GROUP

THEMATIC SEGMENT:

Positive learning: harnessing the power of education to end HIV-related stigma and discrimination, empower young people and provide a comprehensive HIV response

MEETING SUMMARY: SECOND MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

DATE: Thursday 12 May 2022

MEETING AGENDA

- Welcome and introduction
- Presentation of and discussion on the first draft of the background note on “Positive learning: harnessing the power of education to end HIV-related stigma and discrimination, empower young people and provide a comprehensive HIV response”
- Presentation of and discussion on the draft agenda for the thematic half-day
- Next steps

SUMMARY

1. Welcome and introduction

Mr. Morten Ussing, Director Governance, UNAIDS Secretariat, welcomed the PCB working group to its second meeting for the preparation of the thematic segment of the 50th PCB (24 June 2022) on *Positive learning: harnessing the power of education to end HIV-related stigma and discrimination, empower young people and provide a comprehensive HIV response*.

The Secretariat reminded that the working group is established to create ownership of the PCB stakeholders in the framing of the background note and discussions for the PCB thematic segment. The thematic segment is one half day (in virtual and hybrid mode) on the PCB agenda and allows for an in-depth discussion on a specific programmatic area within the AIDS response. The members of the working group play an important role in shaping the day and the documentation that informs it.

Mr. Ussing underlined that the call for submission of good practices had been sent out on 19 April 2022 to the PCB members and all permanent missions and that 17 case studies had been received to date. All regions were well represented except the Middle East and North Africa and West and Central Africa, where more outreach was needed. A selected set of case studies had been used to illustrate key parts of the background note. Mr. Ussing

recalled that all case studies would be compiled into a conference room paper that would accompany the background note. As had been mentioned at the last meeting, UNAIDS uses case studies to inform other publications, extending the impact beyond the thematic segment.

The Secretariat confirmed that the main expected outcome of the second meeting was to listen to the comments, inputs and suggestions from the working group on the draft background note and draft agenda as well as suggested speakers.

2. Presentation of the draft annotated outline of background note for the thematic segment

Caroline Ngonze, Senior Adviser, Education *Plus* at the UNAIDS Secretariat, thanked the working group members for the comments they made after the first meeting. She proceeded to introduce the key enhancements that had been made to the draft background note following the comments received.

Ms. Ngonze highlighted how the request to strongly link the Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026 (Global AIDS Strategy) and the 2021 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: *Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030* to the theme – education – had been accomplished. In the first draft of the background note, there was a clear connection to where the Global AIDS Strategy addresses the topic of education, in particular Result Area 1, Action H, and Result Area 7, Action D, as it mentions what actions are needed to achieve the Strategy's results. This specifically relates to strengthening access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) services both in and out-of-school.

She added that similarly, the Global AIDS Strategy highlights the importance of integrating CSE with a complete package of HIV prevention interventions for young people in Result Area 3, Action E. Result Area 2, Action F underlines strengthening the capacity of the education sector to meet the needs of young people living with and affected by HIV. In addition, Result Area 6, Action B, addresses supporting girls to complete quality secondary education, and a complementary action of Result Area 9 on strengthening the multisectorality of the HIV response included aligning with strategies on girls' education.

The Secretariat further explained that the link with the Political Declaration has been made stronger, by including the role of the education sector as an entry point for HIV knowledge and awareness, prevention, testing, treatment and ending stigma and discrimination. It also includes addressing social, economic and structural factors that contribute to inequality and increase HIV risk. The background note also mentions the need to scale up comprehensive education relating to sexual and reproductive health and HIV and conducting targeted HIV education.

The presentation stressed on how the background note had included the need for clarifying working definitions and concepts to support a common understanding of these throughout the background note.

Ms. Ngonze underlined the role of a violence-free learning environment and schools for all learners, including those living with HIV. Young people living with HIV can face stigma in the form of bullying and other forms of violence from peers, parents, teachers and institutional management. She highlighted the recognition that out-of-school education was equally important to HIV prevention and tackling stigma as in school education and should be seen as complimentary. Out-of-school CSE was highly significant for adolescents and young people outside of institutional learning systems. They should have access to CSE that is accurate, backed by science and in an accessible format. Several

country case studies in the background note illustrate these points. Ms. Ngonze further noted that CSE came under different names and approaches in different countries.

The Secretariat stressed that evidence shows that sexual and reproductive health and rights for adolescents and young people was an effective foundation for ending AIDS as a public health threat, for young people's capacity for HIV prevention and to continue positive and healthy living for those living with HIV. The Secretariat underlined the evidence showing that when HIV policies and programmes are linked to SRHR and empowerment approaches for adolescents and young people, it results in better HIV testing outcomes, more consistent condom use and improved quality of care, reduced HIV-related stigma and discrimination and improved coverage, access to and uptake of both SRHR and HIV services.

Ms. Ngonze highlighted the challenges of providing education in humanitarian settings which are also key to HIV prevention and support for people living with HIV. This in addition to the need for HIV education support services, youth-friendly education and health services for migrant and displaced populations.

While presenting the chapter on psychosocial support, mental health and harm reduction, Ms. Ngonze spoke about the importance of tackling these as part of an integrated package of services. She mentioned data that show that globally, approximately two million young people aged 15-24 inject drugs, and that a harm reduction approach to substance abuse would be a component of supporting learners' well-being.

She underlined the importance of youth participation and leadership, and that young people were not a homogenous group and their needs differed. Therefore, diversity must be taken into account in promoting youth leadership within the HIV response.

The Secretariat further mentioned that the section in the background note on multisectoral approaches and linkages between sectors had been strengthened, especially with regards to the request to highlight their complementarity. She also referred to layered interventions as the most effective for HIV prevention, testing, treatment, care and support.

Ms. Ngonze presented the section in the background note that had been added on the role of innovation, digital and traditional media in promoting resilient, safe, inclusive and healthy learning environments. The digital space was demonstrated as an increasingly important source of information and support to adolescents and young people living with HIV, and how different media can be used to effectively reach diverse audiences. There was recognition of both its potential and risks. She also spoke on the digital divide which remains profound between and within regions and genders.

Lastly, Ms. Ngonze stressed that key recommendations had been grouped into four areas for easier reading and synergy: leadership and young people at the center, education and HIV, linkages between sectors, and financing, planning and coordination.

3. Discussion on the first draft

The PCB working group welcomed the annotated outline. Specific comments included the following:

Member States

- Commended the quality of the draft background note and expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for thoroughly incorporating the feedback received into the draft background note.
- Provided examples from their own countries and highlighted the need for having clinics and/or services for adolescents, especially girls. Once a young adolescent is too old for the pediatric clinic, they would be sent to the adult clinic where services are not adapted to their age and specific needs.
- Suggested inviting the Minister of Education of the Dominican Republic to speak about education sector efforts, especially for pregnant adolescent girls.
- Suggested to consider eliminating stigma and discrimination not only through the angle of comprehensive sexuality education but also through education more broadly.

PCB NGO Delegation

- Regarding youth leadership, highlighted that Y+ Global and the PACT were two important youth-led organisations that play a critical role in mobilizing young people around the world. The PACT is the co-chair of the UNAIDS youth advisory board. Young people from either organisation would provide insightful information as speakers during the thematic segment on youth leadership.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat acknowledged the good examples and helpful comments received. They also noted the comment on the stigma and discrimination angle to be emphasized and not only through comprehensive sexuality education. The Secretariat acknowledged the ideas shared, not least for the suggested young speakers who had played a critical role in mobilizing for the youth statement of the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030. It was proposed that speaker ideas would be further discussed during the discussion of the draft agenda.

4. Presentation of the draft agenda for the thematic segment

The senior advisor on Gender Equality at the UNAIDS Secretariat, Andreas Hilmersson, presented the draft agenda for the thematic segment. He stated that it was standard practice to have keynote addresses after an introduction by a moderator, who would provide strategic vision regarding the session objectives. This could be preceded by a video that would highlight the overall strategic vision. With regards to the moderator of the session, He said that it was proposed to have two young moderators to make the session dynamic and aligned to the topic. The overall moderation coordination would be led by Ms. Ngonze.

The Secretariat indicated that the Minister of Education of Sierra Leone had been suggested as a keynote speaker, while a young person living with HIV as the second speaker still needed to be identified. The Executive Director of UNAIDS, Winnie Byanyima, has been confirmed as the third keynote speaker. The keynote speakers would be followed by a session overview of the main highlights from the thematic segment background note, with a focus on the data and evidence around HIV, young people, education, stigma and discrimination. The speaker had not yet been identified.

The Secretariat suggested having two panel discussions. The first would focus on the experiences of young people in and out of school who have faced stigma, violence and discrimination. Young people would be able to speak up on what they think are the challenges and gaps in this area. There had been a proposal to have TikTok videos featuring young people shared before each of the three envisaged speakers.

The second proposed panel was on how to better leverage the education sector as a strategic entry point for the provision of safe, inclusive, healthy learning environments through comprehensive packages of health, support, social protection and referrals for young people, in and out-of-school, in all their diversity. The panel would seek to address what could be done after the first panel on young people's experiences. It would also highlight south-south and triangular cooperation. Four speakers were envisaged for this panel.

Mr. Hilmersson explained that the two panels would be followed by an opportunity for PCB members to showcase their best examples in eliminating HIV-related stigma and discrimination through education, empowering young people and providing a comprehensive HIV response. The concluding part would provide an overview of the day and highlight key recommendations from the thematic segment.

5. Discussion on the zero-draft agenda

Member States

- Stressed that PEPFAR works with young people including DREAMS Ambassadors who participate in the programme or are living with HIV themselves. They could speak in various parts of the agenda.
- Enquired how the TikTok stories would be selected.
- Reiterated their speaker suggestion, Yana Panfilova, an activist living with HIV and founder of the youth-led organisation Teenergizer, and a strong voice against HIV-related stigma and discrimination. She is currently based in Berlin.
- Suggested highlighting CSE in the objectives of the session itself.
- Offered to consider splitting the topic of Panel 2, Speaker 2 on "making education settings more health-promoting and strengthening the resilience of education systems to shocks (pandemic and climate events)" into two separate topics. Also suggested including war and conflict to pandemic and climate events as shocks that can disrupt the education system.
- Enquired as to why the part dedicated to member states' commitments had been changed to presentations of best practice examples from PCB members.
- Highlighted that the challenges could be further presented both in the agenda and background note and showcase examples of where the challenges had been overcome.
- Asked whether the best practices had to be linked to the case studies submitted or if they could be new.

PCB NGO Delegation

- Suggested a name for Panel 1, speaker 2: Erika Dupuis from the organization PACT.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat thanked the members and clarified that the TikTok stories were proposed to make the session more dynamic and youth-friendly. With regards to the topic of Panel 2, Speaker 2, Mr. Hilmersson noted that the aim would be to cover a broader discussion and to assess synergies, where possible, between the two issues. This avoided resulting in having five speakers on the panel, which risked consuming time. With regards to the last question related to the commitments vs best practices, it was modified to fit better with the desired outcome of the session.

6. Next steps

Mr. Ussing thanked the working group members for their comments and encouraged them to send written inputs by the following Monday, 16 May 2022, on the background note and Thursday 19 May 2022, on the agenda and speakers. He also added that the Secretariat would pay attention to ensure regional and gender balance of the speakers in the agenda.

The Secretariat encouraged working group members to send speaker names as soon as possible, as the Secretariat needed to facilitate travel. The ambition was to have all speakers present in the room for the hybrid thematic segment.

The Secretariat thanked the working group for their time and excellent input and closed the meeting.

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