



UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

Good practice

The joint UNESCO/UNAIDS project Cultural Approach to HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care, was launched in May 1998 with the aim of stimulating reflection and action for the better application of a cultural approach to AIDS. This approach fosters a more supportive environment for those who are infected by raising awareness in the communities involved, and by using local references, taboos and accepted behaviours in consciousness-raising and sensitivity workshops concerning safe sex, hygiene and stereotypes.

Additionally, the interregional conference "A cultural Approach to HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care" (Nairobi, Kenya, October 2000) highlighted strategies to initiate a debate on sex-related values and beliefs among communities and to incorporate gender and women issues in HIV/AIDS programmes.

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Recent policy statements

UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007 (§31), adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in November 2001, stipulates that the needs of women must be mainstreamed throughout all programme activities and projects, including the two cross-cutting themes, "eradication of poverty especially extreme poverty" and "the contribution of information and communication technologies to the development of education, science and culture and the construction of a knowledge society". A gender perspective must be integrated into all stages of the programme cycle, from conceptualization to evaluation. In pursuing its mission, UNESCO is committed to promoting the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality in its five fields of competence, i.e. education, natural and human sciences, communication and culture. Women's priorities and vision of development goals and approaches will be addressed and promoted through greater participation of women at all levels and in all areas of UNESCO's action. Region-specific programmes and activities that benefit girls and women of various ages, including the young and the elderly, will focus on networking, exchange of information, sharing of knowledge and building alliances across borders and cultures in the framework of the *United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace*. Further promotion and implementation of the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* and all other international normative instruments that promote women's human rights remain a top priority.

Programme objectives

UNESCO's two-year Programme and Budget, which applies results-based programming, budgeting, management and monitoring principles, adopts a broad approach to gender mainstreaming. In implementing the Dakar Framework of Action adopted at the World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000), which complements UNESCO's contribution to the Ten-Year UN Girl's Education Initiative, the Education Sector is striving to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to achieve gender equality in education by 2015. UNESCO's strategy to ensure gender equality in education includes: advocacy and sensitization, support to policy development and the promotion of gender-responsive education delivery systems. Women and girls are one of the most targeted population groups in UNESCO's endeavour to eliminate all forms of discrimination in education at all levels throughout life (i.e. in primary, secondary and higher; as well as in basic, technical and vocational education). Guided by the Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge and the Science Agenda: Framework for Action (notably para 90) adopted in Budapest in 1999, the Science Sector, focuses on the integration of gender perspectives into national science and technology policies and programmes. The overall objective being to ensure that women and girls are enabled to take full part in all aspects of science, technology and engineering sciences and that their priorities and visions are reflected in development goals. Special attention is also being paid to the role of women as community ecological stewards, and to the role of local and indigenous knowledge systems.

Keeping in mind that human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights, the Sector of Social and

Human Sciences seeks to promote gender equality and the human rights of women through knowledge sharing, research and analysis of socio-economic issues and structures. The Sector of Social and Human Sciences addresses Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and supports the Millennium Development Goal of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Based on research and analysis, it seeks to promote gender equality as a means for development. This is done by encouraging access to and enjoyment of the human rights of women, by applying research and analysis to inform policy change and by making available knowledge that is essential to the attainment of equality between the sexes and the promotion and protection of human rights of women.

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted at UNESCO's 31st General Conference (Paris, 2 November 2001) emphasizes that in our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. The Declaration stresses the importance of the preservation and transmission of values and cultural heritage. Within this framework, the Culture Sector provides support and advice to its Member States and NGOs to sustain initiatives and programmes devoted to strengthening the contribution of women and the role they play in transmitting the oral tradition to their children, in particular the teaching of the mother-tongue, and transmitting intangible cultural heritage to the younger generations in order to sustain cultural identity. Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible and interdependent in agreement with the full implementation of cultural rights as defined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Other activities

To ensure the effective achievement of these objectives, a Section entirely dedicated to gender mainstreaming – the Section for Women and Gender Equality – is placed within the Bureau of Strategic Planning. While the substantive sectors carry the principal responsibility in addressing these issues in their respective areas, the Gender Section ensures the cohesiveness of UNESCO's overall effort and facilitates information- and knowledge-sharing as well as co-operation across disciplines, sectors and with the United Nations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as the private sector. Developing and/or strengthening appropriate networking mechanisms is a particular priority, based, whenever possible, on focal points within Member States (National Commissions for UNESCO, UNESCO clubs and associations, etc.) and in the Secretariat. The Section has recently edited a series of documents, such as the *UNESCO Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework* and the *Practical Handbook for Gender Focal Points in the National Commissions for UNESCO*. Gender mainstreaming training for the gender focal points at the Secretariat and in the Field Offices will be undertaken this fall. ■