

PRESS RELEASE – IBE – 8 SEPTEMBER 2004

Preliminary Seminar at the 47th ICE: HIV/AIDS and quality education for young people.

“A teacher can save more lives than a doctor” Mr. Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, told us at the opening of the high level seminar on HIV/AIDS and education, which took place yesterday, 7 September, in Geneva. This short sentence sums up nicely the vital importance of the education sector in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

This preliminary seminar, held on the eve of the 47th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) brought together some 10 Ministers of Education and over 50 delegates who came from around the world to participate in the 47th ICE.

Two of the objectives of this event, organized by the International Bureau of Education (IBE-UNESCO) in collaboration with UNAIDS member organizations were: on the one hand to discuss the essential issues concerning the roles and responsibilities of the education sector in the fight against AIDS, and on the other hand to identify the priority measures to take to ensure an effective response from the education sector. Now these messages must be transmitted and integrated into the discussions and results of the 47th ICE.

The contributions of the different ministers and delegates over the three plenary sessions and five working groups were encouraging. The education sectors in a number of countries have already put in place not only the conditions for responding effectively, but also the necessary measures for dealing with the urgent and serious issues that AIDS presents for education.

It is now a question of hearing the responses and enforcing them so that all children, young people, teachers and education employees have access to prevention and care and can assume their responsibilities, each at their own level, to protect themselves, to contribute to prevention and to have access to preventive services, care, advice and treatment.

“An extraordinary situation requires an extraordinary response”, this phrase implies the strengthening and organizing of partners at international, regional and national levels. An extraordinary mobilization of supplementary resources is also a priority so that the education sector is fully prepared for its role and responsibilities.

The following themes, in line with those of the 47th ICE, have been taken up: how can girls be better prepared to protect themselves and be given full access to education against HIV/AIDS? How can all orphans, children and young people affected by HIV/AIDS be assured of a quality education, and prevent their exclusion from the education system.

How can the prevention of HIV/AIDS be fully integrated into school programmes, in particular in addressing gender issues and life skills by using interactive methods of teaching. How can teachers be better prepared and supported? And finally, how can those partners who allow

the mobilization and use of the resources necessary for the education sector to play a role, be further encouraged? A summary of the priorities identified during the seminar, in each domain, will be made available to ICE delegates.

For more information please consult the ICE and IBE HIV/AIDS webpages:
http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Organisation/Organisation_main.htm

(HIV Seminar: HIV/AIDS and Quality Education for all Youth)

<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/hiv aids>

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