



Bringing Us Closer: Nationwide Teacher Orientation on PIASCY

PIASCY

The Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to Youth (PIASCY) is a national effort set out by President Museveni to impart knowledge, skills and behavior change among young people.

One aspect of the initiative equips teachers to provide primary school pupils with information and skills to avoid HIV/AIDS infection. Teachers are asked to conduct monthly assemblies on a series of 26 topics and complement assembly messages with classroom teaching.

UPHOLD oriented 45,721 teachers from 15,890 primary schools in 56 districts on PIASCY

Introduction USAID, through the UPHOLD Project, was privileged to support the Government of Uganda to scale-up PIASCY to primary school teachers. Between June and December 2004, UPHOLD oriented 45,721 teachers from 15,890 primary schools in 56 districts on PIASCY and how to implement it in their schools.

Since the mid 1980s, Uganda has demonstrated impressive reductions in HIV/AIDS transmission, often attributed to national leadership in acknowledging the disease, open communication about it and swift action at all levels. In recognition that the majority of Ugandans are youth and the younger generations continue to require good information about HIV/AIDS and skills to respond, PIASCY is the Presidential Initiative to promote positive behaviors to young people.

The first component of PIASCY revolves around school assemblies and complementary classroom lessons on a set of 26 messages. To achieve these activities, teachers must be knowledgeable about the topics and comfortable discussing them with pupils.

The vast majority of HIV infections in Uganda are spread through sexual transmissions. However, the subject of sex, central to information about HIV/AIDS prevention and transmission, is still a cultural taboo to discuss. Teachers often find it difficult to talk about with anyone, much less with their pupils, for a variety of reasons:

- most teachers lack detailed information about the disease and, therefore, the confidence to raise the issue without being able to answer questions;
- others fear that parents will hold them responsible for bringing up inappropriate subjects in the classroom;
- some teachers know or fear that they are infected; and
- still others feel ashamed to advise pupils to do the very behaviors that they themselves practice.



Orientations The Ministry of Education & Sports developed training materials and trained national facilitators to orient teachers. USAID contributed through UPHOLD to roll-out the strategy to the school level. Alice Ibale, Programme Manager, and Madina Nakibirige, Programme Assistant, worked through the Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS), which coordinates all primary schools through core Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTC), to develop the orientations with principals from 23 core PTCs and District Education Offices.

Three teachers from each primary school participated for two days. They received the manuals and became familiar with the contents. During the process, discussions about current practices in the school setting began.

Achievements Teachers and district officials were pleased with achievements. More than 45,000 teachers from 15,890 primary schools in all 56 districts participated. Both public and private school sent teachers so that the over seven million children in primary schools will benefit from teacher orientations.

Most teachers responded enthusiastically; many reflected upon the current situation in schools and planned what they would do to protect children. In addition, teachers shared that the orientations renewed their commitment to advise pupils and act as positive role models.

The roll-out was completed within six months, compared to the anticipated 11 months for implementation, and at a considerably lower cost than expected. Use of the existing TDMS system increased coverage, effectiveness and speed of delivery. Collaboration between education and district officials ensured that all partners felt ownership over the activity; which made it acceptable to teachers to use the information. This set a foundation for sustainability in the future.

Next Steps

- **Formalize how children will be protected at school.** Teachers shared current contexts in schools related to defilement, which is common throughout the country. Violators are rarely prosecuted, despite the Teacher Code of Conduct and awareness of their fellow teachers and parents. One case in Kamuli District involved a Head Teacher who was harassed by community members for reporting a teacher who defiled a pupil to the police. They also generated ideas about what could be done to protect pupils.
- **Involve parents and other community members** to help form attitudes and values, and protect children at home. Parents influence what can successfully happen at school and are the most influential people in children's lives in forming values, attitudes and practices. What parents believe and do can protect children or put them at risk.
- **Promote female teacher or adult participation.** There are far fewer female teachers than male teachers, especially in rural areas. In some rural schools there are no female teachers. This may affect implementation of PIASCY at school, especially related to information for girls.
- **Update data on schools and teachers.** The activity founds that Ministry of Education & Sports databases on services available and district records were not up-to-date, which resulted in fewer training materials and a shortage in budget plans for each district.