



**Science Education Policy Forum  
&  
Campaign Launch**

***Advocacy and Leadership to Advance the Caribbean Education Sector  
Response to HIV/AIDS***

Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre  
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Framing Remarks for Campaign Launch

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## Introduction

Thank you distinguished hosts, Dr. Matsuura, Director General, UNESCO, Honorable Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education for Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Ramroop, Mme Gosselin, Director, UNESCO Office for the Caribbean, Ms. Ross and Dr. Wiltshire. We are honored and thank Mr. Matsuura for his presence here today and for his leadership support as we launch the HIV Advocacy Campaign. Special thanks, too, to Mr. Michael Morrissey for his dedication to advancing this work.

Good morning most accomplished ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming and I would like to honor the many contributions that each of you is making to science education and to combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

UNESCO invited Education Development Centre (EDC) to this event for two purposes: 1) to share our thinking and ideas in the science education policy forum; and 2) to frame the Advocacy and Leadership Campaign. In my remarks, I will address 3 areas:

1. Who is EDC? What do we do?
2. What this campaign is advocating for – the vision and elements of a comprehensive approach to HIV in the education sector
3. What the campaign plans to do.

### **First, Who is EDC?**

EDC is an international non-profit organization, applying research and education strategies to challenges in health, education and social justice. EDC was founded in 1958 when the Russians launched the Sputnik satellite. Concerned about the poor quality of teaching science with outdated textbooks and the lack of the inquiry method, Dr. Jerrold Zacharias, a physicist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), founded the organization to improve the teaching of science education.

EDC continues today to create innovative science curricula to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Active learning methods and teacher training are always included and we partner with well known publishers to ensure broad scale distribution. As long ago as the 1970's, EDC was invited to Africa to join in creating the African Primary Science Program. Ms. Abigail Levy from EDC will be participating in the Science Forum that follows this session.

Over the last five decades, EDC's work has expanded beyond math, science and technology to broad education reform, early childhood and special education, adult literacy, youth employment, and health promotion and disease prevention. In the area of HIV/AIDS, we conduct research and develop programs to address the full continuum from prevention to counseling and testing to care.



At EDC we act on our belief that **learning is the most powerful and liberating force in human development. We partner with organizations and people in countries**, serving as a neutral facilitator and catalyst for capacity building, and contributing what we know of the evidence base of effective strategies from around the world.

Many years ago when Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, visited EDC, he told a story about his work with Brazilian farmers on literacy. In respect of his university education, they would say, “Professor Freire, you are so highly educated and you know so many things.” “Yes”, he replied, “And you know what I do not know—you know the quality of the soil, the seeds which are most suited, the weather and its effects, the time for harvest.”

The message from this story is that we each know only what we know from the sphere or sector in which we work, or the level—international, national or local—or the research or the practice—and it is through learning and growing together that we can make progress in what seem to be intractable problems concerning HIV/AIDS.

### **Campaign Vision**

Next, I would like to describe the vision of a comprehensive approach to HIV/AIDS in the education sector—what this campaign will be advocating for. Over the last few years, the UNAIDS Inter Agency Task Team for the Education Sector, convened by UNESCO, has done a lot of work in this area and published, [HIV/AIDS & education: a strategic approach](#).

Quoting from the IATT Strategy framework, “*Advocacy at all levels is needed to mobilize all sectors of government in the struggle against HIV/AIDS and to trigger support and complementary actions by non-government organizations, civil society and the private sector*”.

Amplifying and applying this approach to the Caribbean region, Professors Michael Kelly and Brendan Bain, in this very room, in October 2004, launched their new publication, [Education and HIV AIDS in the Caribbean](#). In it they argue that for the first two decades of the epidemic, HIV was largely concentrated in the health sector. At best, the education sector in most places around the world has, concentrated on information and perhaps a curriculum. The approach has rarely looked at what the whole system must do.

The ideal, comprehensive response is to tackle HIV/AIDS **with a systemic management** as well as a public health approach in the educational setting. Quality education itself is at the core—creating a system that graduates educated and literate young people who can assume a productive place in society. Beyond its most basic function, a comprehensive approach to HIV means moving well beyond a health promotion curriculum component alone to having the education sector use **all means at its disposal to promote and protect the health of students and staff, and mitigate the impact on the system itself. The approach includes these 4 key elements:**



1. **Overarching policy** recognizing that the education system is a workplace for thousands of government staff. Adapting and customizing such policies as those that ILO has developed to meet the needs of the education sector is one such way. Education sector policy would also cover curriculum, the school environment and services.
2. Curriculum and education based on effective strategies of behavior change, skill development and participatory learning set in the context of health promotion for responsible lifestyles as addressed by Health and Family Life Education and the development of the ideal Caribbean person. Consideration of what is best handled in school after school and out of school is part of the planning.
3. A healthy psycho-social school and physical school environment, one free of fear, stigma and homophobia, one that promotes gender equity and is free of sexual harassment and sexual assault with codes of conduct and facilities to ensure girls' attendance. On my recent trip to Cape Town, the front page article described school bathrooms as the most unsafe place for girls where they were sexually assaulted.
4. Services through trained guidance counselors and mechanisms to coordinate with Voluntary Counseling and Testing, mental health and nutrition services in the community, making knowledge about and access to testing and care easy for education sector staff and students who may be sexually active.

This is a tall order, but it is an exciting vision, one which, if implemented, will not only address HIV, but also improve the overall health of students and teachers, essential to academic performance. We all know that changing systems requires big ideas. Incremental ones don't do it. Systemic change takes time and against this epidemic, the longer we take the more lives of loved ones we lose. Changing systems also requires players working inside and outside the system for the education sector cannot do this alone. This vision will require support from public health, business, parents, unions, the faith community, etc. Such an approach has potential, in the discouraging face of the AIDS epidemic, to make improvements in the education sector for the long-term.

Two weeks ago, hosted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, as members of the IATT, Mr. Morrissey and I visited an AIDS clinic program in one of the poorest townships in Cape Town, South Africa. In 1999, Doctors without Borders, working alongside a community activist group, tested 400 people for HIV. In 2005 they tested 17,000 people and provided treatment for as many as possible. The staff described the stigma and discrimination they had to overcome to increase these numbers and have people come forward for the lifesaving drugs. They shared, as does the research on stigma, that one of the most successful ways has been when the community actually gets to know people who are living with HIV. Though they have no evaluation studies yet, they also believe that people, who have been tested, received care and are able to return to their communities and care for their children bring hope and the message of prevention to others. They have also shown that people living in extreme poverty can comply with their treatments and survive, disproving the myth that this is not possible.



These lessons have implications for the education sector. It shows the power of education and treatment working together. It shows the power of a partnership of community activists with the public health clinic. Imagine what comparable partnerships in the education sector might do.

Toward the goal of a more comprehensive approach, in just the last 3 years, the Caribbean has taken a quantum leap forward. Many people and circumstances are in place right now to accelerate not only the pace, but the positive outcomes ahead.

This UNESCO advocacy and leadership campaign aims to pave the way to strengthening the education sector response to promoting health across the region, including HIV and HFLE. *The Campaign Goals are to:*

- Advocate for a comprehensive approach to health promotion and the mitigation of the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the education sector;
- Create a demand within the education sector for technical know-how and financial resources for such an approach to be realized;
- Advance policies and programs that protect the lives of students, their teachers and managers throughout the sector; and
- Promote inclusion of persons living with HIV.

### **Process and Next Steps**

Phase I of this regional campaign will take place over the next 8-9 months. But, to develop the regional campaign, we are seeking invitations from 2 countries to work with EDC and UNESCO to shape the overall approach. In each country, we will identify 6-10 advocates. These advocates will work with the EDC/UNESCO team to identify the target audiences, the messages, strategies for their delivery and tools for this campaign. The emphasis will not be on materials development, but on creating a human web of influence—key people willing to advocate for change.

It would be quite wonderful, given the experiences in Trinidad and Tobago of the education and health ministries, United Nations family, National AIDS Coordinating Committee, faith community, NGO community and the University of West Indies, if such an invitation were to come from here.

This team of 6-10 experienced people will be drawn across sectors –formal and informal education, health and public health, unions, industry, faith-based, Caribbean Network of Persons Living with HIV, parent and youth They will have qualities of leadership, advocacy and be good, clear communicators themselves.

The type of people this campaign is seeking to work with are what Jim Collins in his research article describes as Level 5 Leaders. He writes, “The qualities of leaders who transformed systems from good to truly great were not only counterintuitive but counterculture. People generally assume that transformative leaders are larger than life



personalities, charismatic, powerful speakers who become celebrity like. Collins' research findings change the way we think about leadership. He found that the most powerfully transformative leaders possess a paradoxical mixture of personal humility and professional will. They are timid and ferocious. They are shy and fearless. They are rare—and unstoppable.

At the end of the day, it is people with these qualities across the Caribbean we are seeking to identify—to support and deploy them with a campaign strategy, and eventually to honor those who make a significant difference through a Caribbean Awards Ceremony.

Beyond that right now, we must develop the details of the campaign together with the country partners. As the poet, Antonio Machado wrote in 1917,

Wanderer your footprints are the path and nothing more  
Wanderer there is no path  
It is s created as you walk  
by walking  
You make the path before you.

**Thank you. We look forward to making the path to strengthening the education sector response to HIV as we walk together with you.**