







Harmonisation of Public Policies on Sexual Education and HIV/AIDS Prevention in Schools in the MERCOSUL

Sexual Education plays a substantial role in a successful response to the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, UNAIDS called with UNESCO "to make sexuality education an integral part of the national response to the HIV pandemic" (UNESCO 2009).

Already in 2007 - in a multilateral process facilitated by GTZ (now GIZ), the Brazilian Ministry of Health, UNAIDS, UNESCO and UNFPA - six countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay) jointly agreed to implement the regional south-south cooperation project called "Harmonisation of Public Policies on Sexual Education and HIV/AIDS Prevention in Schools in the MERCOSUL".

This process intended to 1) Strengthening sexual education programmes and HIV prevention in schools, addressing also discrimination, social exclusion and stigmatization of and among children and adolescents; and to 2) Harmonising public policies and strengthening the linkages between health and education sectors.

The implementation of the process started with a

- 1) Project phase (2007 2009), initiated with a fact-finding and objective setting workshop; in this project phase each country established a multi-sectorial management committee for sexual education, including MoE, MoH and civil society. National policies and national working plans were formulated and implemented. Regular regional workshops and support form a network of technical experts ensured a coordinated progress.
- 2) Consolidation phase (2010); during this phase countries continued implementation and gathered experiences with the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation. In an analysis workshop, it became evident that in the meantime all countries have implemented national policies and integrated sexual education in school curricula. Further issues arise on the quality of implementation and sustainability of the achievements.
- 3) Development of a regional network (from 2011 onwards): Community of practice; in response to the problems identified in the consolidation phase, a Community of practice (CoPSexEd) has been initiated, with focal points in each country. The CoP will be supported by a UNAIDS interactive website, in order to facilitate the continued technical exchange of experiences between countries, but also to link United Nations Agencies with countries to address problems during the implementation of sexual education in schools (Figure 1). UNAIDS and UNESCO are committed to take the process forward.

The process benefited from ownership of the countries involved, each responsible for defining and implementing the objectives of the process. The continued technical discussion in this south - south cooperation throughout the phases allowed for regional harmonisation, but also to provide a forum to exchange experiences with a subject that continues to be sensitive in many countries.

Visible and measurable achievements of the regional initiative include 1) the introduction of national policies and action plans, 2) subsequently sexual education has reached an estimated 100,000 teachers and 1,200,000 pupils (from 2007 – 2011), 3) a multi-sectorial co-operation in countries – this often being a novelty for countries and 4) a commitment between countries to continue the process in a CoP.

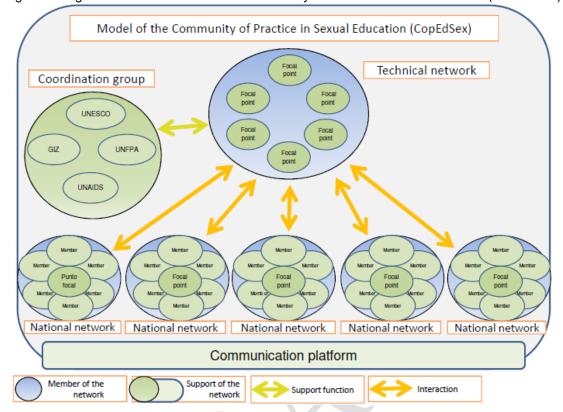








Figure 1: Organisational structure of the Community of Practice/Sexual Education (CoPSexEd)



ⁱ UNESCO 2009, International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, An evidence-informed approach for schools, teachers and health educators, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183281e.pdf (accessed 12 September 2011)