

Effective teaching of HIV/AIDS related topics in the classroom:

Teachers frequently do not teach about HIV/AIDS in the classroom, or if they do, it is limited to providing factual knowledge and is often not effective. This has many reasons. A key one is the traditional distance between teachers as adults and figures of authority and young people. The cultural background and upbringing of the teachers themselves makes it difficult for them to talk about sexuality - especially with youth. The fact that they have not been trained on how to address these topics appropriately in the context of the existing curriculum is another important reason. In addition, they lack appropriate teaching materials.

Therefore one of the key interventions of the PASHA project has been to support Biology and Civics teachers in secondary schools to improve their teaching of HIV/AIDS in the classroom.

In both cases the training uses participatory teaching methods *and seeks to convey to teachers how they can use these methods to ensure student involvement in teaching about HIV/AIDS or related topics*. Teachers practice participatory methods during the trainings: for example, role plays are used to engage students in discussions on controversial situations, to encourage them to reflect on their values, attitudes and risks and develop life-skills to deal with these. Teachers also receive a selection of reference materials and sample activities in form of a workbook when they take part in the training. The initial training lasts for approximately 5 days. At the end of the training, teachers receive an assignment to design, plan and try out their own interactive lesson plan in the classroom and to reflect on it. These assignments form the basis for the invitation to a short refresher course (2-3 days) a few months later, which is tailored to the training needs that have become apparent through the assignments.

The training of Biology teachers addresses two main areas: improving the content knowledge on reproductive health including HIV/AIDS, contraceptives and sexuality in a wider sense while at the same time developing and practicing a variety of interactive, participatory teaching strategies, such as e.g. role play, case studies, small group discussions etc.

For Civics teachers, the starting point is to create a sense of need to address HIV/AIDS among the teachers, and thereafter identifying where and how HIV/AIDS can be integrated into the school curriculum. HIV/AIDS strongly relates to topics like human rights, gender and lifeskills which are topics included in the civics curriculum – nonetheless it was found by PASHA that teachers hardly do so, as they generally have not been trained on HIV/AIDS and are uncertain on how to integrate it into their teaching. The uncertainty is compounded by the lack of appropriate teaching materials.

Refresher trainings play a very important role in enforcing what has been learned in the initial training. The sharing of experiences and challenges with colleagues which can then be addressed during the workshop help to motivate teachers to really use these methodologies in the classroom. The trainings have been met with enthusiasm by both groups of teachers and the proportion who have gone on to complete the assignments and sought to apply what they have learned has been consistently high.