

Creating a Caring School

A Guide for School Management Teams

with

Accompanying Toolkit



Saide 
South African Institute
for Distance Education

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A Guide for School Management Teams with an Accompanying Toolkit

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- Saxonwold Primary School, Johannesburg, Gauteng
- Gaetsalwe Primary School, Makgobistad, North West Province
- Kwa Manandi Primary School, Mtubatuba, Kwa Zulu Natal or
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Cover Photograph

- Saxonwold Primary School, Johannesburg, Gauteng

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INTRODUCTION

Background

HIV and AIDS prevalence and its effect in South Africa

South Africa is currently experiencing one of the most severe AIDS epidemics in the world with more than five million (or an estimated 11%) of the overall population living with HIV. The total number of new HIV infections for 2009 is estimated at 413 000. Of these, an estimated 60 000 will be among children (Statistics SA: 2009)¹. For each person living with HIV, the impact is felt not only by the infected person, but also in the lives of their families, friends and wider communities, thus significantly multiplying the effect.

What does this mean for education?

Carol Coombe, a prominent South African HIV and AIDS specialist, has highlighted the impact of HIV and AIDS on education. The following is a summary of some of the worrying ways in which this impact is manifested.

Learners

Fewer children enrol in school because HIV+ mothers die young; children are ill and dying of AIDS complications; many families are impoverished; and many children are orphaned or caring for younger children, or are trying to scrape together a meager living – they therefore stay out of school. These conditions also generally lead to increased absenteeism; withdrawal from school to care for others; lower educational performance; and premature termination of education all of which result in fewer vocational opportunities.

Teachers

Qualified teachers and officials are lost to education through death or illness.

School effectiveness

Where a significant proportion of teachers, officials and children are ill, lacking morale, and unable to concentrate, a decline in school effectiveness is likely to occur.

The schooling system

Management, administration and financial control in the education system are already fragile; HIV and AIDS are likely to make it even more difficult to sustain the structures necessary to provide formal education of the scope and quality envisioned by the government's policies.

These aspects are all very worrying because, ultimately, they signify a real reversal of development gains (achieved since 1994) and further development will be more difficult. Current education development goals (including the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All) will be unattainable within the foreseeable future (adapted from Coombe 2000: 16).²

In the context of this epidemic, we need to acknowledge that we are behind in our responses and consequently must manage the results of this epidemic while trying to put in place the counter measures required for the longer term. An effective education sector response to HIV and AIDS is required. To date, much of the focus has been on preventing HIV and AIDS and little attention has been given to the question of how best to support those people who are HIV+ or whose lives are affected by HIV and AIDS. A range of questions need to be asked and answered. For example, how best can the wellness of the teachers be supported? What systems need to be put in place to ensure that teaching and learning continue, even if teachers are absent? How can learners who are absent be enabled to continue learning? What systems exist in schools for supporting vulnerable learners? A new planning and management paradigm for mitigating the influence of the spreading epidemic on the education system is required.

Given this situation, the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) embarked on a research project with the aim of developing a practical approach to managing the impact of HIV and AIDS in schools in diverse contexts.

As this project commenced, one of the first activities SAIDE undertook was a survey of existing initiatives aimed at mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS on schooling. We established that many such projects existed. We found that, typically, the Department of Education initiatives seemed to mainly focus on training around interpretation of HIV and AIDS and Inclusive Education Policy. Many non-government, community and faith based organisations working in the education sector focussed on a range of interventions. These included practical interventions from support to schools on how to develop food gardens to short training workshops for teachers on how to identify and support vulnerable learners as well as inputs on HIV and AIDS prevention. We found that there were many good projects dotted all around the country, some small and localised and some large scale initiatives that were province-wide and, in some cases, some even intended for national implementation.

The nature, duration and quality of the interventions varied greatly. We found many instances of short, two or three day training workshops, but it soon became clear that these were not sufficient to build the kind of capacity that is needed to deal with the large challenges created by the impact of HIV and AIDS on education. We found a number of pilot projects that had been implemented, often for a year or so, but without ever being properly evaluated. The strengths and weaknesses of these pilot projects were therefore never fully assessed and as a result many valuable lessons were lost. Many of these projects became once-off events, rather than providing the impetus for sustained development.

SAIDE's next research activity was a scan of schools to review school-based care and support initiatives. Many were found, but most frequently these were of an informal nature, carried out by individual teachers who had been personally moved to do something by the plight of vulnerable learners. We came across numerous examples of individual teachers bringing food to school to feed hungry learners. We found cases of teachers paying for a learner's school fees or uniform. We even found evidence of teachers fostering orphans. But by their very nature, these are not initiatives that can be implemented school-wide and turned into systematised programmes of action. Despite the importance of these caring initiatives, again, questions about sustainability need to be raised.

We found numerous schools struggling to support vulnerable learners without receiving any sustained support, either from the department of education or from any other organisations. This meant that in many cases, where interventions were made, they were not systematically implemented, well managed or sustainable.

But we did not believe that the situation was hopeless. Next, SAIDE approached the various provincial departments of education, the teacher unions and some NGOs and asked them to help us identify examples of good school-based care and support for vulnerable learners. We visited schools across seven provinces and recorded the examples of good practice that we found. Based on the evidence that we have collected on implementation of manageable strategies and good management practice, we have seen how schools *can* and *do* make a difference. We found pockets of excellence in the remotest rural areas as well as in inner city and township schools. Our research convinced us that all schools have the potential to slowly and systematically put into place measures that will help them become sites of care and support.

We have used the findings of our research to develop this guide and the companion toolkit. We hope that the many valuable lessons distilled will serve as a practical guide to help school principals and their management teams (SMTs) to manage the health and social needs of children infected and affected by HIV and AIDS or made vulnerable for other reasons.

Approach used in this guide and toolkit

An integrated approach is used to think about support

In response to the multifaceted nature of the effects of HIV and AIDS, the approach used in this guide is an integrated one. Those whose lives are affected may need to be supported in a range of ways. For example, learners may need support of a physical nature, in the form of nutrition and medical care, but they may also require support with school work and psycho-social support. Whereas it may not be possible to offer a whole range of support services from the outset, schools need to consider a range of interventions and think about a phased-in or incremental approach to implementing these.

This guide also acknowledges that it is difficult for any school to manage the number of social and economic challenges that present themselves on its own. External support needs to be sought. This requires the school leadership and management to develop strategies for harnessing assistance from a variety of organisations outside of the school. SAIDE therefore recognises the importance of school management building its capacity to set up networks of support as a method of achieving necessary external assistance.

Inclusive understanding of vulnerability

How does SAIDE understand the notion of vulnerability? Many organisations, both inside and outside of South Africa, involved with providing support and care to vulnerable children (the Children's Institute, Soul City, Save the Children, MIET(A) and large international agencies like UNICEF) adhere to an inclusive definition of 'vulnerability'. The definition used by these organisations includes children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS or by *any other* socio-economic causes such as poverty, physical or sexual abuse, alcohol and drug abuse etc. The South African Education White Paper 6 *Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System*, (DoE: 2001)³ also defines 'vulnerability' in this broad and inclusive way, characterising HIV and AIDS as being just one among many barriers to learning.

This raised the question for SAIDE as to what our approach should be. How narrow or wide a definition of vulnerability should we adopt? Should we focus our research only on supporting learners affected by HIV and AIDS or should we include all vulnerable learners in our investigation into various care and support strategies?

We eventually agreed that while it remained important to maintain a focus on HIV and AIDS, we would do so within the wider context of *inclusive* education.

How is the role of school management conceptualised?

Educational policy in South Africa is largely premised on the notion that the school principal and the school management team (SMT) should provide leadership and management both in the school and beyond the school walls - in the broader community. (See the South African Schools Act 1996⁴ and the National Policy for HIV and AIDS for Learners and Educators in Public Schools 1999)⁵.

Our research confirmed the existence of an extremely wide spectrum of schools in South Africa with very varying management capacity and resources dependant largely on the context in which schools are located. It is therefore unlikely that it would be possible to develop a management approach that would suit all schools. Instead, the strategies proposed in this guide are intended to assist principals and SMTs to think about and plan the approaches that are most appropriate to their school and context.

Focus on learners

The research undertaken to inform the development of this guide was intended initially to focus on good practice in supporting both learners and teachers who are affected by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. However as our research progressed, it became more and more obvious that while there were many initiatives to support learners, there was very little evidence of care or support initiatives aimed at teachers who were infected or affected by HIV and AIDS. The one exception that SAIDE came across is the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) Prevention Care and Treatment Action (PCTA) programme. The lack of good practice in this field has meant that we were not able to write up information on teacher care and support. Teacher care and support is therefore, unfortunately, not a focus areas of this guide. We do however encourage all schools to get involved in the PCTA programme which is available nationally and to be proactive in their support of their teachers.

More information about the PCTA programme is available in the resource section of the Toolkit.

Use of sketches and case studies

The 'sketches' included in this guide are based on the actual case studies undertaken as part of the SAIDE research. (School names and the names of school principals have been changed.) The 'sketches' demonstrate the range of leadership competences demonstrated by school leaders in a range of schools that were selected to be part of this research project. They reflect the richness and variety of the leadership styles observed during the research and serve to illustrate that reasonable and 'doable' responses to this crisis are possible, even in the most poorly resourced schools.

Purpose of this guide and toolkit

Schools conceptualised as centres of care and support

One of the important lessons learnt in our research has been that a new paradigm for schools needs to become entrenched – one in which schools are conceptualised as centres of care and support. This notion is not a new one; rather, it is well rooted in existing policy. The need to make the shift from a narrow focus on what schools do and how they are led, to the notion of schools as centres of care and support becomes urgent when one takes cognisance of the number of orphans and vulnerable children as evidenced in this research sample alone. The challenge is to give realisable, practical expression to existing policy.

Thus, while retaining their emphasis on teaching and learning, schools need to focus on a few well chosen interventions. This study suggests that basic nutrition, aftercare and support with school work, and psycho-social support are preconditions for successful learning and teaching to take place. Schools will therefore be required to build supportive networks to:

- better manage, strengthen and expand the current provincial nutrition programmes;
- establish aftercare facilities; and
- manage psycho-social support and referral services.

The expanded role of school leadership

The concept of the school being expanded to become a centre of care and support inevitably results in a related expansion of the role of the school leadership. New responsibilities will have to be assumed. In summary, these roles and responsibilities include SMTs having to be knowledgeable and skilled at identifying and mobilising resources within the school and beyond, enabling them to set up and sustain programmes for orphans and vulnerable learners; willing to take on more explicit mentoring and management roles in relation to staff; and providing oversight for setting up of simple, effective information management system for tracking vulnerable learners.

The need for professional development with a different emphasis

It is likely that many principals and SMT members will themselves lack these kinds of skills and require a different form of capacity building from that currently offered to school leaders. This has implications for the type of continuing professional development needed. While the DoE is acknowledged for developing the Advanced Certificate in Education in Leadership and Management for school principals, the current content of this programme is not responsive to the type of needs described here. In fact, as it presently stands, the programme does not have a module dealing with support for vulnerable learners nor with any other aspect of managing the impact of HIV and AIDS in schools.

Having identified this gap in current professional development provision, SAIDE recognised the need for further professional support specifically aimed at helping school leadership to understand the issues and get to grips with some of the practicalities involved in managing a school in the environment of HIV and AIDS.

The idea of developing a management resource to support SMTs was born. To ensure the relevance of the materials, SAIDE embarked on a evidence-based research process which has directly fed into the development of this guide and toolkit.

While the content of this Guide and Toolkit do not lead to a formal qualification, a range of key competencies are covered. It is intended that the Guide will be a useful curriculum support for providers seeking to offer qualifications to school management, as well as directly to those principals and members of management teams and teachers (especially in the Life Skills/Life Orientation Learning Areas) who are interested in some professional development outside of a formal qualification.

The structure of the guide and toolkit

This resource is comprised of two companion components, the Guide and the Toolkit. The guide is intended to assist school leadership and management to understand why and how a particular strategy, method, or idea is useful, and not to be just a “how to” manual of tips. Yet the resource as a whole is at the same time intended to be relevant to the context and practice of the school management team. Therefore, included in the Toolkit component are realistic exemplars, check lists, and a set of information management tools that demonstrate approaches and methods for recording, planning, managing and monitoring implementation of a range of care and support interventions.

Content outline

Unit 1

How responsive are schools to the socio-economic challenges in South Africa today?

In this first unit we explore some of the main social and economic challenges that children face. We examine how these issues affect not only the children, their households and communities, but also the school. In acknowledging the significant challenges such as the impact of HIV and AIDS that schools managers face, we explore the following questions:

- Why is schooling important?
- What are the implications of these challenges for schools?
 - What is the role of the school in mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS?
 - What implications does this have for the role of school management?

Unit 2

Schools as centres of care

Against the backdrop of the broader South African education policy framework we attempt to create a vision of what a caring school might look like. In Unit 2 we:

- Explore how policy requires schools to respond to the effects of HIV and AIDS;
- Ask why there is a gap between policy and implementation;
- Identify the features of a caring school in which vulnerable children are supported and where they are enabled to grow and develop; and
- Explore the role that the school management team needs to play to create a caring and supportive school environment.

Unit 3

Care for vulnerable learners

In this unit we examine the meaning of the term *vulnerable* and reflect on the devastating effects that socio-economic issues such as HIV and AIDS, poverty and related challenges have on learners. We establish that regular attendance at school is critical for vulnerable learners since schools can provide them with the stability and support they need. In Unit 3 we explore:

- What makes learners vulnerable;
- How being vulnerable affects a learner's education;
- Why schools are important in the lives of vulnerable learners - the notion of schooling as a "social vaccine"; and
- How having a system for identifying and managing information about vulnerable learners enables management to use resources wisely and to plan appropriate support.

Unit 4

Networks of care and support

Having established that schools are critical role players in the national multisectoral strategy for combating the spread of HIV and AIDS infection and managing the effects of the epidemic in the local context, in Unit 4 we explore:

- The benefits of setting up networks of support as a method for delivering the school's overall support strategy;
- What types of support are available from state and other external organisations; and
- How to manage support networks to get optimum benefits for your school.

Unit 5

Good nutrition for learning

In this unit, we explore in some depth why the provision of nutritious food for vulnerable children should be a central concern for schools in general and for the principal and school management team in particular. Numerous examples from the field show the benefits of providing nutrition for those learners who are most vulnerable. In particular we explore:

- Why it is necessary for schools to get involved in managing a nutrition programme;
- The requirements and intended objectives of the National School Nutrition Programme; what difficulties schools experience with implementing it; how to strengthen the Nutrition Programme in schools where it exists; and
- How to assess your school nutrition needs and how to manage a nutrition programme effectively.

Unit 6

School-based aftercare

Several aftercare initiatives we examined as part of the SAIDE research revealed the different ways in which aftercare programmes are set up and managed, the activities and support that are organised, the roles and responsibilities of school management, and the nature of the support provided by NGOs, government departments, businesses, parents and the community. In Unit 6 we explore:

- What the benefits of aftercare support for learners are;
- What types of aftercare support strategies can be organised;
- What is involved in managing school-based aftercare programmes; and
- Which aftercare strategy is likely to be most suitable for your school.

Unit 7

Counselling support for vulnerable learners

In this unit we establish that a learner's ability to participate fully in learning hinges as much on their emotional sense of well being as it does on their physical well being. We explore:

- What the benefits of counselling support for learners are;
- What types of counselling support strategies can be organised;
- What is involved in managing school-based counselling programmes; and
- Which counselling strategy is likely to be most suitable for your school.

Unit 8

Developing a school-based care and support plan

In Unit 8 we pull together all the lessons of the previous seven units, applying what has been learnt to a practical planning exercise that culminates in the preparation of two linked plans: a strategic plan of priority goals to build your school as a centre of care and support, and action plans that deal with the more practical aspects (including funding) and provide the details of how you will achieve these goals. To achieve this in Unit 8 we examine:

- Where we want to be (vision for your school as a centre of care and hope);
- Where we are now (analysis of your present situation);
- How we will get to where we want to be (strategic plan comprising clear goals);
- What our priorities are (identification of priority and achievable goals); and
- What is involved in implementing a strategic goal (action plan that spells out details of actions to be taken).

Using this guide and toolkit

This Guide operates as your “teacher”. Although you can work through it on your own, we strongly recommend rather that you work through it together with the members of the school management team (SMT), thereby setting up a community of practice (CoP)⁶. You may even consider pooling your efforts and working collaboratively with principals or SMTs from neighbouring schools.

The notion of developing communities of practice is one which has, since the early 1990s, been largely promoted by Etienne Wenger, an internationally recognised educational theorist and practitioner. He suggests that knowledge that is shared and learned in communities of practice is social capital. People connect at various levels and across departments, both internally and externally, of the school. As people connect with each other they are able to share their expertise and learn from other members. Benefits of learning and working together in this way include:

- Enhanced problem solving
- Developing new capabilities
- Leveraging best practices
- Standardising practices
- Time savings
- Increase in skills
- Avoiding mistakes
- Creating new knowledge.

Differently put, two (or more) heads are better than one!

The importance of active learning

Because we believe that new understandings depend on, and arise out of, action, we have designed this guide to include many activities that we hope you will complete. Like all good learning materials, this guide will work best if you engage systematically with the activities. If you do not do the activities you will miss out on the most important part of the learning pathway we have developed for you.

Thinking activities

At various points in the Guide, we ask you to *stop and think* and to take some time to reflect on a particular issue. These thought pauses are designed to help you consolidate your understanding of a specific point before tackling the next section of the Guide. They deliberately try to slow you down!

One of the habits many of us develop through our involvement in a *rote recall* kind of learning is that we rush through things. Once we have read something, we believe that we know it. This isn't true. While we may at first reading recognise the idea, we probably don't really understand it in any detail. Work through this guide slowly and thoughtfully. Read and think. This is how we develop a depth of understanding and become able to use the ideas we learn.

Try to link the issues raised in each thought pause with what you have read, with what you have already learnt about learning, with your own previous experience, and so on. Think about the problems we have raised. You might want to jot down your ideas and keep them in a file so that you can be reminded of them later.

Keeping a reference file for planning purposes

We strongly advise you to keep a file in which you keep all the activities, copies of completed tools and also notes you have made on any additional ideas that you and your team have as you work through this Guide and Toolkit. Apart from serving as a record of your thinking and development, the information in this file will form the basis of the planning that you undertake in Unit 8: Preparing a school care and support plan.

Contextualising the use of this guide

Schools are all at very different stages with regard to the implementation of care and support systems for vulnerable learners. Each school has to interpret and work within its own context. For some schools, strengthening the existing national nutrition programme may be a priority. For others it may be the challenge of establishing some or all components of an aftercare facility or setting up a referral system.

This Guide is intended to alert you to, and help you to think about, a number of key issues involved in creating a caring school. It offers a framework for planning and suggests solutions. It also offers alternative approaches and provides a set of tools to help you implement a set of care and support strategies that are relevant to your context and needs. In all aspects it draws from the experience of South African schools that participated in the original SAIDE research and the strategies and approaches they are exploring.

We hope that this Guide will be useful to all those entrusted with managing the care and support of vulnerable learners.

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Fullan's work is based on linking moral purpose, which he describes as a deep commitment to all students in raising the bar and closing the gap in student achievement, and capacity building which involves developing the knowledge, skills and competencies required to get better results.

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- ¹ Alliance OVC Support Toolkit (www.ovcsupport.net) accessed 21 August 2009
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- ¹ Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Toolkit on Overview of Planning, <http://www.civicus.org/resources>
- ² Ibid
- ³ The Pareto Principle is also referred to as the 80:20 rule. It states that, for many events, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. Business management thinker Joseph M. Juran suggested the principle and named it after Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto. It is a common rule of thumb in business; e.g., "80% of your sales come from 20% of your clients."
- ⁴ At the time of our research, the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) was in the process of instituting a Prevention, Care and Treatment Access (PCTA) programme nationally. The PCTA is aimed at educating and informing teachers about the HIV and AIDS epidemic and what teachers infected and/or affected could do about their situations. A network of school-based peer counsellors is intended to support teachers by listening to their problems and ensuring that teachers have time to go for consultation and treatment when necessary. A privately sponsored programme allows teachers to call a toll-free number which directs the teacher to a private doctor for free counselling, testing and treatment. You can read more about this intervention on the ELRC website www.elrc.co.za.
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UNIT ONE

How responsive are schools to the socio-economic challenges in South Africa today?

Introduction

The issues and challenges facing schools in South Africa today are very different from those of the past. Are schools that were created to respond to particular social needs at a particular time ready to play a significant role in preparing children and young people for the world in which we live today?

South Africa today is a country grappling to establish a society in which all its people have access to quality education, health, housing, and economic well being. At the same time we are part of a fast-paced world in which technology makes it possible to connect people from around the world into a global network. In response to emerging new realities at home and internationally South Africa, like other countries around the world, has embarked on educational reform. New education policies and curricula encourage us to think differently about learning and teaching, and about the role of the school within society with all its challenges and opportunities.

In this first Unit we reflect on the role that schools are expected to play in society and what the impact of socio-economic issues like HIV and AIDS, poverty and violence on schools is. Are schools doing enough to respond constructively to these social challenges? Your first response may well be that the focus of the school must be on teaching and learning and that socio-economic issues must be taken care of by the community, government agencies and non-government organisations.

Teaching and learning are the core business of our schools but the research in which this guide and toolkit are rooted provides strong evidence of the fact that schools have to undergo a paradigm shift in order to become centres of care and support. The high number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in our schools make this shift a precondition for successful learning and teaching to take place.

The lessons learnt from this research have been distilled and are discussed in this guide. It is hoped that these findings, together with the extracts from relevant articles selected and the reflection activities provided, will stimulate you to deepen your understanding of the issues related to HIV and AIDS and the range of socio-economic issues which have an impact on education. It is also hoped that this guide may, in some small way, help to provide clearer insight into the changing role of schools in South Africa and the leadership and management role that is required to create a caring school environment is our aim.

Key questions

This unit explores the following questions:

1. Why is schooling important?
2. What are some of the key challenges facing children in South Africa today?
3. What are the implications of these challenges for schools?

Outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- More fully understand the vital role that schools can play in society.
- Identify the effects of socio-economic challenges like HIV/AIDS, poverty and violence on the children who come to your school.
- Critically analyse the changing role of the school in South Africa in the light of these socio-economic challenges.

Why is schooling important?

Education is highly valued by all societies. In South Africa we have policies in place that ensure that all our children have access to education. The perception is that education will equip children to be productive citizens and to take their rightful place in society.

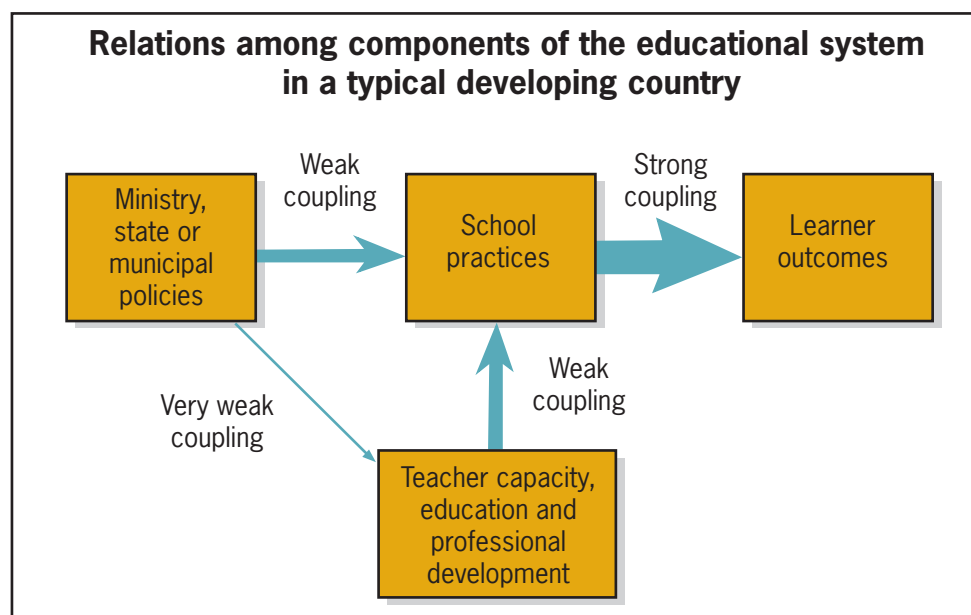
The extract below, from a recent Development Bank publication, *Investment Choices for South African Education*, focuses attention on the important role that schools can play in society.

Education is both a human right and a human need. Although no education system is perfect, public education is still one of the best ways in which a state can support the development of its people and thereby improve their lives. In South Africa a large part of the annual budget is spent on education and more children have access to schooling now than ever before. But going to school does not always led to a better life. Why not?

Money and access to schooling clearly are not enough for development to take place. The quality of each school matters. Often, well intentioned policies, such as curriculum frameworks, are weakly coupled to actual school practice, because there is no supervisory/instructional assistance structure to ensure that the reforms are being implemented as anticipated in the reform programme.

The flow diagram on the next page shows that state policies only have a weak influence (thin arrow = weak coupling or effect) on teacher capacity and school practice. There is also a weak link between teacher education and school practice. This means the state has little direct influence on the students' lives. In the end the biggest effect on students (fat arrow) comes from what actually happens on a daily basis in each school.

(Bloch, G, et al: 2008)¹



Source: Bloch, G., Chisholm, L., Fleisch, B. and Mabizela, M. (eds.) (2008:27) *Investment Choices for South African Education*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg.

Education policy cannot directly improve education and cannot directly improve learners' lives. At best a good policy and a good curriculum will give the individual school a clear framework for the job that needs to be done on the ground. The really important questions about the state of education in South Africa therefore have to be directed to each individual school. This is what we must ask the principals and management teams in our country: What is happening in **your** school? How much value does the daily practice in the classrooms of **your** school add to the lives of learners? What is the real benefit for learners of coming to **your** school every day?

Various research initiatives have found that the majority of schools in South Africa are struggling to deliver on the promises that the education policies make. By the end of 2009 a large number of schools in South Africa were considered to be dysfunctional, because what actually went on at the schools undermined the possible benefits of attending class. This dire situation has sparked much critical reflection and discussion in the education community. The business sector has also expressed concern about the lack of adequately skilled people and much of their criticism is aimed at the quality of education and training. The unsatisfactory state of education in the country is a complex challenge that requires attention in a number of areas. At the top of the list is the need to strengthen management and leadership capacity, improve teacher training and development, and encourage professional behaviour and practice by all members of the teaching staff. We know that no teaching and learning can happen where teachers are absent. In well-managed schools principals and their management teams show strong leadership and teachers are *'on time, teaching with text books'* and mechanisms that create zero tolerance of unwarranted teacher absenteeism are in place.

Equally, where absenteeism is legitimate, be it amongst teachers or learners, systems are in place for managing this. Substitution is arranged for classes with absent teachers and support is provided to learners who have missed sections of school work.



ACTIVITY

Activity 1

Does going to school lead to a better life?

Read the extract from the Development Bank publication again and examine the flow diagram. Then discuss these questions with your management team:

1. Why do the authors think that schooling is important?
2. Discuss this statement: *Access to education without success is as bad as no access.*
3. What are the threats to your school's ability to offer quality education?



TOOLKIT

Tool 1

Check threats to quality education

This tool enables you to identify key problems that may affect your school's ability to offer quality education. You can refer to this tool when you compile a care and support plan for your school in Unit 8.

Comment

Bloch and his co-authors make a strong case for the value of education. They see it as a critical tool for development and call it both a human right, and a basic human need. Education is the responsibility of the family, but also of the state. Through national education policies the state wants to ensure that all children have access to education and get a chance to develop their full potential in life.

It is interesting to note that the research findings show how national education policies can set clear goals for schools, but cannot ensure outcomes. The authors argue that each individual school has to guarantee the quality of education that the state provides. Does this mean the state cannot make things better without us? There is a tendency in South Africa to expect 'the government' to solve all problems. This article challenges us to rethink this assumption. Perhaps it is time to think about what you can do as school and community leaders entrusted with the responsibility of developing the children of today who will be the adults of tomorrow.

*We are also challenged by the flow diagram. It shows how the quality of education in a country depends on what happens in each individual school. The implication of this is huge. It not only means that every school matters, but also that the **daily practice** of schooling matters. How we run our schools day-to-day will add to the value that our schools have in our children's lives.*



STOP THINK

If children attend school regularly, they will have spent an average of 600 hours a year in class. If a quarter of every lesson is wasted with starting lessons late, teachers coming to lessons unprepared, learners having no books, the children will have spent 150 hours that year learning 'how to waste time'.

Schools, as sites of education delivery, are organised in such a way that they bring together various stakeholders. In particular, parents (as primary educators) and the state (concerned with national development). This means that schools offer the children an important entry point into society. When children start school they move from the private to the public sphere. Schools do not only prepare children for life in society by teaching the curriculum. They also help to socialise them. Through the daily experience of going to school, children fit into a larger system and learn how a society works. Schooling is most successful when the match between the school and the community is good. But what happens in situations where social problems in communities break down the links between families and schools? What happens when children have to cope with the trauma of living with parents who are HIV+ or who themselves have to cope with the effects of HIV? What happens when families are unable to care for their children because they are poor and destitute? What happens when children are victims of violence and sexual abuse?

What challenges do young people face in South Africa today?

The flow diagram we examined earlier shows how powerfully schools are placed to make an impact on children's lives. Unfortunately, the diagram does not show how the economic and social context of the school influences this role. As a school principal, one of your responsibilities is to lead your team in analysing the social context in which your school is located and to think about how this influences the children who attend your school. A deep understanding of the social and economic challenges that children face will enable you to find ways in which your school can be a beacon of hope, a place where everyone is supported to develop and achieve their potential.



ACTIVITY

Activity 2

What do the newspaper headlines reveal?

If you pick up any newspaper and page through it, you are likely to see a plethora of socio-economic problems that our communities face daily.

Here are some recent newspaper headlines. What do they tell you about the challenges and problems young people face?

Child trips, dagga found

Parents urged to apply for school uniforms

Child grant heist

Food insecurity a global issue

Children orphaned as HIV strikes

Child abuse on the rise

Student stabs teacher in the neck

Embezzlement of school feeding scheme funds



Think of your own school.

What are some of the threats and challenges that face the young people who come to your school?

Comment

The newspaper headlines remind us that our social system is under pressure. One of the most talked about and often least understood social issues is HIV and AIDS, which is particularly widespread in Sub-Saharan African countries including South Africa. It is estimated that over five million people, or 11% of the population over the age of two years old, are living with HIV and AIDS in South Africa (Shishana: 2005² and Claasen: 2006³). The impact of HIV and AIDS on individuals, households, schools and communities is complex and children are often the ones who are most affected by the consequences of the epidemic. HIV and AIDS push households further into poverty and children do not get the basic care they need, are malnourished and often suffer stunted growth and development. A growing number of children are orphaned and have to fend for themselves.

The effects of poverty are not limited to children who live with parents or family members who are HIV+. High unemployment rates fuel the cycle of poverty in our country and coping with poverty is a reality for a large number of children. In communities where people are poverty stricken we would expect schools to struggle with children who come to school hungry and with parents who are unable to pay school fees and buy books and school uniforms.

Rising levels of violence and abuse in communities mean that many children grow up feeling unsafe, fearful and showing signs of emotional trauma.



Have you noticed how easily children become identified with their problems? It makes sense to say that schools struggle with hungry children. In reality, however, the children are not the problem at all. They are the victims who need our help. Children's experiences (being hungry) or behaviours (being aggressive) are symptoms of deeper, more widespread problems in the community in which they live.

South Africa is a country in the process of transformation and although we have achieved a high level of political and economic stability since 1994, the social conditions for the majority of South Africans have not improved as much as we hoped. Poverty levels have not decreased significantly and the burden of unemployment remains unacceptably high. Add to this the disruption caused by the HIV and AIDS epidemic and high levels of crime and violence and we have an environment which is unable to provide the support that children need to grow and flourish. The school is a microcosm of society and social problems do not stop at the school gates but are present in the school community. Thousands of children are showing signs of physical and emotional strain and stress and this has a negative impact on their ability to learn and develop.

The South African Schools Act requires schools to offer quality education to all learners of school going age. Since it is the school's responsibility to create an environment in which all children are supported and enabled to learn, school management and teachers must be encouraged to understand the social issues and barriers that make this difficult, or prevent children from learning and developing. What are these barriers? The short notes that follow give an indication of the effects on children of three key socio-economic realities: HIV and AIDS, poverty, and violence.

The impact of HIV and AIDS

Many children in South Africa are in some way affected by HIV or AIDS. The following extract shows how disruptive HIV and AIDS is for families and children.

The impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on children and families is incremental; poor communities with inadequate infrastructure and limited access to basic services are worst hit. Poverty amplifies the impacts of HIV/AIDS on children and renders their effects on children unrelenting. At the same time, changes associated with the illness and death of caregivers and breadwinners can push children into conditions of desperate hardship.

As John Williamson says:

The common impacts [of HIV/AIDS] include deepening poverty, pressure to drop out of school, food insecurity, reduced access to health services, deteriorating housing, worsening material conditions, and loss of access to land and other productive assets. Psychosocial distress is another impact on children and families, and it includes anxiety, loss of parental love and nurture, depression, grief, and separation of siblings among relatives to spread the economic burden of their care.

(Richter, L. 2004)⁴

This table gives an overview of the potential impact of HIV and AIDS on children, families and communities

Potential impact on children	Potential impact on families and households	Potential impact on communities
• Loss of family and identity • Depression • Reduced well-being • Increased malnutrition, starvation • Failure to immunize or provide health care • Loss of health status • Increased demand in labour • Loss of educational opportunities • Loss of inheritance • Forced migration • Homelessness, vagrancy, crime • Increased street living • Exposure to HIV infection	• Loss of members, grief • Impoverishment • Change in family composition, and family child roles • Forced migration • Dissolution • Stress • Inability to provide parental care for children • Lack of income for health care and education • Demoralisation • Long-term pathologies • Decrease in middle generation in households, leaving the old and the young	• Reduced labour • Increased poverty • Inability to maintain infrastructure • Loss of skilled labour, including health workers and teachers • Reduced access to health care • Elevated mortality and morbidity • Psychological stress and breakdown • Inability to marshal resources for community-wide initiatives

Source: Hunter & Williamson (2000, 2002) in Richter, L. (2004). *Family and Community Interventions for Children Affected by AIDS* page 8⁵.

The statistics on the following page give some idea of the scale of the impact that HIV and AIDS are having in South Africa.

SOME SOUTH AFRICAN HIV AND AIDS STATISTICS⁶

- South Africa is currently experiencing one of the most severe AIDS pandemics in the world. At the end of 2007, there were approximately 5.7 million people living with HIV in South Africa, and almost 1,000 AIDS deaths occurring every day.
- HIV prevalence in 15 – 49 year olds is 18.1%.
- According to UNAIDS, there were around 280,000 children aged below 15 living with HIV in South Africa in 2007.
- It is estimated that there were 1.4 million South African children orphaned by AIDS in 2007, compared to 780,000 in 2003. Once orphaned, these children are more likely to face poverty, poor health and a lack of access to education.

Source: HIV and AIDS information from Avert, www.avert.org. [22.07.2009]

Families that are poor are more vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and families that are affected by HIV and AIDS often become poorer because of the disease because people are often too sick to work. Equally, people who are poor often are unable to afford the proper balanced diets necessary for maintaining a healthy life style or they may be unable to seek the necessary medical treatment. Thus, poverty and HIV feed on one another.

The poverty cycle

There has been positive economic growth in South Africa for more than a decade now, yet the reality for many households and communities is that they remain stuck in poverty. What exactly do we mean by poverty? Here is a description of what is a complex social problem.

In South Africa to be poor means to be alienated from your community, to be unable to sufficiently feed your family, to live in overcrowded conditions, use basic forms of energy, lack adequately paid and secure jobs and to have fragmented families (May, J. p5: 2000 in Borat, H., Poswell, L., Naidoo, P. 2004).⁷

In essence poverty describes a state of deprivation that prevents an individual from achieving some minimum socially acceptable standard of living.

Poverty is the “inability of individuals, households or communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living”⁸

THE EXTENT OF POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICA⁹

- *The Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive Social Security System for South Africa* found that between 45 and 55% of all South Africans live in poverty, depending on the poverty measure used.
- *Statistics South Africa* calculated that 60.8% of all persons in South Africa are living on less than R250 each per month, based on the Census 1996 data.
- In 2001, unemployment rates were as high as 37%.
- Spiraling food prices, general inflation and unemployment all feed increasing poverty.
- It is estimated that in 2002 about 11 million children under 18 years of age in South Africa are living on less than R200 per month and hence are desperately in need of income support.

Source: *Children's Institute, University of Cape Town (2002) Childhood poverty in South Africa. www.ci.org.za [22.07.2009].*

For the children who make up these statistics, these numbers translate into extreme hardship and real suffering. In their own words, poverty means:

"...the biggest problem is food. Sometimes we end up not getting any food at home... The other problem is to have school shoes." (Boy, 15, Limpopo)

Apart from physical hardships, children from disadvantaged communities also often suffer from a range of emotional problems. These may be externalised as aggression, fighting, and acting out. But emotional problems may also be internalised and manifest as anxiety, social withdrawal and depression.

The unstable economic situation of most families, together with the presence of HIV, has created a situation in which parents are often absent and many are physically and emotionally unable to give their children the care and support they need. As a result children are frequently left to look after themselves. Even where a parent or guardian is present, children often grow up without family routines and a clear set of guidelines and rules. Children who have experienced inadequate parenting often start school with poor social skills that lead to disciplinary problems and they may find it difficult to fit into the structured and controlled environment of a functional school.

Another negative aspect of poverty is the hugely widening gap between rich and poor in South Africa. One effect of this uneven development is that young people are exposed to a range of luxury goods, which they cannot afford. They are bombarded daily with advertisements about an alluring lifestyle that is not within their immediate reach. For young people who suffer from low self-esteem this often leads to an increased desire to own 'brand' clothing and goods. They perceive such goods as boosting their self-image. They believe it communicates to the world that they belong to the group that matters in society. Since parents want their children to have a better life, the 'image needs' of their children often use up the limited resources of the family. The strong need to own expensive brand products also makes young people vulnerable to unscrupulous people who offer them financial rewards for sexual favours.

Violence against women and children

Violence against women and children is common in our country and disturbingly often the perpetrators are family members or family friends. Large numbers of children in our schools are affected by it. The extract that follows from a paper compiled by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, *Psychological Effects of Criminal and Political Violence on Children*, gives a summary of common responses to violent events. The paper was published in 1993 and at that time, the most commonly expressed fears by children were in relation to possible attacks by the then security forces on the children's homes. It is interesting to note that today, although the most common fears relate to perpetrators of criminal acts such as assault and sexual abuse, the effects of the trauma on children are very similar.

PSYCHO-SOCIO EFFECTS OF CRIME AND VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN

Fear: of attack, assault, sexual abuse, losing parents and loved ones.

Emotional changes: feelings of emotional numbing, powerlessness, of extreme vulnerability and lack of safety. Anxiety, restlessness and irritability. Having no interest in life, feeling guilt or bad to be alive. No energy and feeling tired all of the time. Changing quickly from one mood to another. Younger children often act much younger than they are by clinging to their mother all the time and beginning to wet their beds again, for example. Older children tend to get depressed and withdraw into themselves.

Difficulties with sleeping and dreaming: nightmares about attacks and fear of falling asleep.

Difficulties with thinking and learning: Constantly thinking about and re-experiencing the traumatic experience. Not being able to concentrate and to remember properly. Children's thoughts are negative and they find it difficult to be creative.

Social difficulties: not wanting to be social with other children, being aggressive with others.

Eating problems: refusal to eat and loss of appetite.

Somatic complaints: mainly in the form of headaches and stomachaches.

Children are psychologically more at risk than adults through violent experiences. Follow-up studies of disasters found 80% of children had symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder one to two years later, compared with 30% of adults. Children's potential for long-term recovery without the support of a significant adult and/or the relevant treatment, is markedly less than that of an adult. Their conceptual and emotional inability properly to understand the violent event, and to have some measure of control over their environment are factors which mitigate against a swift recovery. (Stavrou,V.: 1993)¹⁰

The impact of violence on children has devastating effects on them. But it does not mean that there is no hope at all. Research has found that the response of children to high levels of stress depends to a large extent on their personality, temperament, learned coping skills, age of exposure to violence *and the availability of support of caring adults and social supports in the environment*. Even in the most dire of situations, opportunities for recovery can be hastened when children are given opportunities to achieve in and out of the school context, are offered new and supportive relationships and positive changes are made in their circumstances. Recovery is hindered and maladjustment sets in when the violent conditions persist and no support is available.



Have these brief notes helped you to become more aware of how a range of social issues may have an impact on children's ability to fully participate in learning?



Activity 3 What is the situation in your school?

This is an opportunity for you to open up a discussion within the School Management Team (SMT) and later with teachers and relevant stakeholders to create awareness of the needs of the children in your school. In particular, the needs of those who are affected by HIV and AIDS or any of the many problems created by poverty and the violence that affects so many of our communities.



1. Ask each member of the school management team to complete **Tool 2 - Check barriers to learning**.
2. Compare your completed checklists. What did you find?
3. Discuss the size of the problem in the context of your school. How many children in your school show symptoms of physical and emotional distress which is compromising their ability to learn.
4. What percentage of children in your school would you consider to be at risk and vulnerable? Make an estimate based on your present observations.

This percentage may change (and become even bigger) when you've worked through Unit 3 and have a better understanding of what we mean by *vulnerable* children. But this is a start; identifying and acknowledging the problems is one of the necessary first steps to supporting and caring for those learners that are vulnerable.

Comment

Vulnerable children come to school displaying many of the physical and emotional symptoms described. A child living with HIV is often a hungry and traumatised child who is unable to participate fully in the learning process. For them the present and future looks bleak and without the right kind of care and support they will probably drop out of school and their lives are likely to continue in the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

In the course of school visits which we conducted as part of our research project we noted that about 40% of children in the schools visited are vulnerable. This is an average percentage. In some schools we discovered that as many as 80% of the children are vulnerable and in need of physical and emotional support.

In many schools, the present response to the needs of vulnerable children is informal and implemented on an *ad hoc* basis. It often depends on the commitment and dedication of a single visionary principal or a caring Life Orientation or other individual teacher who feels compelled to take action. Such a principal or teacher may be moved to respond to the needs of vulnerable children by providing some food for them or by making available emotional counselling. Indeed, our research identified some examples of principals and SMT members doing extraordinarily good work under the most challenging conditions. Pockets of good practice do exist in schools all over South Africa. These *are* signs of hope in, what is for many children, a sea of anguish and hopelessness. But is it sufficient? Can schools play a more systematic and sustainable role in providing the kind of support that vulnerable children need?

What are the implications of these socio-economic challenges for schools?

Schools are microcosms of society and they have to cope with the social challenges that are prevalent in a society at any given time. The research we conducted focused attention on the multiplying effects of HIV and AIDS on children, their families, the community and the school. We also noted how HIV and AIDS is closely intermeshed with a range of other socio-economic factors such as poverty and physical, sexual and drug abuse. We soon realised that we could not easily separate the root causes of learners' vulnerability. The causes were often created by a number of closely interlinked factors. We therefore opted for an inclusive approach – an approach that is in line with White Paper 6: *Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (DoE: 2001).¹¹ In this policy, HIV and AIDS-related effects are considered as *one* set of barriers among *many* barriers to learning. At the same time, given the particular impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, this Guide does retain a clear HIV and AIDS focus, but *within* the wider context of social challenges that create barriers for children to learn and develop.



What is your reaction to the following two extracts?

Despite all their shortcomings, schools have significant potential to play a critical role in obviating the worst effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on children. Apart from the accrued personal and social benefits of education for work and national development, schooling provides stability, institutional affiliation and the normalisation of experience for children. It also places children in an environment where adults and older children are potentially available to provide social support.

(Richter, L.: 2004 Chap.2 p.26)¹²

It is important that educational institutions be well managed, places where orderliness and normality prevail and where high expectations for the behaviour of everyone are articulated. In the disturbed environment of a severely AIDS-affected community, 'school' may be the only normal situation a child encounters (although even here sickness and mortality among teachers, fellow students and family and community members may cast a pall). A key goal of educational managers should be to ensure full scope, within secure environments, for vitality, happiness, hope, energy and play. Education systems must ensure that those affected by HIV / AIDS can work and learn in caring institutional settings where the safety and human rights of all are respected. Education systems must be rendered fully and patently inclusive, providing for the most extensive possible participation by persons with HIV / AIDS.

(Coombe, C. and Kelly, M.J., : 2001)¹³

Research into HIV has shown that schools can play a critical role in providing stability for children affected by HIV and AIDS as well as for those children living in poverty-stricken and violent contexts. The role of the school features prominently in reports and articles that investigate ways of managing the effects of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. This role is also highlighted in the conceptualisation of schools as "centres of community life" and schools dealing "urgently and purposefully with the HIV and AIDS emergency in and through the education system", two priority areas outlined in the *Implementation Plan for Tirisano 2000 – 2004: A plan for the transformation of education*, developed by the then Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal (DoE 2000 a: pp 7 & 8)¹⁴.

The extract below from *A framework for the protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV and AIDS* – a Unicef report, offers some pertinent points about the roles that schools can play.

A FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION, CARE AND SUPPORT OF ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN LIVING IN A WORLD WITH HIV AND AIDS – UNICEF

1. Schools can provide children with a safe, structured environment, the emotional support and supervision of adults, and the opportunity to learn how to interact with other children and develop social networks.
2. Education can reduce children’s risk of HIV infection by increasing knowledge, awareness, skills and opportunities.
3. The introduction of school meals, especially in areas where food security is an issue, provides the added benefit of improving children’s attendance and nutritional status. When combined with take-home rations, school meals also offer benefits by supporting the larger household.
4. Making the curriculum more relevant to the daily needs of children and youth will help attract and keep children at school.
5. Teachers can be trained to identify vulnerable children and provide needed support and counseling.
6. Schools can also be a place of increased risk. Policy and monitoring measures are needed to prevent and address situations in which learners are bullied, abused or exploited. These measures can help ensure that all children, particularly those most vulnerable, are not prevented from enjoying their right to a safe educational environment due to such practices.
7. Enhancing the role of schools in fighting HIV/AIDS and mitigating its impact on children may also involve childcare (after school), recreational programmes and community education.
8. Efforts to improve and expand the role of schools will require the involvement of parents, community leaders and children themselves

(Connolly M, & Stirling M.,: 2004)¹⁵

Schools are centrally positioned in communities and are more than places of education. They are places where strong relationships are established among learners, and between teachers, learners and their parents. Because schools reach large numbers of children and their parents, the school can be at the forefront of mobilising efforts to break down stigma and discrimination, to disseminate information, and be a gathering point for a range of support services and activities. Schools can also play a significant role in collecting relevant and dependable information required to monitor and manage the HIV and AIDS epidemic in their area.



ACTIVITY

Activity 4 What is happening in your school?

We started our reflection on the role of schools by identifying that the quality of education in a country depends on what happens in each individual school. What is your school doing to lessen the effects of HIV and AIDS on children and teachers who are affected and infected by the epidemic? What are you doing to support and help children who suffer from the effects of poverty and violence?



TOOLKIT

Tool 3 How responsive is your school?

To carry out a reality check with your management team, use the table provided in Tool 3 to record your responses to these questions:

1. What support is the school currently providing for children affected by socio-economic issues such as HIV and AIDS, poverty and violence?
2. What prevents the school from providing adequate support to these learners?
3. How effective is the support the school is providing to these learners?
4. How is the school supporting teachers who are affected by HIV and AIDS?
5. What prevents the school from supporting these teachers?
6. How effective is the support your school is providing to these teachers?

Once you have worked through the whole guide and gained a good understanding of the issues, you will have the opportunity to compile a coherent plan of action. You will then be required to refer back to these responses to compile a *care and support plan* for your school (as set out in Unit 8) so keep these initial responses in a file for future reference.

Comment

It takes strong leadership and management to create a school environment where there is respect and acceptance of difference and where teachers, learners and their parents work together to create a place of learning and development for all. A safe environment makes it possible to offer opportunities for support and care for children in need. Caring schools are better schools. Unless the basic needs of learners like food and safety are addressed, it is unlikely that quality learning can take place. Therefore, by addressing the challenge of teaching vulnerable children affected by various social and economic issues such as HIV and AIDS, poverty and violence, schools will improve the quality of their work. Vulnerable children and their parents or caregivers will be encouraged to stay connected with a school community which is a centre of hope, where households at risk can get support. In this way, parents and caregivers can be drawn in to become part of the solution, instead of possibly being a part of the problem.

Key points

In this unit we have explored some of the main social challenges that children face. We have also examined how these socio-economic issues affect not only the children, their families and communities, but also the school.

In Unit 1, we explored:

- Why schooling is important.
- What are some of the key challenges that children and young people in South Africa face today.
- What the implications of these challenges may be for schools.

Some important insights we gained:

1. Access to education is an important human right and need. But access to schooling is not enough for development to take place. The *quality* of education influences the kind of development that can be achieved and schools are responsible for ensuring that quality education is provided.
2. Large numbers of children who come to school show symptoms of the effects of a range of social and economic issues. These include learners who are infected or affected by HIV and AIDS and/or affected by poverty and high levels of crime and violence. These issues have an impact on their ability to learn. Frequently such children, if they don't receive the support they need, drop out of school and their lives continue in the cycle of poverty and deprivation.
3. The school is a microcosm of society and the effects of HIV and AIDS, poverty and high levels of crime and violence are present in the school environment. The school therefore has a responsibility to find ways of responding constructively to these social challenges because they can and do seriously undermine the learning and development that should take place.
4. The school can play a critical role in providing all children with a non-threatening, caring and supportive learning environment. This requires that management take a strong leadership role and create opportunities for teachers, learners, parents and the community to work together to become part of the solution.
5. Basic care and the hope is a pre-requisite for quality learning to take place.



UNIT TWO

Schools as centres of care

Introduction

We have acknowledged that schools are, in many respects, a microcosm of society and that socio-economic problems are as much part of the fabric of the school as they are of the community at large. One of the most significant challenges that our society and schools face is the HIV and AIDS epidemic. As we have seen in Unit 1, the many ways in which this epidemic has an impact on learners, their families, communities and schools, is complex. In the context of schooling, HIV and AIDS and the interrelated problems of poverty create barriers that pose great challenges to learning. Faced with this situation, we are pushed to think beyond the immediate and obvious roles and functions that schools have traditionally fulfilled to a conceptualisation of schools as a centre of care and support. While teaching and learning remain the core business of any school, we do, at the same time, need to explore strategies for providing the care and support needed for our learners to succeed. To achieve this we also need to think about the implications for school leadership and about a shift in the school leadership and management paradigm.

Many in leadership positions are already beginning to realise that school management, in the current South African context, can no longer focus narrowly on managing the implementation of national policies and meeting departmental administrative requirements. Even though many principals and management teams may already find these tasks difficult enough as it is, addressing HIV and AIDS and other related barriers to learning is critical. Our research provides clear evidence that unless schools are able to respond to these barriers, educational success will remain an elusive dream for most South African learners.

In acknowledging the multi-dimensional nature of the impact that HIV and AIDS has on health, on education, on employment, on family finances, on morale and so on, it becomes clear that an integrated, multisectoral approach to dealing with HIV and AIDS is necessary. Schools need to become key partners in the national multisectoral response to HIV and AIDS and poverty. To achieve this, school leadership is called upon to take responsibility for making links and managing the process of working in partnership with other role players to create a supportive and caring environment in and around schools. Such role players include provincial education, health and social service departments, district education offices, community-based structures and organisations and learners' families.

In Unit 2 we start off by examining relevant policies and guidelines dealing with education issues relating to HIV and AIDS in the South African context and probe the reasons for the gap between policy and practice. We reflect on three case studies that show what some schools are doing to provide care and support for vulnerable learners. These scenarios act as a stimulus for creating a vision of the school as a centre of care that supports the development of all its learners. A diagrammatic overview of the features of a caring and supportive school is provided, the components of which can be used as the basis for a school management framework. The diagram also serves to highlight the areas that are dealt with in subsequent units of this guide. As you work through the next units the principal and school management team will gain good

insight into the practical implications of building a caring school. This information will inform the comprehensive care and support plan that you are encouraged to develop at the end of the guide in Unit 8.

Key questions

This unit explores the following questions:

1. How does policy require schools to respond to the effects of HIV and AIDS?
2. Why is there a gap between policy and practice?
3. What are the features of a caring school?
4. What is the role of management in building a caring and supportive school environment?

Outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Better understand relevant policy and guidelines for schools to respond to the effects of HIV and AIDS, poverty and a range of related socio-economic issues that are barriers to learning.
- Understand the reasons why schools often do not implement policies with regard to HIV and AIDS.
- Identify the features of a caring school in which vulnerable children are supported and where they are enabled to grow and develop.
- Explain what the school management team can do to create a caring and supportive school environment.

What does policy say about HIV and AIDS?

Are you aware of the existing policy that guides the school management's response to the effects of HIV and AIDS?



Here are excerpts from several relevant policy documents. What are the common themes?



Every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services.

(The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa: 1996)

Quality education for all learners of school going age.... The rights of all learners must be upheld... intolerance and discrimination must be combated.

(The South African Schools Act, DoE: 1996)



No learner may be refused admission to a public school.

(The Admissions Policy for Ordinary Schools, DoE: 1996)



The national system of education must serve the needs and interests of all people of South Africa and uphold their fundamental rights.

(The National Education Policy Act, DoE: 1996)

Differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases are acknowledged and respected.

(White Paper 6 Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, DoE: 2001)

Many learners will become orphaned and will need emotional help and guidance from educators.

(Policy on HIV and AIDS, DoE: 1999)



These excerpts from policy documents and guidelines are concerned with ‘the right to education for all’, ‘the inclusive nature of education’, ‘non discrimination’, ‘the state’s obligation to translate rights into reality’, and ‘protection and support of children who suffer the effects of HIV and AIDS and experience various barriers to learning’.

A review of HIV and AIDS policy conducted during our research revealed three main themes:

1. HIV and AIDS related policy is rooted in a human rights and inclusive approach to education and training;
2. The role of the School Governing Body and the School Management Team is strongly profiled in the HIV and AIDS policy; and
3. Schools are conceptualised as centres of community life.

Inclusive human rights approach

The White Paper 6 (*Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System*, DoE: 2001)¹ encourages an inclusive education and training approach and advises ‘maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning.’



The DoE 1999 *National Policy on HIV/AIDS for Learners, Students and Educators* gives comprehensive guidelines relating to the rights and treatment of learners and educators who are HIV+. Among others, the policy specifies that:

- The constitutional rights of all learners and educators must be protected equally.
- There should be no compulsory disclosure of HIV/AIDS status (applicable to learners and educators).
- The testing of learners as a prerequisite for attendance at an institution, or of an educator as a prerequisite of service, is prohibited.
- No HIV+ learner or educator may be discriminated against; they must be treated in a just, humane and life-affirming way.
- No learner may be denied admission to or continued attendance at an institution because of his or her actual or perceived HIV status.
- No educator may be denied appointment to a post because of his or her actual or perceived HIV status.
- Learners who are HIV+ should lead as full a life as possible and not be denied the opportunity to receive an education to the maximum of their ability. Likewise HIV+ educators should lead as full a professional life as possible, with the same rights and opportunities as other educators.
- If and when learners with HIV or AIDS become incapacitated through illness, the school should make work available to them for study at home and should support continued learning where possible... or provide older learners with distance education.

(DoE 1999: pp 9 -13).²

The role of the School Governing Body and the School Management Team

The *National Policy on HIV/AIDS for Learners, Students and Educators* gives a clear directive to school governing bodies.

In order to meet the demands of the wide variety of circumstances posed by the South African community and to acknowledge the importance of school governing bodies, councils and parents in the education partnership, national policy is intended as broad principles only. It is envisaged that the governing body of a school, acting within its functions under the South African Schools Act, 1996, ... should give operational effect to the national policy by developing and advocating an HIV/AIDS implementation plan that would reflect the needs, ethos and values of a specific school or institution and its community within the framework of the national policy.

(DoE 1999: 6).³



ACTIVITY

Activity 1

Review/develop your school's HIV and AIDS policy

The Department of Education (DoE) has developed a national policy on the management of HIV and AIDS in schools and all public learning institutions. Schools and Governing Bodies are encouraged to develop and adopt their own policy based on the principles reflected in the national policy. If your school *does not* have its own policy, use these guidelines to develop one.

Policy must be evaluated regularly and, if necessary, revised to stay relevant, if your school *does* have an HIV and AIDS policy, this is a good opportunity for you to review it and whether any refinements are necessary.



TOOLKIT

Tool 4

Preparing to develop/review your school's HIV and AIDS policy

This tool provides an overview of the critical areas that should be included in the policy. Work with your management team to develop/review your school's policy and make amendments if necessary.



TOOLKIT

Tool 5

Exemplar: School HIV and AIDS policy

This tool gives more detailed information and guidance on what your school's policy should include. The template is a useful tool for compiling a new policy.

You can refer to your amended HIV and AIDS policy or your new policy when you compile a care and support plan for your school in Unit 8.

Comment

Our current policy framework is based on human rights, and specifically supports both the African and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children.

The policy framework defines our responsibilities in surprisingly practical ways. It maps out clear areas of action, to which we are called to respond. For example, if our children have a right to food and they are not getting it, we have an obligation to provide it. That is a very immediate and practical task. Our obligation to the young includes the provision of basic needs (such as food and shelter and safety), as well as emotional and intellectual needs (like love and education). It is interesting to note that we are obliged to respond to individual needs (like supporting maximum development) as well as social needs (like creating a humane society).

It is important to honour parents as primary educators in all these tasks, but if parents are not able to do this adequately, principals and teachers are obligated to help. A vital benefit of a school is that it gives us the opportunity to respond to the needs of children in ongoing and systematic ways. This is a legal and constitutional obligation, not just a personal choice. Teachers have a specific responsibility because they are paid by the state to nurture each new generation of children and prepare them for the role they will play in society one day. In particular, the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE: 2000c) in which teacher competences are spelt out and associated roles are prescribed, requires teachers to fulfil a community, citizenship and pastoral role. This role is defined in the document as follows:

The educator will practise and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others. The educator will uphold the constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society. Within the school, the educator will demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow educators.

Furthermore, the educator will develop supportive relations with parents and other key persons and organisations based on a critical understanding of community and environmental development issues. One critical dimension of this role is HIV/AIDS education.

(DoE: 2000c)⁷

Gap between policy and practice

Although our educational policies give us a fairly practical framework for nurturing a humane and caring society, we have found that the implementation of this is often difficult. Principals and teachers, especially those who are working in poor communities, struggle to make the policies work. What are the most common challenges that schools face when they try to implement a policy of care and support?

Policy implementation challenges

Have you heard the following types of complaints about making policy work in your school?

}We know about policies, but don't really understand how to make them work in our community. ||

}We don't have enough money or other resources to deliver on the promises the policies make. ||

}It is hard to fit all these extra demands into the daily tasks at school. ||

}The parents don't attend meetings, they don't really support the school. ||

}People don't care. They will not make an effort to get the policies to work. ||

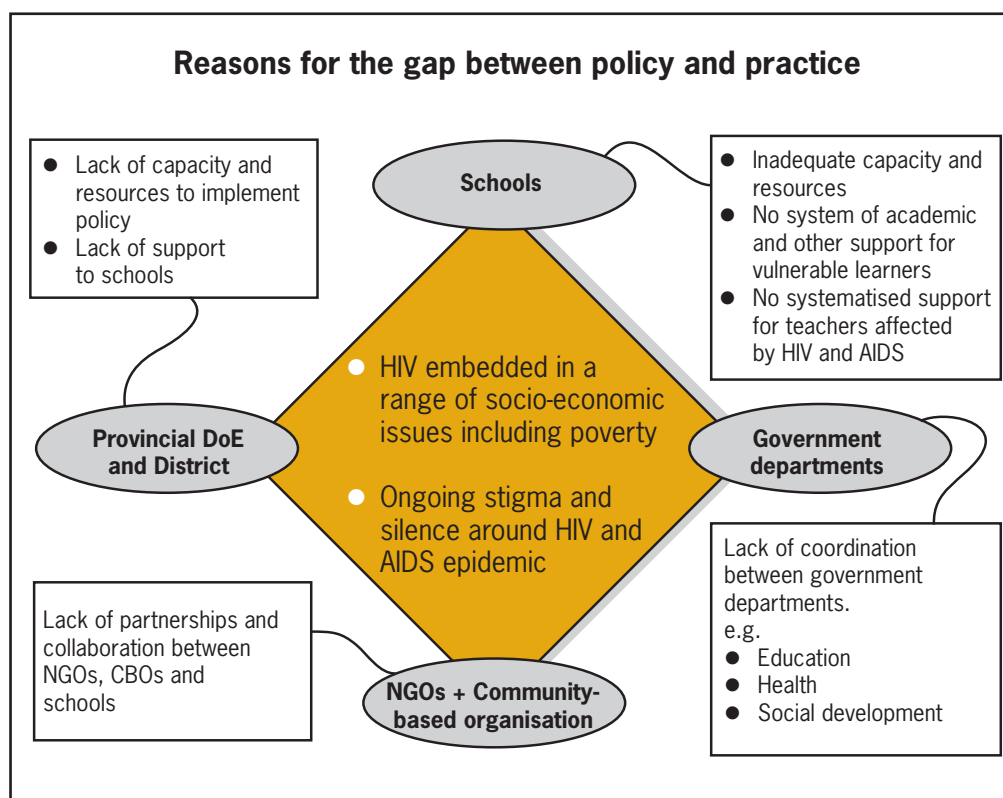
}Absenteeism is a problem. It is hard to make things work when teachers don't come to school. ||

}The SGB exists only in name. ||



}The parents are supportive but they don't have the skills or the resources to help with policy implementation. ||

There are many reasons why policies don't work. In our research we discovered that the gap between policy and implementation as it relates to HIV and AIDS is due to a combination of factors as reflected in the diagram below.



The school is a key role player in the fight against the spread and management of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. It is a fact that the effects of HIV and AIDS on learners and teachers create barriers to learning and the delivery of quality education. This is a critical reason why principals and their management teams must find constructive ways of responding to diminish the effects of the epidemic in their school. Our research shows that in most schools visited there is no coherent plan of action. Instead we found evidence of some informal actions taken by committed teachers to support learners. Commendable as such actions are, there is a need to create a much more systematic and sustainable approach.

Activity 2

Review the implementation of your school's HIV and AIDS policy

Making a policy work in the real context is very challenging. What are some of the things that have worked? What are you particularly proud of? What are some of the things that have not worked? Why have they not worked?

Carry out a critical review of the implementation of the HIV and AIDS policy during the past year.

Tool 6

Making the HIV and AIDS policy work in your school



ACTIVITY

This tool has been designed to enable you to record the results of a critical reflection on your current practice.

You can refer to these points when you compile a care and support plan for your school in Unit 8.

Comment

We have visited schools in all provinces and have seen that there are common challenges facing many of them.

One of the biggest challenges is the lack of strong leadership and effective management. There is often a perception that if a school has access to adequate resources, management would be in a better position to implement policies. While resources are important, they are not the most significant factor for making policies work. Money and resources will not bring about a caring and supportive school environment. What is required is leadership. A good leader and strong management team will be able to harness and manage whatever resources are available in the community to give expression to the policies they have developed as part of a coherent response. Take for example the national nutrition programme or feeding scheme. This programme is intended to provide a warm meal for every primary school learner in quintile one, two, and three schools, yet there are very few places where it is managed effectively. As a result there are still hundreds of hungry children in our schools. There are many other support programmes available, which school leaders can tap into. It requires an awareness of what is available in your community and the commitment to establish networks and partnerships with the district and

provincial education department, other government departments and initiatives, as well as non government organisations (NGOs), community based organisations (CBOs), business, community leaders and parents. These networks and partnerships are often complex and trying to make them work can be very difficult and time consuming.

We came across many schools that struggle with demotivated and overloaded teachers. They are already under stress to deliver on their teaching responsibilities and often do not see it as their role to offer extra care and support.

Another huge challenge facing many schools in the country is poverty. Many schools are located in communities that are too poor to support them. Unless schools get money from the outside to fund some of the possible support activities, e.g. paying for short-term replacements for sick teachers, they find it difficult to deliver on the promises the policies make.

A vision of the school as a centre of care

We found principals in the schools we visited in different provinces in the country, who are working in poor communities and who have managed to support vulnerable learners at their school. Here are three scenarios that show what can be done. For the sake of confidentiality we have changed the names of the schools and principals.

Activity 3

What are the features of caring schools?

Read the case studies and identify support actions that the principals managed to organise in their schools. Then answer these questions:

1. What kind of support do parents provide in case study 1?
2. Which external agencies did the principals approach in each of the three case studies?
3. What support did these external agencies offer?
4. In your opinion why were the principals able to provide the learners in their schools with the types of support described in the case studies?
5. Which support actions do you think you could organise in your school?

Write down some initial ideas. You will be able to expand on these ideas when you compile your care and support plan in Unit 8.



at a time. Some parents help with cleaning, some look after the vegetable garden, some work as teachers' assistants in the classrooms and one parent assists with the school's aftercare programme. In addition, Mrs Smit has integrated a schoolwork/homework support system in the daily programme to offer learners academic support and established an aftercare facility that is open during school time and in the holidays. This facility is managed by the Grade R teacher.

The principal has also identified a non government organisation (NGO) that offers counselling, the Johannesburg Parent and Child Counselling Centre (JPCCC), and entered into a contractual agreement. This contract involves identifying vulnerable learners and following through with the necessary support actions. The principal is, however, very hands on in managing this process and is meticulous about keeping records regarding vulnerable learners and home visits. The counsellors also report back to her (in broad terms) so that she is fully informed about which learners may need additional support.

The proactive leadership of the principal has made a huge difference in this school. Through her commitment, insight and values-based leadership she has invested in training and motivating her staff to be part of an integrated and systematised approach to supporting learners and enabling them to access quality education.

While the School Governing Body (SGB) does not have the capacity to provide the strategic direction and oversight envisaged in the SA Schools Act, Mrs Smit draws the SGB into her planning meetings and receives a lot of assistance from the SGB members. Because the school actively supports vulnerable children it enjoys a positive relationship with the community in terms of support and respect. This can be seen through the high level of parental participation in school activities and functions.

CASE STUDY 2 – STRATEGIES FOR SOURCING SUPPORT

Vuwani Lower Primary is a rural school situated in a poor community in Limpopo where unemployment is rife. The few people who do work are employed on the surrounding commercial fruit farms. Subsistence farming supports most people, an activity that is totally dependent on the weather. Vuwani is a quintile three school and every learner is required to pay R50 school fees per year. But the principal, Mrs Ndukwana, states that the annual default rate is in excess of 50%. The school, with a total of 688 children, has a favourable teacher-learner ratio of 1:30. As there is no running water, the school is dependent on a borehole from which water is pumped into tanks. Vuwani School does not have a telephone line or e-mail facilities, and the only way of communicating is through the principal's private cell phone. While the school has three donated computers, limited computer literacy on the part of the staff renders these almost unused. The school is connected to the ESKOM grid with electricity primarily used to run a photocopying machine and computers which are located in the principal's office. The principal's office also has to double up as a library and a storage room for school equipment.

According to school records, 30 learners have formally been identified as orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC), and of these, it is estimated that 14 are affected and/or infected by HIV and AIDS. The school records do not list learners who are orphaned directly as a result of HIV and AIDS, nor is the problem of HIV and AIDS infection talked about openly in the community. However, the majority of learners are vulnerable because of their poor home backgrounds. Mrs Ndukwana commented that most learners stay with their siblings or with relatives, and as a result, regular food supply is a challenge.

Poverty causes the school to rely heavily on support from government sources and from external donors. After realising the constraints posed by poverty in the community, Mrs Ndukwana looked actively for external support. She has approached and drawn in support from various provincial departments involving them in the school's development. The Education Department has helped with infrastructure development as well as training on record keeping and school administration. The Department of Agriculture helps with the school garden, while Health contributes educational posters and assists learners to go to the local clinic. The Department of Water provides water when the borehole does not work.

When Mrs Ndukwana arrived at Vuwani in 1997 there were not enough classrooms and many classes were held under trees. The school grounds were not fenced and accessing water was extremely challenging. But the principal had learnt about accessing donor funds from her experiences at another school. Today the school has five classroom blocks that accommodate all learners and sufficient space to plan for the extension of the school to include Grade 5 in 2009. Three of these blocks are relatively new; one was built through the assistance of the Department of Education while the others were constructed through funds from the Japanese Embassy. The Centre for Community Development (CCD) started a Women's Project aimed at raising funds for school fees through building and sewing. This led to the involvement of the National Development Agency (NDA) which began by supporting salaries for the men and women who worked in the Women's Project. The NDA's involvement soon spread to capacity building training for teachers, school managers and the school governors. Mrs Ndukwana has also secured the help of local businesses, and one bus company supplies free transport as well as food and dishes for special occasions like HIV and AIDS days.

The principal has organised her staff into teams to work on various aspects of school development and learner support. Apart from the School Management Team (SMT) that implement policies, committees have been established for orphans and vulnerable learners, health and hygiene, nutritional diet and the school garden, and psycho-social counselling for learners. These committees are answerable to the principal and to the SMT. Thus the principal remains constantly aware of what is happening in the committees. She also plays a pivotal role in supporting the committees through mobilising resources.

Mrs Ndukwana says that the School Governing Body (SGB) is too weak to make meaningful contributions towards school development. The School Management Team (SMT) reportedly has problems in getting members of the SGB to attend meetings, since the latter are usually busy tending for their families on the surrounding commercial farms. Most activities in the school are therefore driven by the principal and her SMT. Although there is no active SGB, the principal has been able to mobilise a tremendous number of resources from external agencies.

CASE STUDY 3 – MANAGING INTERVENTIONS

Zama Intermediate School is located in a semi-urban area with the atmosphere of both rural village and urban township. The school is neat and well maintained with a good fence. Two large gardens dominate the grounds at both ends of the school. The school has running water, electricity and a number of computers for administration, but no e-mail. While the school has a library, it does not have a computer laboratory. Extra mural activities like soccer, netball and volley ball are offered on the fairly good sports grounds. The principal describes the School Governing Body (SGB) as being 'very good and active'. They run the school finances with a vigilant eye and oversee the maintenance of the school buildings.

The school has a total of 34 teachers with two of them being paid for by the SGB. Zama is a Quintile one no fee school with 1223 learners. Of these, 192 learners are officially considered to be orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) however, there are in fact many more learners at the school who are at risk and therefore in need of additional support. The principal, Mr Molefe estimates that there are about 72 learners who are affected or infected by HIV AND AIDS. A School Based Support Team⁸ including learner representatives - looks after the interests of OVC in the school. By conducting home visits, the team is able to identify problems that learners face outside the classroom.

When Mr Molefe became principal ten years ago he immediately recognised the challenges faced by the community and his learners. For example, many learners came to school hungry, many were unhealthy and quite a number demonstrated behavioural problems consistent with abusive home environments. In addition, a great number of learners lived in child-headed households. The principal felt that he needed to assist the learners by offering them medical and nutritional support. He tried to source assistance from government departments, but this was not sufficient. Mr Molefe soon realised that he would have to look outside the school and the Department for help.

With the support of the School Based Support Team (SBST) Mr Molefe approached several individuals and external organisations for assistance. His efforts in this regard were extremely successful and today a number of organisations and local businesses work with the school, offering a range of different support services to the learners. Save the Children (UK) implements its 'Caring Schools' programme at Zama. As part of the Save the Children programme, READ (another NGO) also became involved at Zama. The READ programme provides literacy resources as well as science and sports equipment. READ also offers some teacher training, particularly in the field of literacy. Mr Molefe also initiated contact with Thusanang, an NGO that did some training at the school in the field of rights and responsibilities. The Roman Catholic church working in that region was also approached. They offered financial support for food, training for the kitchen staff and support with maintaining the school food garden. Their contribution effectively supplements the nutrition programme provided by the Department of Education which is insufficient to meet the needs of the learners at Zama. The school also made links with Soul City and runs the Soul Buddies programme as part of its aftercare initiative.

The principal's role in setting up and maintaining this network of support for his school has been both in making the initial contacts and in maintaining contact and liaising with these organisations on an ongoing basis. Where specific contracts have been set up between the school and an external organisation (like Save the Children) Mr Molefe monitors the school's adherence to the terms of the contract. In short, his role in managing the external support is crucial.

Of significance is the fact that Zama Intermediate School is one of the few schools in our study in which the impact of HIV and AIDS was fairly openly acknowledged. The principal also spoke about the need to address stigma and discrimination and suggested that the Life Skills programme could play an important role in tackling this problem.

Comment

All three schools are determined to offer the best possible education, even if their situation is bleak. Their caring is practical and this makes a huge difference in the lives of the learners concerned. The principal in the first school came up with an innovative way of involving poor parents. In lieu of monetary support, she gets parents to volunteer their services in different ways, e.g. cleaning, looking after the vegetable garden, helping teachers in the classroom and in the aftercare programme.

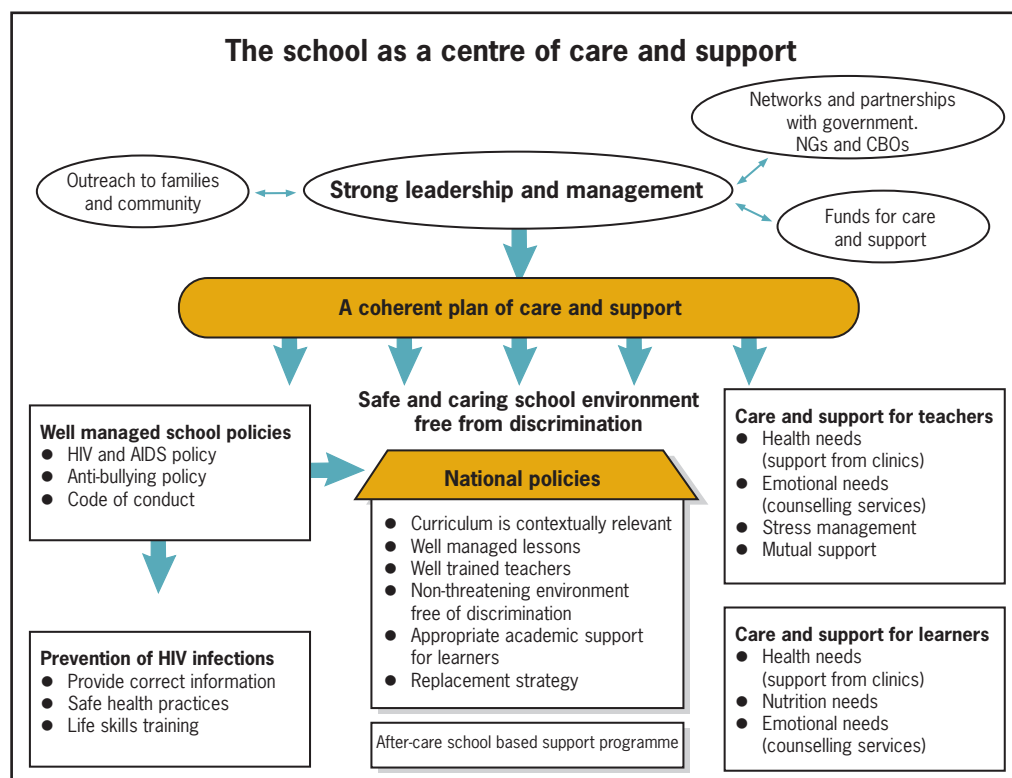
In one case caring involved building more classrooms, and making the school clean and safe. For all of them caring involved taking action that resulted in appropriate activities to support learners.

All three schools have networked with NGOs, CBOs, church organisations, government departments and business. The principals have involved them in various ways to provide support and funding which enables the schools to offer support to learners that contributes to overcoming barriers to learning. The services offered by external agencies include support for nutrition and after care programmes, setting up and maintaining school gardens, health services, counseling services, and funding. It is impressive that even schools with very limited resources could find extra support through networking.

In the course of our site visits we noticed that in schools which offered care and support to learners, the SMT responded to their obligation to care with action. First, they identified the problem and second, did something practical to help solve the problem. The caring initiatives of one person often resulted in others becoming involved and helping with the care. In many cases the caring activities became part of the daily running of the school, monitored and supported by the SMT.

The above three case studies give us an idea of what a caring school could look like. But we know that not all schools will think about and provide care in the same way. There will be different needs in different communities and different resources. There are also many different ways in which each school can respond. So what are the essential ingredients of a caring school? In the diagram on the following page, we sketch some of the key elements that create a caring school.





When caring becomes part of the shared vision of a school, it is easier to make it part of the core business of schooling, and create the climate in which learning takes place. But is it that simple? Let's reflect on your leadership and management role in translating the vision for your school as a centre of care.

The role of management in creating a caring and supportive school environment

The principals depicted in the three case studies were the drivers for change in each school. They all wanted a school in which learning was possible, and so they translated this vision into actions to meet identified challenges.

Activity 4

What are the practical implications of creating a caring school environment?

Take another look at the three case studies and the diagram above. Discuss with your management team what the practical implications are of creating a caring school environment.

Tool 7

Creating a caring school environment: What is involved?

This tool is intended to guide your thinking and discussion on possible start-up actions. You are encouraged to record your ideas.

You can refer to this information when you compile your care and support plan in Unit 8.

Comment

The diagram - the school as a centre of care – on the previous page, shows that management has to take an overarching responsibility to manage, monitor and maintain all aspects of a caring school. A comprehensive, coherent and well-developed plan guides the implementation of clearly defined policies and actions.

This is the time for courageous leaders to embrace ‘deep change’ that will make their schools part of the solution by responding proactively to the social challenges of HIV and AIDS, poverty and violence. In an article in The Times, Jonathan Jansen refers to the crisis in education and emphasises that:



- The dismal performance of so many of our schools is not the result of a lack of resources, but the inability of schools to turn resources into results.
- Even in dismal circumstances, the single most important factor influencing educational outcomes is the quality of the school leadership.
- In schools where there is structure, discipline and predictability, the pupils are more likely to achieve educational success.

(Jonathan Jansen: 2009)⁹

Management holds the key to turning the current crisis into new opportunities for schools to respond. Daunting though the task is, management does not need to go it alone. The principals in the case studies did not try to change things on their own. They managed to share their vision and enlist others to help them, be it the school staff, the community, government departments or outside organisations. We will deal with setting up these types of partnerships and networks in more detail in Unit 4.

It is interesting to note that the majority of principals who managed to create a caring school environment are women. Is there something about the way women are raised to be ‘carers’ that makes them more sensitive to the needs of others? Though caring and compassion is not the preserve of women, it is an important value and attitude that can be a driving force for taking actions that result in building a caring school environment.

In reflecting on the important role of leadership and management in creating a caring and supportive school environment as seen in the three preceeding case studies, we identified some leadership tips which we believe may be useful.

- A vision for a caring school must be rooted in an accurate understanding of the context so that it can be translated into smaller practical and doable steps.
- The principal and the SMT must demonstrate leadership by taking the initiative to prioritise areas for development and then develop a strategy to get wider support.
- It is important to work as a team and set achievable goals for the school. Principals must be careful not to overburden the staff, but find ways to support them.
- Networking is a critical part of the school's action plan. Few schools can manage to do everything on their own without outside help. Setting up networks of support is therefore a key competence which principals and SMTs should strive to develop. But it remains the responsibility of the principal and SMT to manage the services and support that has been elicited from outside of the school. This is where clear contracts that specify what will be done by whom, where and when, are crucial.
- The principal and SMT take full responsibility for ensuring that outside assistance is relevant and supports the school's vision of a caring environment and does not interfere with the core business of the school.

Caring attitudes start with practical actions.

Comment

Unfortunately, schools with a shared vision for caring are still the exception rather than the rule. Many principals have reported that they struggle to get parents and teachers to buy into their vision, because they do not seem to care. This raises a critical leadership question. Can people be taught to care? Let us reflect for a moment on some practical examples. If the teachers in a school have a good understanding of the rights of a child, and they understand how hunger and abuse undermine these rights, no real caring has taken place yet. Caring begins when the principal and teachers act on this insight. It begins, for example, when they identify and feed the hungry children in their school. If we want to turn a shared set of values (vision) into practical caring responses, we need to do specific management tasks. For example, does the school have a good system to identify vulnerable children? How does the school manage the nutritional programme? These management tasks make it possible for a school to integrate its caring intentions (like feeding the hungry) into its day-to-day business. This includes defining, monitoring and supporting the care responsibilities of teachers, which should be part of their daily work. It is important to keep in mind that if teachers are given clearly defined roles in the school-wide care programmes the school can maintain a caring climate, regardless of the personal beliefs of the teachers involved. Caring attitudes start with practical actions.

UNIT THREE

Care for vulnerable learners

Introduction

All children in South African schools are entitled to quality education and a supportive school environment that will allow them to take full advantage of the teaching and learning opportunities to develop their potential. This fundamental right to education for everyone is enshrined in the South African Constitution and is promoted by national education acts and policies.

It is a known fact that large numbers of learners in our schools are unable to take advantage of education because they are the victims of socio-economic issues such as HIV and AIDS, poverty and violence. In Unit 1 we touched briefly on the impact of these socio-economic ills on children and examined the role that schools could play to mitigate the effects on learners. We continued our reflection on the school as a critical partner in the national multisectoral response to HIV and AIDS and poverty in Unit 2, and constructed a picture of what a caring school in which vulnerable learners receive appropriate care and support might look like.

In Unit 3 we place the spotlight on learners and investigate what we mean by vulnerable learners, what challenges they face, and why the school can be such a powerful and positive influence in their lives. We hope that deeper insight into the plight of vulnerable learners will motivate you and your management team to put in place a simple information gathering system that enables you to pinpoint accurately who is vulnerable in your school. Dependable management information will enable you to make informed decisions about the support and care strategies that are best suited to your school context. Managing information about vulnerable learners and their needs is an integral part of an overall plan to respond proactively to the dire situation that many of your learners have to cope with. You are encouraged to start thinking about information gathering and storage in preparation for the planning process that you will undertake in Unit 8. Tool 31 will provide you with detailed guidance on information management.

Key questions

This unit explores the following questions:

1. What makes learners vulnerable?
2. How does being vulnerable affect a learner's education?
3. Why are schools important in the lives of vulnerable learners?
4. How can you identify vulnerable children in your school?

Outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Refine your ideas of what makes children vulnerable and what the indicators of vulnerability are.
- Hold a deeper understanding of the effects that HIV and AIDS, poverty and a range of socio-economic issues have on the education of vulnerable learners.
- Increase your awareness of the importance of helping vulnerable learners to access school and of providing support for them to attend school regularly.
- Recognise the importance of collecting dependable information about the number of vulnerable learners and their needs in order to inform better planning and management decisions about necessary actions for appropriate support.
- Describe what is involved in setting up and maintaining a reliable management information system to identify vulnerable learners in your school.

What makes learners vulnerable?

The term *vulnerable children* is used by numerous agencies and communities around the world and is generally understood to mean children who face hardships of many kinds. But what exactly is the nature of these hardships?



Before examining the term *vulnerable* in some detail, stop and think about your current understanding of it. In Unit 1 you were asked to estimate how many learners in your school you consider to be vulnerable. Did you find it easy to define *vulnerable learners*? What characteristics or criteria did you use to identify vulnerable learners in your school?



Activity 1

What does the term *vulnerable children* mean?

Read the following two extracts from different sources that describe this term. Then answer these questions.

1. What are the common indicators of vulnerability listed in both extracts?
2. Which aspects did you not consider when you did the activity in Unit 1 that asked you to estimate the number of learners in your school that are vulnerable?
3. Why is it helpful for you and your management team to have a clear idea of what you mean by *vulnerable learners*?

EXTRACT 1

Some specific indicators for vulnerability in children include the following:

- Any physical or mental handicap or any other long-term difficulty that would make it difficult for the child to function independently;
- Illness, either HIV or other major illness;
- Emotional or psychological problems;
- Abuse at emotional, physical or sexual level;
- Not cheerful, dull, miserable, often sleepy;
- Use of drugs, e.g. glue, alcohol, cigarettes, dagga, cocaine;
- Neglect of schoolwork, does not attend school regularly, does not perform well at school;
- Does not receive sufficient healthy food and constantly shows signs of hunger;
- Constantly shows signs of not sleeping well;
- Poor hygiene or cannot engage in personal care;
- Does not have clothing or has dirty clothing all the time;
- Does not receive care, particularly love, guidance and support.

Family and community contexts that make children vulnerable

Family situations that make children vulnerable:

- Caregivers that are not able or willing to care for the children that they are responsible for;
- Alcoholic and/or emotionally disturbed parents;
- Handicapped (physically and mentally) or chronically sick parents, e.g. confined to bed;
- Household is overcrowded or the ratio of children to caregivers is too high;
- Divorced parents;
- Abusive family or parents or caregivers not equipped to provide the care giving role;
- Lack of financial resources to adequately care for the child;
- Lack of parental guidance and direction.

The community context in which the child lives also influences vulnerability:

- Risk of being exposed to dangerous situations;
- Prevented from having a normal life as a child, e.g. schooling, play, etc.;
- Unsafe environments such as informal settlements, lack of toilets, crime;
- High levels of poverty;
- Exposure to crime, gangs and drug use.

(Skinner, D. et al: 2004)¹

EXTRACT 2

In South Africa, the broad definition of *vulnerability*, typically used by organisations such as the Media in Education Trust (MiET), Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity (NOAH), Save the Children UK and others involved in supporting children at risk, include the following indicators as descriptors of vulnerability. Vulnerable children are children who:

- are orphaned (with regard to orphans there is still much debate as to what constitutes an orphan, whether it is the death of one parent or two?);
- are hungry and do not bring food to eat at school/are unable to pay attention in class;
- need clothes and/or shoes/ do not have school uniform;
- are living on their own;
- are living with grandparents or other family;
- are caregivers to others;
- have parents who are sick;
- are not properly cared for at home;
- are physically or sexually abused;
- do not attend school;
- often do not complete homework because of household chores and lack of support;
- are visibly neglected, not clean, need clothes /school uniforms;
- have emotional problems (they bully others, cry a lot, are quick to get angry etc.;
- are unable to manage their school work (their work is not up to standard and/or their work is often behind);
- are physically sick/ they have no one to take care of them when they are sick;
- appear abused;
- lack confidence.

(Marneweck, L. et al: 2008)²

Comment

In both descriptions a vulnerable child is seen as someone who has no access or limited access to basic needs such as sufficient and nutritious food, shelter, adequate clothing, a safe home and community environment free from abuse and exploitation, family care and support, good health care, and the ability to take full advantage of available education opportunities. In Extract 1 we are reminded that socio-economic problems and challenges in the country such as HIV and AIDS, poverty, high levels of unemployment and unacceptable levels of crime and violence experienced at community level, seriously reduce the ability of families to provide adequately for their children. As a result children suffer enormous physical, psychological, emotional and mental hardships. The indicators of vulnerability offer a broad description that focus not only on the effects of HIV and AIDS but include poverty, violence and a range of related socio-economic problems.

A clear and agreed definition of vulnerability can provide government, community leaders and schools with a useful set of indicators to inform the planning of suitable care and support responses and interventions. At the same time it is important to gather dependable information about the size of the vulnerable learner population to ensure that planned support can be successfully implemented. For example where the school is organising a nutrition programme, it is necessary for the school management team (SMT) to know how many children need to be catered for, and what the nature of their nutritional needs is.

While definitions of vulnerability can be useful we must guard against using the definition as a label as this could easily result in learners becoming targets of stigma. The whole issue of vulnerability needs to be handled in a sensitive and sensible manner.

The definition of 'vulnerable children' as reflected in various reports and articles from international bodies such as UNICEF, UNAIDS, USAID and the World Bank, has continued to change over time. From a narrow focus on orphaned children the definition has broadened to include children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS, through parental illness and associated poverty. It now includes children aged 0-18 years who are infected by HIV, children who have lost one or both parents, and children whose survival, well being or development is affected by HIV and AIDS (UNICEF 2006)³.

How widespread is the incidence of vulnerable children in South Africa?

The definition used in South Africa incorporates international indicators. So how widespread is the incidence of vulnerable children in South Africa? Here are some statistics from a recent UNICEF report (April 2009), *Situational Analysis of Children in South Africa* from 2007 - 2008, which was commissioned by the Office of the Rights of the Child in the Presidency. The report summarises recent trends in children's well being in our country.



FACTS AND FIGURES

- In 2006 an estimated 21% or almost 3.8 million children were orphaned with either *one* or *both* parents dead.
- A big proportion of orphanhood is associated with high HIV and AIDS prevalence.
- In each year over a five-year period, the majority of orphans in South Africa were paternal orphans.
- The death of a parent may have an impact on the quality of care, psycho-social well-being and access to services for the orphan, and it may increase risks of abuse and exploitation.
- 3.3% of children in the 2-14 age group were infected with HIV (2005).
- 10.3% of youth in the 15-24 age group were infected with HIV (2005).
- Infection rates are higher among girls.
- Of the approximately 122,000 children living in child-headed households in 2006, half are aged below 15 years.
- The majority of children living in child-headed households are in Limpopo, Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Eastern Cape.
- 68% of children (i.e. close to 12 million children) lived in households with monthly expenditures under R1200 (2006).
- 27% of children under the age of five were chronically malnourished (2003). There is no indication that the nutrition status has changed substantially.
- The total number of crimes against children recorded by the South African Police Services (SAPS) decreased in recent years to 74,000 in 2007 but is still worrisome. After common assault, rape is the second most frequent crime committed against children; 40% of all reported rape victims are under 18 years old.

(Report commissioned by the SA Presidency, prepared by UNICEF: 2009)⁴



Large numbers of children who enter our school gates suffer the effects of social and/or economic problems that significantly compromise their ability to access education opportunities and achieve academic and social success.

How does being vulnerable affect the learners' education?

Any one single factor described in the previous section places a child at risk. But when more than one factor is present there is a multiplying effect that increases the likelihood that children will be unable to engage fully with education activities and usually experience failure, loss of self esteem and inability to realise their potential.

So what are the most common barriers to education and learning that vulnerable children face?

1. Interrupted schooling and dropping out

Absenteeism, interrupted schooling and dropping out are problems that predominantly affect children who come from impoverished families and communities. The main reasons include:

- coping with illness;
- looking after a sick parent, a caregiver, brother or sister;
- not being able to find the money for school fees, uniforms and books;
- living far from home and having to walk long distances to get to school;
- assuming the adult caring role which demands that some children have to do outside work in order to earn an income as well as taking on the responsibility of caring for the household;
- girls are usually called on to assist their families in a variety of ways. They are often exploited sexually and frequently leave school because of pregnancy.

2. Physical suffering

Children who live in HIV and AIDS affected households usually also have to deal with the effects of poverty. The most immediate experience for children is that they suffer material deprivation that seriously affects their physical well-being and development. Many children go hungry and have to live in crowded, unsafe, unhygienic and poor living conditions that do not give adequate protection. In addition there is no money to get them suitable clothing that protects them from bad weather and that makes them feel comfortable and socially acceptable. Clothing is considered an important indicator of social status and is a recognisable external sign of a child's living conditions. Having no money for what is considered acceptable clothing does not only affect a child physically but also has an emotional and psychological effect. Children and especially adolescents want to fit in, and wearing appropriate clothing is a way of doing that.

Children do not suffer only the immediate effects of not having their basic needs met but if unchecked physical deprivation has serious long-term effects. For example a large percentage of children in South Africa suffer from malnutrition that leads to delayed or reduced physical and psychological development. Malnourished children are also more susceptible to serious illness.

3. Emotional and psychological trauma

Childhood is usually conceived of as a time during which a child benefits from the nurturing care of loving parents, caregivers and adults in their immediate environment. It is a time for playing, enjoying time with other children, having energy to engage with the environment and actively learn about the world.

But what do children who live in conditions of physical, emotional and psychological deprivation learn? What do they learn when the adults in their lives are unable or unwilling to give them adequate nurturing and supportive care? What do they learn when the adults in their environment abuse and exploit them? No doubt children are resilient and there are many examples of people in our country and in the world of children who experienced a traumatic childhood who have managed to overcome the odds, grow and become remarkable people and leaders. But for many children who experience continued neglect and lack of emotional warmth and care from their parents and caregivers, the immediate experiences are traumatic. Emotional suffering is probably the strongest effect on children who live in HIV affected and poverty stricken households. Feelings of loneliness, depression and anxiety can overwhelm them. Even if children are unable to talk about their feelings they reveal them in signs such as:

- excessive and ongoing tiredness
- not wanting to eat or eating too much
- sleeping a lot or not being able to sleep
- tearfulness and crying often
- withdrawing from others
- having negative feelings
- being uninterested and not wanting to engage
- being unable to concentrate and remember things
- feeling afraid all the time
- feeling helpless, worthless and even thinking of suicide.

Probably one of the most devastating experiences for children is to cope with the serious illness and eventual death of an AIDS infected parent, caregiver, brother or sister. They can often not grieve properly because of the silence that exists around HIV and AIDS and the inability of those around them to know how to handle the grieving process.

The stress of living in poverty-stricken environments and coping with associated emotional deprivation can also result in aggressive, impulsive and attention seeking behaviours.

4. Learning difficulties

The combination of the effects of physical deprivation and emotional and psychological trauma results in serious barriers to learning as highlighted in the excerpt below.

Emotions are a significant aspect of life for children of poverty. Emotions have a connection to memory in that they help to store information and also trigger recall. Emotions affect the actual capacity of children to grasp ideas. One of the most prominent emotions in children of poverty is fear. Brain research indicates that constant fear has a negative effect on learning. Additionally, a person's physical and emotional well-being are related to their ability to think and learn. Considering that children living in poverty may be poorly developed, both physically and emotionally, and that their home environments are often emotionally stressful can explain why they often encounter difficulties in school.... Emotional draining and negative self-status can literally zap the motivation to learn out of children.

(The Effects of Poverty on Teaching and Learning accessed on <http://www.technology.com>)⁵

The factors that contribute significantly to placing learners at risk for academic failure are those that are experienced in households and communities affected by HIV and AIDS. They include unemployment, poverty, crime, violence, homelessness, dangerous neighbourhoods, abuse and neglect and exposure to inadequate or inappropriate educational experiences.

5. Coping with stigma and discrimination

Despite all the information circulated about the HIV and AIDS epidemic and the launch of initiatives to encourage people to be tested so that they can receive suitable medical treatment, there is still widespread stigmatisation and discrimination against people who are infected or affected by HIV and AIDS.

Is stigma the same as discrimination? A stigma is a characteristic which is considered negative or undesirable by others whereas discrimination has to do with behaviours that treat people differently because of their stigma. Throughout the world there are cases of people who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS being discriminated against, rejected and even physically hurt. The nature of the discrimination is different from country to country and community to community but essentially many people who live with HIV and AIDS have to cope with the illness as well as the stigma attached to it.

Why does the HIV and AIDS stigma exist and why do people engage in discriminatory behaviours and practices? Fear of contagion and contracting the disease, coupled with assumptions about people who are infected continue to fuel the stigma. Since most people become infected with HIV through sexual behaviour, there may be a perception that people with HIV are irresponsible, promiscuous and immoral. Such behaviours are considered socially unacceptable by many people.

As long as the stigma endures, discriminatory behaviours will continue. In 2003 the World Health Organization (WHO) stated:



As HIV/AIDS becomes a disease that can be both prevented and treated, attitudes will change, and denial, stigma and discrimination will rapidly be reduced.⁶

But at the current time stigma and discrimination continue to affect people. There are two types of stigma that adults and children who live with HIV and AIDS have to endure: external and internal stigma. External stigma results in discriminatory behaviours by others such as avoidance, rejection, denial of jobs and services, abuse and injury. People living with HIV display evidence of internal stigma when they withdraw socially and do not attend gatherings, do not access support services, or apply for jobs for fear of disclosure. Some people respond by overcompensating. They think that they have to work harder or make a greater effort to prove themselves. Self-stigma and fear of negative reaction from the community perpetuates the wall of shame and silence surrounding the HIV pandemic and seriously undermines national and local efforts to deal constructively with this complex issue.

Stigma and discrimination do not stop at the school gates. Learners at your school who are infected with HIV and who live in HIV affected households often become victims of discrimination by other learners and even by teachers. Teachers may treat these learners differently and may unwittingly encourage abusive behaviour towards them by others.



Activity 2

How can an anti-bullying policy help you to combat stigma and discrimination?

Teasing and the more serious problem of bullying are present in all schools. There are many underlying reasons for this socially unacceptable behaviour that usually targets learners who are most vulnerable. In responding to bullying behaviour management has both to understand why children engage in bullying practices and manage the problem firmly by promoting zero tolerance of abusive behaviour of any kind.

As part of an overall strategy to combat the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and AIDS and poverty, the school management team can implement an Anti-Bullying Policy that spells out clearly the kind of abusive behaviour that is unacceptable as well as the consequences of bullying behaviour.

1. What are you currently doing to manage bullying behaviour in your school?
2. Read the exemplar of an Anti-Bullying Policy in the Toolkit.
3. Which aspects are applicable to your school?



Tool 8

What should be included in an Anti-Bullying Policy?

An Anti-Bullying Policy can be an effective management tool that provides your learners and teachers with a common understanding of acceptable and unacceptable abusive and discriminatory behaviour. You can use the exemplar policy (**Tool 8**) in the Toolkit to:

- Review and refine an existing Anti-Bullying Policy, or
- Compile a new Anti-Bullying Policy

While you may choose to develop your Anti-Bullying Policy framework initially with SMT members, it is a good idea to workshop the proposed policy with all your school-based stakeholders - teachers, learners and parents. In this way you are more likely to achieve buy-in and support for the policy implementation.

Comment

All children have the right to respect and to a safe school environment in which they do not have to fear humiliation, abuse and injury. It is your responsibility to create a non-discriminatory, non-threatening environment in your school, which promotes security and influences the learners' ability to engage with the learning process.

By implementing and monitoring an Anti-Bullying Policy you demonstrate your commitment to caring for the most vulnerable learners in your school and to protecting them from becoming victims of emotional, psychological and physical abuse by other learners.

We have a duty to challenge the many forms of bullying and discrimination that vulnerable learners experience at school. This might include difficult and unpopular interventions like calling in the police to check learners for drugs and weapons. You may need to work with teachers and parents to identify gangs and their leaders. Or to talk to learners and teachers to assist with identifying individual learners that bully others as well as challenging the behaviour of teachers who threaten learners to boost their authority, or abuse their position for personal and sexual favours.

In building a school environment in which learners and teachers respect each other and where there is a culture of zero tolerance for abusive behaviour of any kind you are making a significant contribution to combating stigma and discrimination.

Why are schools important in the lives of vulnerable learners?

In Units 1 and 2 we reflected on the critical role that schools can play to mitigate or lessen the effects of socio-economic issues such as HIV and AIDS, poverty and violence. In this section we view the benefits of school attendance from the perspective of learners, and in particular, from the perspective of *vulnerable* learners.

There may not be a medical vaccine for HIV infection at the present time but we have at our disposal a 'social vaccine'.



Education and schooling provide almost the only known antidote to HIV infection. (Coombe, C. and Kelly, M.J.: 2001)⁷

Why is '*education and schooling*' referred to as a social vaccine and what exactly does it mean?



Activity 3 Why are education and schooling regarded as social vaccines?

The extract on the following page from the Journal of Epidemiology and Public Health gives a summary of the findings of a study conducted in countries in sub-Saharan Africa on the association of school attendance and levels of HIV infection.

Use these questions to guide your reading of the extract.

1. What was the purpose of this study?
2. What were the key findings?
3. What does this mean for school management?

KEEPING YOUNG SOUTH AFRICANS IN SCHOOL: A “SOCIAL VACCINE” AGAINST AIDS

A study published today in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health suggests that secondary school attendance is linked to lower risk of HIV infection among young people in rural South Africa.

The study, a collaboration between the School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), examined sexual behaviour and HIV prevalence among 916 young men and 1003 young women aged 14 to 25 in rural South Africa. The researchers wanted to know whether youth who remain in school are at higher or lower risk of HIV infection, compared to similar, out-of-school peers.

The team, led by Dr. James Hargreaves of the LSHTM’s Infectious Disease Epidemiology Unit, found that among both sexes, those in school reported fewer sexual partners, compared to their out-of-school peers. For female students, this partner reduction was accompanied by other protective behaviours such as greater condom use, less frequent sex, and partners who were closer to their own age. Strikingly, male students were much less likely to be HIV positive than their out-of-school peers.

In light of recent setbacks, such as the disappointing closure of the Merck HIV vaccine trial, such findings suggest that we should not overlook potential “social vaccines” which, in addition to biomedical interventions, can play a critical role in HIV prevention. Dr James Hargreaves comments: “Our study suggests that, in South Africa, being in school can shape young people’s social networks, leading to less high-risk sexual behaviour and, therefore, lower rates of HIV infection. We also recently conducted a review of 36 studies across sub-Saharan Africa which came to the same conclusions – that across a number of countries, those with higher education may now be at lower risk of HIV infection, reversing previous trends. We need to accelerate efforts to increase access to education, including secondary education, if we are going to make an impact on this epidemic. It’s encouraging that African governments, the G8, the World Bank, and others have committed to these goals – now there is even more evidence why we should do it.” (The Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health: 2008)⁸

Comment

Let’s think about the use of the word ‘vaccine’. Vaccines are used in medicine to prevent disease. Children who have been vaccinated are thus at lower risk when they are exposed to germs and infectious diseases that can harm them. By calling schooling a ‘social vaccine’, the report implies that the process of education itself, the interactions with peers and adults, the acquisition of attitudes, the strengthening of values, the ability to use information critically: all of these aspects have an impact on learners helping them to modify their behaviour and make appropriate decisions.

The study did not comment on the quality of schools in particular. Just going to school had a protective influence on the young people involved. It seems that is better to go to school – even if the quality of education is quite poor – than to drop out and stay at home. Can you imagine how much more young people could benefit if they attended a school with a caring and supportive environment?

These research findings clearly support the ideas we have explored so far. First, schools are well placed to make a difference in the lives of their learners. Second, the work of principals and teachers is much wider than the formal curriculum. It has to do with creating a particular social structure and environment that nurtures and protects the young. Finally, the power of schooling comes from the actual school procedures and routines that help learners to develop valuable habits and that create stability in the lives of vulnerable learners whose home environment is often fragmented and unstructured.

Schools can obviously benefit children only if they are in school in the first place. Even though national policies are in place that show the government's commitment to education access for all, vulnerable children face many obstacles that prevent them from attending school regularly. Here are some facts and figures about school access from the recent UNICEF report (April 2009).

SCHOOL ACCESS - FACTS AND FIGURES

Inclusive education policy

- A strong suite of laws, policies and programmes lays the foundation for getting all school aged children into schools and ensuring learner-friendly school environments.
- Children's access to basic education (Grades 1-9) is extensive and most children stay in school at least to the end of primary school (Grade 7).
- The proportion of children in the education system declines significantly for the age-group 16-18 years.

Out of school children

- Out-of-school children are a concern. In 2006, an estimated total of 446,568 children between the ages of seven and seventeen were not enrolled in any educational facility.
- After Grade 9, the last grade of compulsory education, estimated drop-out rates were significantly higher suggesting one in five learners dropping out at Grades 10 and 11 and thus not completing secondary education.
- Deep poverty, severe disability, unstable families and duties of care and labour within families are among the most common reasons for children not enrolling in school.

School fees

- School-related costs such as fees, uniforms and transport costs seriously limit children's exercise of their right to basic education.
- 58% of public ordinary schools apply the No-Fee Schools policy.

Physical access of schools

- The distance that children travel to school is also an impediment to meaningful participation.
- Physical access to schools is limited for children and educators with movement disabilities.

Nutrition programme

- The National School Nutrition programme aims to provide the poorest children with at least one meal per day and thus to relieve child hunger and serve as an incentive for school attendance.

Barriers to quality education

- High enrolment rates have not yet been matched by improvements in educational quality:
 - o Qualified teachers are unevenly distributed across districts, with rural schools at a distinct disadvantage.
 - o Large class sizes and consequent overcrowding in the early years of schooling impedes critical foundational learning.
 - o Improving the qualifications and skills of teachers to deliver subject material effectively and to manage the class environment have to be among the top priorities.

Retaining learners

- One way of encouraging and supporting learners to complete their schooling is to remove the financial incentives to leave by addressing the policy gaps for poor teenagers who are not targeted by some of the critical poverty alleviation programmes – notably the Child Support Grant and the National School Nutrition Programme.
- Another way to retain learners is to improve the quality of education and school safety through concerted efforts of school administration, school governing bodies and school communities.

(Report commissioned by the SA Presidency, prepared by UNICEF: 2009)⁹

Keeping vulnerable learners at school is possibly as challenging as ensuring that they receive adequate support to be able to engage with the learning and teaching process.

Identifying vulnerable learners in your school

South African schools are filled with vulnerable children, but it is not always easy to know who they are. Poverty, lack of parenting, violence and illness harm our children, but they do so in systemic and invisible ways. In addition, there is often a cultural imperative for children to stay in the background, and not to make demands. Many children who are hungry will not complain. Instead they become passive and stop expecting decent meals. Children who are affected by illnesses such as HIV may become more and more isolated and may even go to some lengths to hide their needs.

Children who are abused feel powerless and often protect their perpetrators to avoid further harm. Thus it is quite possible for teachers to be with vulnerable children and not perceive their needs. Because of the endemic suffering, the passivity and the silence in our communities, it is possible to work with children on a daily basis and still miss the signs that tell us they need help.

We can help vulnerable children only if they come to school and are enabled to stay at school. Any education, support actions and other constructive influences and benefits, which the school can offer vulnerable learners starts with this simple basic fact: *learners have to be in school to benefit from education and the school environment*. School attendance patterns are signs that give us an insight into which learners may be vulnerable. Let's consider a few examples:

What does the attendance register reveal about learners?	What do the learner performance and teacher's observations show?
1. Mpho has been absent for four days this term, and has been late on several occasions. On two days she was ill and on the other days she said she needed to care for a sick relative.	Her performance has declined, but only slightly. Although her concentration is poorer, she has a positive attitude and appears to be healthy.
2. Maria has been absent for 8 days this term. She has not provided any reason for the absenteeism. Follow up with her guardians has not provided sufficient information on the cause of the absenteeism.	Maria looks tired and listless and is unable to concentrate. She often does not do her homework.
3. Andrew is always absent on the same day every week.	Andrew seems to be taking medication. He often looks faint and tends to be restless and finds it difficult to concentrate. His performance on assessment activities has dropped dramatically during the past two months.
4. Thabo has been absent for three weeks in May. This is the first time Thabo has been absent this year.	Thabo has been in several fights with other learners in class. He gets angry quickly and has taken to bullying other children on the playground. Thabo's work has become untidy and sloppy.
5. Monge always comes late for school and leaves early every day.	Monge's performance on assessment activities and in class is average and remains unchanged. She often has to borrow books from a classmate. She does not like to talk about her family.

The examples illustrate that analysing attendance records can alert teachers to problems that learners may be experiencing in their home environment. Attendance data on their own though do not tell the whole story. But in conjunction with the learner's performance and the teacher's observations, it is possible to start identifying which learners may be vulnerable. We must be careful though as our assumptions about learners could be inaccurate. Keeping accurate data on attendance and linking it to school performance is a necessary first step in identifying vulnerable learners, but we may need more information to be sure. We need to really know the child and her/his context to make an accurate assessment of her/his vulnerability and needs. Do you have reliable methods for identifying vulnerable children?

**ACTIVITY****Activity 4****What is involved in collecting accurate data about vulnerable learners?**

Collecting reliable data about vulnerable learners in your school enables you to compile a picture of the scope and nature of the challenge. Accurate information will enable you to focus your efforts and plan the most appropriate actions to support vulnerable learners.

In this activity the purpose is to raise your awareness on what is involved in setting up an information system to pinpoint vulnerable learners and to identify what their support requirements are.

The principal and management team need to organise a discussion. Ask each member to read the following Toolkit resource first:

**TOOLKIT****Tool 9****Collecting basic information about vulnerable learners**

Now use the questions that follow below to structure your discussion and reflection on setting up a reliable information system on vulnerable learners.

1. What are the benefits of setting up a system that generates accurate and reliable information about vulnerable learners?
2. What are your biggest concerns about setting up a system for collecting information about vulnerable learners?
3. What will it take to make this kind of information system work in your school?
4. Which resources do you have that you could harness to set up the information system?

Keep a record of the main points of your discussion. You can refer to them when you prepare your school care and support plan in Unit 8.

Comment

Accurate and reliable information serves to inform the plans and decisions that management make about the use of resources in their schools. There are ample examples that show how money and effort was wasted on actions that did not have the desired effect. A contributing factor is frequently that information is incomplete, superficial and unreliable. Often plans are put together without due consideration and a thorough analysis of the reality on the ground.

People frequently have a negative attitude to the collection of data because they experience it as a time consuming and tedious activity, and commonly do not see the purpose or value of collecting it. This is because, often as not, feedback to those involved in the data collection process is not provided and the people involved never get to know the results of the data or how the data is supposed to be used.

Collecting reliable information about vulnerable learners is quite tricky. It needs to start with the clear description of vulnerability that the school has adopted.

Children who live with HIV or in households affected by HIV and AIDS, orphans, children who live in poverty stricken conditions and those who are severely affected by violence are clearly at risk and would be identified as being vulnerable. However, confirming their vulnerability status might prove to be quite challenging. Learners, their parents and caregivers often do not want to reveal this information. Additionally, persisting stigma and discrimination associated with these types of issues means that school management will have to deal sensitively with the information and respect individuals' right to confidentiality.

A key finding of the research we conducted is the importance of implementing a holistic, school-wide intervention that protects and supports orphans and vulnerable learners. Such interventions need to be systematised and taken up by the whole school community to be sustainable. *Ad hoc* initiatives implemented by individual teachers, while offering support to those who have been identified as needing it, often become too onerous on the individuals who are offering the support and are therefore seldom sustainable. This wider focus is not meant to diminish the impact of individual teacher's actions, but rather to plan for interventions that can be systematised and have the potential of making a difference on a larger scale. We identified five school-wide interventions that worked like a 'social vaccine' and helped to protect vulnerable learners in powerful ways. These interventions are:

- creating networks of support for learners and teachers
- running effective nutrition programmes for learners
- providing school-based aftercare for learners
- providing psycho-social support for learners in the form of counselling
- supporting teachers in their expanded pastoral roles.

We will deal with each of these areas in the following units. By engaging with, and doing the activities in these units you will get an in-depth understanding of what is involved in implementing these types of support programmes at your school. When you compile your overall plan of care and support in Unit 8 you can draw on the information from these units.

Key points

We examined the meaning of the term *vulnerable* and reflected on the devastating effects that socio-economic issues such as HIV and AIDS, poverty and its related challenges have on learners. We established that regular attendance at school is critical for vulnerable learners since schools can provide them with the stability and support they need.

In Unit 3 we explored:

- What makes learners vulnerable.
- How being vulnerable affects a learner's education.
- Why schools are important in the lives of vulnerable learners.
- How you can identify vulnerable children in your school.



Some important insights we gained:

1. A vulnerable learner is someone who does not have access, or who has limited access to basic needs such as sufficient and nutritious food, shelter, adequate clothing, a safe home and community environment free from abuse and exploitation, family care and support, good health care, and the ability to take full advantage of available education opportunities.
2. The most common barriers to education are: poverty, irregular school attendance, physical suffering, emotional and psychological trauma, learning difficulties, and social stigma and discrimination.

3. Bullying is a form of discrimination that is usually targeted at the most vulnerable learners. By implementing an Anti-Bullying Policy management can show commitment to caring for vulnerable learners in the school and can try to protect them from becoming victims of emotional, psychological and physical abuse by other learners.
4. Schooling is considered to be a 'social vaccine' and is presently the only known 'antidote to HIV infection'. It seems that schooling itself, namely, school procedures and routines can help learners to develop valuable habits. At the same time the school structure creates stability in the lives of vulnerable learners whose home environment is often fragmented and unstructured. Additionally, accurate, relevant information on HIV and AIDS learnt at school as well as positive attitudes and values formed in the school context, help in mitigating the impact of this pandemic.
5. Managing information about vulnerable learners and their needs is an integral part of an overall plan to respond proactively to the needs and support requirements of vulnerable learners. Accurate and reliable information enables management to use resources wisely and to implement appropriate support.



UNIT FOUR

Networks of Care and Support

Introduction

The scale of social challenges in South Africa is so huge and widespread that it requires a multi-pronged response strategy that harnesses resources and expertise from across public and private sectors: health, social development, education and training, business, non government organisation (NGOs), community based organisations (CBOs), national and international agencies. Schools are critical role players but management has to collaborate with other role players to support the large numbers of traumatised and vulnerable learners in the most appropriate ways.

Many of the problems that affect the health and well-being of people in communities – such as alcohol and drug abuse, poverty, environmental hazards and inadequate access to health care – cannot be solved by any person, organization, or sector working alone. These problems are complex and interrelated, defying easy answers.... Only by combining the knowledge, skills, and resources of a broad range of people and organizations can communities understand the underlying nature of these problems and develop effective and locally feasible solutions.

(Lasker, R. and Weiss, E. 2003 in IDASA publication, 2005)¹

It has become apparent from our research that many schools feel overwhelmed by the extent of the problem. Although the situation on the ground is dire, schools do not have the capacity to take adequate care of the needs of their vulnerable children. Yet without adequate support many learners are unable to attend school regularly and participate adequately in learning and teaching. Schools that have provided support for vulnerable learners to mitigate the effects of socio-economic issues are those that have been able to draw in support from external organisations and partners through networking.

Networking and the formation of partnerships is not an optional extra; it must become an integral part of the strategy to manage sustainable support for vulnerable learners. This is the focus of our reflections in Unit 4. We start by looking at a few practical examples of how schools have managed networking with external partners and what kind of support they provided for vulnerable learners.

Key questions

This unit explores the following questions:

1. What are the benefits of establishing networks of support?
2. What types of external support are available to your school?
3. How can you best manage support networks to optimally benefit your school?

Outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Understand the importance of a multisectoral, integrated approach to mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS and other interrelated socio-economic problems.
- Demonstrate an increased awareness of the types of support that external organisations can offer schools.
- Understand clearly the role of management in working with external organisations that offer support to schools.
- Describe what is involved in setting up a collaborative network with external organisations and agencies.
- Identify potential sources of support and compile a start-up list of contacts.
- Understand the importance of the need to access services and support from relevant government departments and initiatives.
- Assess your ability to manage a support network.

Networks of support in practice

Schools are responding to the challenge of providing support to large numbers of vulnerable learners in a variety of ways. The examples we came across during our research show that there are essentially two main categories of approach to networking that schools are using.

1. Responsive networking

Outside individuals and agencies approached the school to offer specified support services. For example, at one Gauteng, East Rand township school, local women took the initiative to provide aftercare support for learners. In other instances, notably in KwaZulu Natal and in the North West province, schools were approached by the provincial Department of Education to participate in an NGO-led initiative to support orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Other examples included donors who approached schools and offered funds, resources or services. In all these cases, apart from being involved in the initial negotiations, principals and School Management Teams (SMTs) played a more passive and limited role during the implementation phase allowing the external organisations to manage the interventions.

2. Proactive networking

The principals took the initiative to find suitable support outside of the school. Contact was made with external organisations, government departments and individuals. These were then drawn in to provide various forms of support, usually in response to clearly established needs. The principal provided strong leadership and was actively involved in establishing and maintaining contact with external providers and managed the support initiatives and projects inside the school.

Here are some more case study examples from our research that illustrate both these approaches to networking.



ACTIVITY

Activity 1

What is the role of the principal in responding to offers of support from external agencies?

Case Study 3 describes how a group of grandmothers approached Ngesi Primary School and offered to care for learners after school.

1. What are the benefits of this support initiative?
2. How sustainable is this initiative?
3. What opportunities did the principal miss?
4. What is the role of the principal/SMT in this kind of initiative?

CASE STUDY 4 – THE CARING GOGOS

Like many schools in the country, **Ngesi Primary School** has a large number of vulnerable children who need support. These learners are provided for by various external agencies, the main one being the community-based group called Itsoseng. Itsoseng is an organisation in the township of Vosloorus, East Rand, where Ngesi primary school is located. It was started by elderly women in that community. These women were touched by the plight of learners at risk, especially those who did not have adult care at home. In 2002 the women approached the school, and offered to help them by looking after their learners once school closed.

The main aim of this initiative started by the women was to keep such children off the streets after school and to assist them with their school homework and study. This is how the aftercare facility at Ngesi Primary was established. With time, the women's initiative was greatly appreciated by other organisations, which then offered to support Itsoseng financially. One of the organisations that offered such support was Emperor's Palace, a casino operating in the area. Itsoseng was also assisted by the Gauteng Department of Social Development to establish offices in the township and broaden their work to include the whole community.

The funding of the interventions at Ngesi School by Emperor's Palace through its East Rand Trust has helped to pay for two people who are employed full time to look after learners, and a fully qualified cook to prepare meals for the learners. The Aftercare service, which was started, also established a food garden and now provides extra food for the learners.

The principal and the teachers seem to have no direct involvement in the implementation of this aftercare initiative at their school.



Comment

When we visited Ngesi Primary we were moved by the compassion the women at Itsoseng had for the children of the school. All kinds of benefits flowed from the aftercare initiative started by the grandmothers. The children received food, were safe, did their homework in the afternoons under supervision, and participated in life skills training. The aftercare experience contributed significantly to enhancing the children's self esteem and confidence and had a positive influence on their schoolwork.

Although the initiative started as an informal support service offered by concerned and caring women, it grew into a community-supported project that received financial contributions from a well-established local business. An interesting feature of the Itsoseng project is its links with the Department of Social Development, which encouraged the project to expand its work in the community. From humble beginnings this care initiative was rooted in the community and therein lies its success and its sustainability.

It is surprising that the school was not an active member of the network of organisations that formed around this project. The principal at Ngesi stayed on the sidelines and missed a valuable opportunity to participate in the network and create strong links with individuals and the organisations for the benefit of the school. Robust interactions with organisations in the community offer principals opportunities to forge relationships and partnerships that can support and assist the school in a variety of ways. It also enables the school to remain abreast of the needs of the community.

The school principal and SMT should play a vital role in monitoring all support services offered to the school whether they are initiated from within or from outside the school. By keeping a watchful eye on initiatives the principal is able to ensure that the support meets the school's requirements. It is important to know what is actually happening on the ground so that principals can intervene if actions are not in the best interests of the children or of the school. On-going monitoring also enables principals to be proactive especially when there are indications that the support is running into difficulty. Steps can then be taken in good time to find alternative strategies to avoid collapse of the support.

A responsive approach to networking does not mean a passive approach. Principals should welcome offers of support but should not abdicate their responsibility by leaving individuals and organisations free reign to do what they want. It should always be a collaborative arrangement between the provider of the support services and the school management.

In the following example you can get a good idea of what happens when the principal initiates contact with external individuals and organisations to provide support to the school.



ACTIVITY

Activity 2

What is the role of the principal in a proactive approach to networking?

In Case Study 5 you will notice that the principal has a proactive approach to networking.

1. What are the benefits of being proactive in finding support from external agencies?
2. What role did the principal/SMT play?
3. What does the principal have to do to ensure that the support provided by external providers is sustainable?

CASE STUDY 5 – WEB OF SUPPORT NETWORKS

At **Hlophe Secondary School**, on the East Rand of Gauteng, Mr. Mokoena, the principal, did not wait for organisations to link up with him. Through his activism in the local community he went out and networked with several local businesses like Royal Paraffin to get support for the school. This included funds for supporting orphans and vulnerable children.

Through his innovativeness, Mr. Mokoena also managed to bring in the local police to help with the maintenance of security in the school. The police in turn linked the principal to the local Community Policing Forum (CPF), an initiative that combats crime in the community. The Forum then roped in other influential people like the chief of the local Correctional Services institution, the local magistrate and prosecutor and formed a stronger coalition called the Justice Forum.

The school has also established strong ties with the local clinic and it stands as surety for poor learners who cannot afford the clinic fees. Mr. Mokoena also belongs to the local branch of the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (SANCA), an organisation that educates young people on the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. The organisation representatives come into the school occasionally to talk to learners about drug abuse. It is through this organisation that the school was linked to a School in England, a development that led to the principal of this twin school visiting Hlophe Secondary in 2007 to strengthen the partnership. Further benefits of this twinning arrangement have resulted from the learners in the UK raising money for Hlophe Secondary School.

It is evident that the assertive leadership of the principal in this school has led to the establishment of a strong network of organisations that support the school in many of its needs. Many of the organisations and stakeholders the principal has worked with have led him from one organisation to another, thus creating a web of support networks that all contribute towards the welfare of needy learners in the school.

Comment

Hlophe's experience is a good example of how a principal can proactively manage a support network for the school. All the organisations involved were brought into the school through the initiative of Mr. Mokoena. He approached each organisation with a clear vision of what he needed and had a good idea of how each organisation could help. He also understood how their activity could contribute to creating a caring environment in the school as a whole. The police forum helped to address the issue of safety. The local clinic responded to the needs of ill children, while SANCA looked at learners made vulnerable due to substance abuse. The links with one organisation led to the involvement of many other organisations, but at the centre of the network was the visionary leadership of the principal, who saw the potential of each initiative to develop his school.

The assertive leadership of the principal at Hlope Secondary led to the establishment of a strong network of organisations that support the school in many of its needs. We could easily see the knock-on effect of networking. Many of the organisations and stakeholders Mr. Mokoena was actively involved with led him from one organisation to another. Soon there was a wide web of support round the school. This clearly is the strength of Mr. Mokoena's proactive approach. It gave him a wide resource base to draw on and he could choose how each organisation would contribute towards the welfare of vulnerable learners in the school. With so many organisations involved, it is unlikely that the school's support system will collapse if one organisation pulled out. This is the real benefit of a network, as opposed to getting support from one or two partners only.

A proactive approach to establishing networks of support can be time consuming and energy sapping. There might be the danger that the efforts to maintain the support network could lead to neglect of other key management duties if not well managed. This is where good coordination and delegation skills play such a vital role. As principals have a strategic role to play, they do not have to do everything. Instead their task is to promote the vision of the support network, to involve suitable people to carry out agreed networking tasks, to monitor the networking initiative at the school, and to take corrective action where necessary.

Principals and SMTs are expected to use both proactive and responsive networking approaches in their efforts to establish a robust network of support that can help them meet the diverse needs of vulnerable learners at their school.

Types of support

The two case studies examined in this unit give an idea of the kind of support that schools could receive from external sources. Our research has revealed many more examples. Listed in the table below are other examples that we came across in our visits to schools dotted across the country. They are grouped according to the key support needs of vulnerable children and also indicate the types of service available.

Some services and resources

Needs of vulnerable learners	Types of service	Examples of support
Nutrition	Funding	- Provincial Nutrition Programme provides state funding for the provision of food during the school week in quintile 1,2, and 3 Primary Schools - Contributions from local businesses
	Nutrition Programmes as part of aftercare	NOAH (Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity) is an NGO that provides aftercare programmes for clusters of schools in Gauteng, KwaZuluNatal and Mpumalanga. The nutrition programme they offer forms part of their aftercare programme and provides food to vulnerable children throughout the year.
	School food gardens	- Department of Agriculture helps with the school garden by providing seeds and gardening implements. - A number of NGOs exist nationally that focus specifically on assisting schools to develop their own food gardens - Unemployed parents help with doing the gardening as part of the school's volunteer programme - HIV and AIDS Committee in the school coordinates support to learners including a vegetable garden

Needs of vulnerable learners	Types of service	Examples of support
Nutrition	Provisions and a cook	Funds from a local trust pay for the purchase of provisions and for the salary of a qualified cook who provides meals as part of the school aftercare programme.
	Food donations	- Businesses like a supermarket or a bakery donate food to the school. - A school in an affluent community forges links with a school in a disadvantaged community and makes food donations. - Local schools twin with schools in other countries and receive donations used to purchase food. - The school has established a system which encourages the children in the school who can to bring food to share with those who most need it. - One school had a system whereby each week it was the responsibility of one class in the school to bring an extra sandwich to school and to make it available (through a coordinated process) to any learner who needed school lunch.
Safety	Security	“Adopt a Cop”: local police and the police forum are approached by the school to assist with security at the school. - The school sets up a parent volunteer system for maintaining security at the school.
Health	School-based support	- The school establishes a special fund to pay clinic fees for learners who need this support. - Members of the School Based Support Team (SBST) assist in taking learners to medical facilities for treatment.
	Community and NGO –based support	In a number of instances NGOs including MIETA, Save the Children and the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) have established district-wide initiatives in Free State, North West and KZN which entail providing a stipend to community or youth workers whose job it is to take learners to the local health facilities.
	Treatment at clinics	Local clinics give treatment to vulnerable children. They also check for abuse.
Counselling to deal with emotional and psychological problems	Counseling and referrals	- Skilled Life Orientation teachers or those who have a qualification in psychology are able to provide initial guidance and counseling and to make appropriate referrals for specialised support where necessary. - A contractual agreement was established between the school and a local child and parent counseling centre. The school identifies vulnerable learners and the centre offers appropriate support. - Links with the Department of Social Development for information about possible counseling through their regional SASSA offices (SA Social Security Agency).
	Dealing with bullying	A number of schools had a box into which learners could place a note anonymously reporting incidents of bullying or other problems. In this way SMTs would be alerted to such problems as they arose.
Child support grants and other social security grants	Financial support for OVC from the Department of Social Development	- Principals assist OVC to secure documentation (Birth Certificates, IDs, Death certificates etc) to secure Child Support Grants. - NGOs working in the school district provide the services of community/youth workers to assist learners in schools in accessing grants through the regional SASSA office (SA Social Security Agency).

Needs of vulnerable learners	Types of service	Examples of support
Payment of school fees, uniforms and books	Community project raises funds	The principal negotiated funding and support from the NDA (National Development Agency) and the Japanese Embassy to set up a self employment project for unemployed parents of the school. A sewing and a brick making project were established. Through money earned, parents were able to pay school fees and for school uniforms.
	School uniform and book bank	In a number of schools, the school management team had set up and coordinated a school uniform and book bank. All learners leaving at the end of Matric, as well as those who had grown out of their uniform, were asked to donate their uniforms and books to the school 'bank' for redistribution to anyone who may need them.
Learner hygiene and clean uniforms	Washing facility	- In two schools, one in rural Eastern Cape and one in a Gauteng township, the School Management Team had seen to it that a shower with hot water was made available at the school for OVC. Teachers took turns to supervise the personal hygiene of learners. - On Friday afternoons, OVC were able, with supervision, to wash and dry their school uniforms at school.
Transport	Transport	A bus company provides learners with free transport services.
Academic support	Aftercare Programme that includes homework support	- Internally organised by the principal who involves teachers and parents who serve on a volunteer basis in the school. - External support from concerned adults in the community. The aftercare programme is organised by this group. - External organisations (NGOs) run the aftercare programme. - In one school visited, the principal had organized for all teachers to stay on one extra hour immediately after formal classes ended to be able to offer homework support to any learners who needed it or who needed to catch up work. - In another primary school, the principal had a box into which each class teacher put some extra copies of worksheets covered in class each day. If a learner was absent, they knew that they could collect the hand outs that they had missed.
Information about HIV and AIDS	Information in the form of posters, pamphlets and lectures	NGOs involved in HIV and AIDS related projects, and relevant government departments in the district, e.g. Department of Education, Social Development and Health.
Adequate classrooms and toilets	Funds from donors to build classrooms and toilets	Principals whose schools had inadequate classrooms, and were forced to teach outside under trees, approached diverse donors for funds, e.g. - Japanese Embassy - Canada Fund - National Development Agency - De Beers Education Trust - A Game Lodge - SA Lottery - Overseas 'twin' schools.

Needs of vulnerable learners	Types of service	Examples of support
Staff training and development	Management training	- An external organisation was approached to run workshops for SGB and SMT members to improve their management skills. The principal believed that this training would develop the capacity of the school to give support vulnerable learners. Largely as a result of these workshops the school has been able to establish various working committees to run initiatives like the school nutrition and garden programme, health and hygiene programme, orphans and vulnerable learners programme, and the counselling programme. - In another instance, the principal attended training offered by an NGO in fundraising and on how to prepare a funding proposal.
	Teacher training in care for vulnerable learners	- IEP (Integrated Educators' Programme) is an NGO which conducts workshops for teachers on pedagogical issues including caring for learners and teachers affected and infected by HIV and AIDS. - Some schools took up training offered by NGOs like REPSI in first level counselling for teachers.

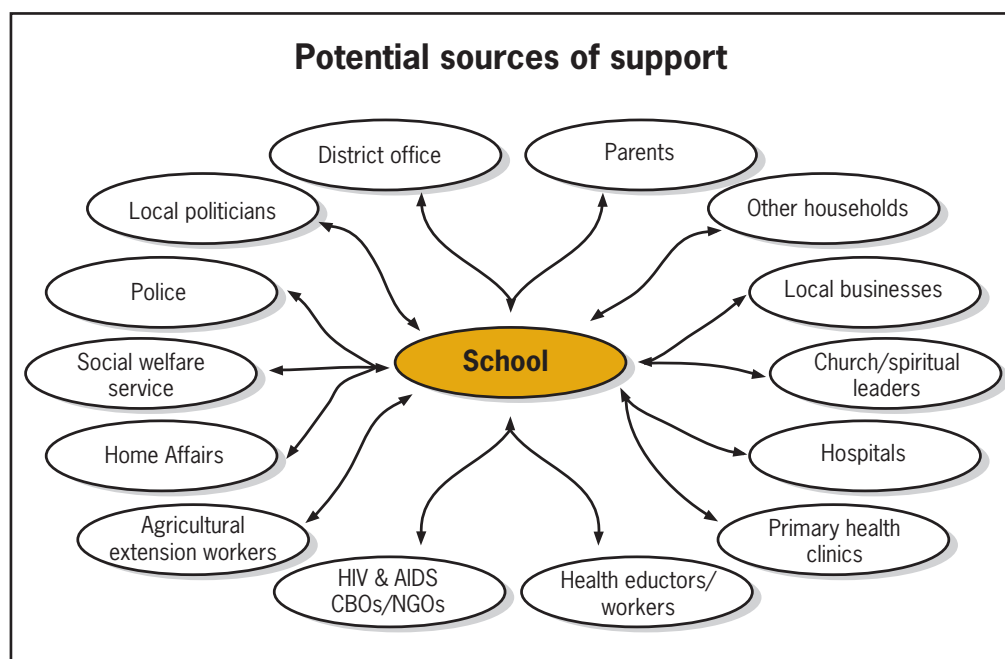
While this list of interventions aimed at supporting vulnerable children is by no means intended to be exhaustive, it does give you a good idea of the different kinds of support you could access from individuals and organisations in your support network. A number of the interventions are also easy to implement and don't need specialised resourcing, for example, a school system for homework support. We observed that the principals in our study who were proactive in responding to the challenge of caring for vulnerable children exhibited a range of good management skills including:

- Sound knowledge and understanding of the socio-economic context of the school
- Accurate identification of challenges that vulnerable learners and teachers face
- Prioritisation of problems and challenges
- Identification of potential sources of support
- Good communication and initiation of contact with external individuals and organisations
- Development of critical strategies to respond proactively to challenges
- Insightful and practical actions to respond to challenges
- Active participation in all external projects and initiatives

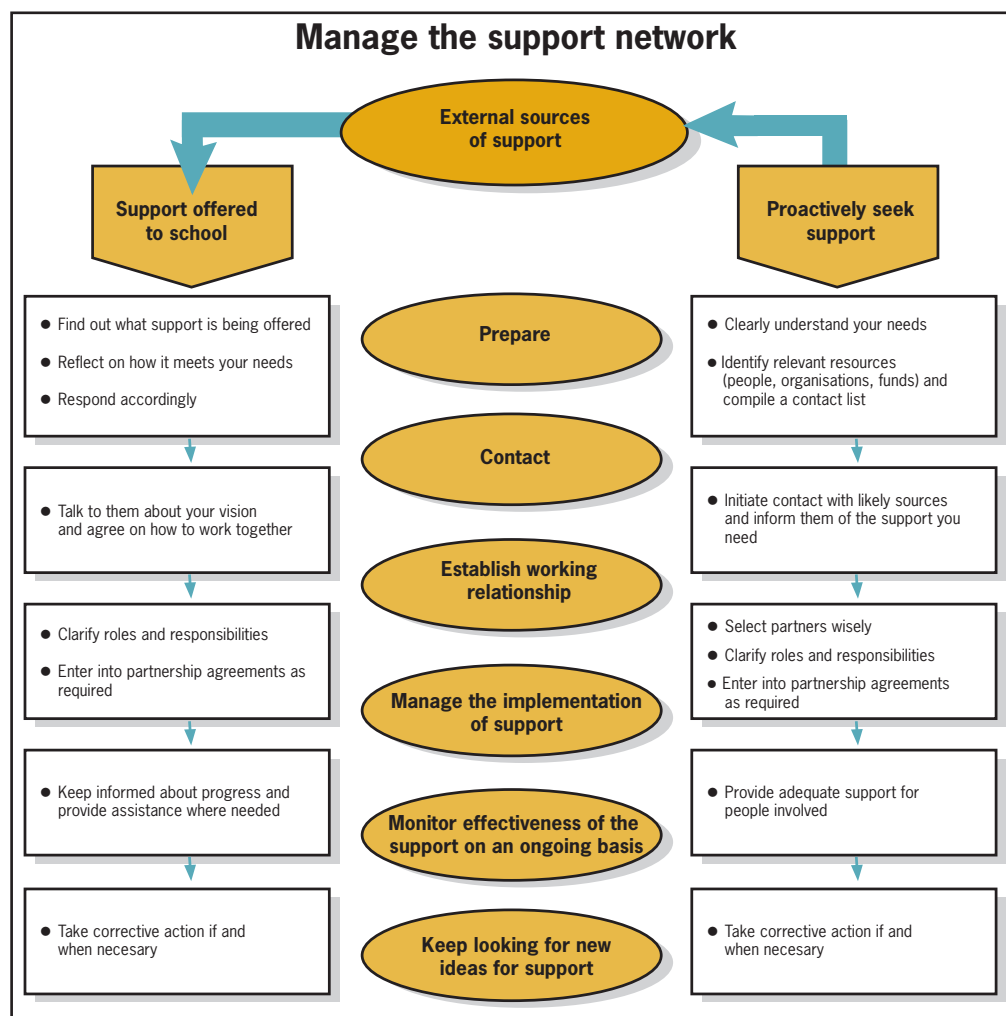
The process of managing the network of support is illustrated in the next section.

Managing networks of support

The school is not an island but has links with the community and organisations beyond the immediate context as is reflected in this diagram.



This is a picture of the potential sources of support for the school. Sometimes individuals and organisations knock on the door of the school and offer support as we saw in Case Study 4 (page 74). But principals and SMTs cannot afford to sit and wait for such offers. Instead you have to go the proactive route and find the right kind of support that meets your needs. So how do you manage networks of support? Here is an overview of what is involved.



On one level networking is as easy as making new friends. If you can make new friends, then you can network. But setting up suitable support networks takes effort and is time consuming. Many of the principals we met were people with vision and energy. Often, it was their energy and their commitment to making a difference that helped them set up successful networks of support. Although particular knowledge and skills in identifying and mobilising resources were learnt and honed in the process as well. They came up with creative ideas and connected with a range of individuals and organisations. They saw networking not as an end in itself but a **strategy** to help them get the support they needed.

Let's examine each of the main tasks required to establish and maintain a network of support for your school.

1. Have a clear vision of your school's support needs

The teachers and principals we interviewed reported that the support actions and programmes that made a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable learners are particularly those that concentrated on areas like nutrition, after-care and psycho-social counselling.

- A school nutrition programme which ensures that vulnerable learners received at least one meal a day was established.
- An aftercare programme where learners were fed and which provided a safe place in the afternoons was set up. Some aftercare facilities also provided place for learners to do their homework under adult supervision. Vulnerable children were provided with opportunities to interact with peers, and 'friendly' adults. Social warmth, which was often lacking in the learners' homes, was a positive experience.
- Psycho-social counselling provided traumatised learners with the emotional support they required to cope with issues such as bereavement and abuse.

These were among the main types of intervention that we identified in Unit 3 when we examined the needs of vulnerable learners. Given your school context, you will have to decide what your priority support needs are. When you have a clear vision of what your school's needs are, you will be in a strong position to pinpoint the most appropriate support.



It is always wise to proceed with caution. You may decide to introduce one intervention only, making sure it is working well before turning your energies to introducing another intervention.

2. Map your circle of support

An important second step in the process is to identify resources that can help. The table on the previous page shows the kind of services and resources that schools can access. This could mean tapping into the skills and services of an organisation, or the wisdom and energy of a particular individual or expert. Resources obviously include money, building materials and other material assets, but they also refer to things the school already has (like classrooms or a field) and perhaps does not use efficiently (like a hall that is empty a lot of the time). Some schools get involved in recycling projects and turn the waste of the community into a resource. Unemployed parents can be a resource for a school because they have time to help with small, practical tasks. Do you remember the principal in Case Study 1 (Unit 2, page 43) who set up a system that involved parents in volunteering their help to the school in cleaning, gardening and helping in the school aftercare? Thinking creatively about resources and how to make use of them is a critical networking skill.

Resource mapping is an activity that helps you to identify individual people, groups, organisations, businesses and institutions that can help to support the needs of your school. The map usually begins locally, with your school and then moves outwards. It will thus include resources:

- in your school
- in your immediate community
- in your district or ward
- in your province
- at national level
- in the international community.

Not all resources are visible. Government services like the child care grant, for example, cannot be seen. Yet they are resources available at national level and the school can support vulnerable learners by helping families in their community to access them. It is important for you to make it your business to know what is available. Other less obvious resources include the information provided by policy statements and guidelines; parents and teachers with special skills; drawing on the skills and support of other school principals in the District; the services of non-profit organisations (NGOs); links to overseas funders; and information networks, like the Internet. When you do the following activity, it will be useful to keep these kinds of resources in mind.



Activity 3 **Map your circle of support**

There are numerous sources of support in your immediate environment, which you can tap into. But usually, you will have to make the first move. It starts with a list of contacts.



Tool 10 **Check your circle of influence**

Use Tool 10 to check your present circle of influence. You can also ask your management team to do the activity. This will enable you to identify people and organisations that you already have strong links with.



Tool 11 **Map your circle of support**

Now use Tool 11 to compile a start-up list of contacts – individuals and organisations that have the potential to support your school.



The old saying, “two heads are better than one”, is always a good strategy for dealing with challenging situations.

Comment

The above activity is very useful if you are not sure where to begin looking for support. It helps you to identify possible partners in your support network. Draw in the whole SMT and staff, brainstorm the process and try and think beyond the obvious individuals and organisations. Try to come up with some new ideas. Once you have identified potential partners find out more about them. What kind of organisation is it? What work do they do? What support can they offer the school? Why would they want to help the school? This kind of information will be gathered over time. Draw in as many people as you can to help with this task. For example, you could ask specific parents or teachers to do the research for you, and there may be other principals who could help you with information they have gathered over the years in their school communities.

Think about purposively setting up a support group of principals from your District or Ward – a peer support group in which information and ideas about support and managing schools in an environment of HIV and AIDS and tackling other socio-economic challenges can be shared.

Many principals have found it helpful to start a digital resource file of information, which is organised in an accessible way, e.g. in categories of support and in alphabetical order. In this way the school can slowly build up a database of information regarding support networks and it can easily be updated. If your records are kept digitally, they will also be easy to update every few months to ensure that the information remains relevant. You can keep the printout in a file in the school office where the information is accessible to others staff members.

3. Make your support needs known

An important step in networking is to make your support needs known to the community and to the networking partners who might be willing to help.



ACTIVITY

Activity 4

How can you make your support needs known?

You know your community and have experienced what communication methods work best with different sections of the community.

Brainstorm ideas with the SMT and the rest of the staff on how to ‘advertise’ your schools needs. Make a list of the ideas that you know work well, but also try to think of new ways of ‘advertising’ your school support needs. Keep a record of your ideas and add to them on an ongoing basis.

Comment

When you thought about ways of making your support needs known you may have considered what would be suitable for the different target groups. For example it would be a waste of time to use the Internet to raise awareness of your needs to parents who don’t have access to the Internet, let alone have no computer or ability to use the computer. This approach, though, would work quite well with businesses.

Did your list of ideas include the following?

- *Talk to the learners and parents at your school and help them to see how they can help to build a caring and supportive school environment.*
- *Put up a poster or notice in public places like clinics, crèches, local government offices, shops, churches, mosques or other religious places.*
- *Place a short notice in local newspapers. Here is an example of a notice to draw attention to the need for school uniforms:*

Some of our children don't have uniforms. Can you help? We need 20 white shirts (size 7-10), 10 pairs of grey trousers (size 9-10), 12 grey skirts (size 7-8). All contributions will be appreciated. Contact: Principal (tel).

- *Speak about your school's support needs at community meetings, circuit meetings and when visitors come to the school – never miss an opportunity to raise this topic with others, you never know who might be willing to help!*
- *Organise a meeting with influential people in your community and make a presentation that provides the people attending with a good idea of what the situation is of vulnerable children in your school, what you are trying to achieve, and how they might be able to help.*
- *Draw attention to the plight of the vulnerable children in your school by sharing your story at teacher conferences, workshops and training events.*
- *Compile a regular newsletter (e.g. once a term or twice a year) in which you capture, among others, stories of how you are managing to support the vulnerable learners in your school. Send your school newsletter to the district and provincial departments of education, NGOs, embassies, international funders and friends of the school.*
- *Enlist the aid of parents who have the skill or experience of compiling information and using communication media such as information sheets, posters, notices, newsletters, web site.*

Sharing your story and your needs builds awareness and contributes to creating an informed and caring community.

4. Choose your partners wisely

Here is a short, adapted extract from a paper by Michael Fullan², called *The Three Stories of Education Reform*. In this paper Fullan looks at the relationship between individual schools and the systems in which they work. He makes some helpful points about the discerning way in which schools should choose to relate to the outside world.



As you read through the extract think about these questions:

1. Under what circumstances would you refuse to get involved with an individual or outside organisation?
2. What attributes would you look for in a person or organisation that could provide your school with support?

ADAPTED FROM: THE THREE STORIES OF EDUCATION REFORM

Schools need the outside to get the job done. These external forces, however, do not always come in helpful packages. They are a mixture of complex and uncoordinated offers and ideas. The work of the school is to figure out when to say yes and when to say no and how to make its relationship with the outside a productive one.

One key to understanding this process is the realization that schools that are good at collaboration do not take on everyone. Rather, they are selective. They select and integrate innovations. They constantly work on connectedness. They carefully choose staff development programmes, and they always work on applying what they learn.

In other words, the secret to a successful relationship with the 'outside' lies in the way a school attacks the incoherence and confusion outside partnerships can create. They have to deal with the outside, partly to ward off negative forces, partly to ferret out resources, and partly to learn from the outside. But the success in their partnerships comes from the way they choose the connections and make them work for their school.

(Fullan, M.: 2000. p581)³

Fullan's reminder that schools have a right to say no to external partners is helpful. It brings us back to an earlier point in this unit, where we argued that setting up support networks should be a management strategy that serves the interests of the school. Not every networking opportunity will be helpful for a school. Sometimes outside partners introduce themselves with smooth presentations that create high expectations, and when these are not met, teachers and learners feel disappointed or betrayed. This can happen, for example, when an organisation promises to provide support material, and then takes a very long time to deliver the pamphlets or books. Another example is of an organisation introducing an art competition and once the school has sent off entries, they never hear from the organisation again. Principals can ask for references and check on the reputation of organisations, before they agree to let them work in their school.

Even worse than experiencing some disappointment are the potentially negative consequences of allowing individuals or organisations into a school without having properly assessed the nature and quality of the input or service that they propose to provide. Especially if individuals or organisations are going to be addressing learners on sensitive issues such as HIV and AIDS, they should not be 'let loose' on learners before they have provided the school management with detailed information on what they plan to do and how they plan to do it. Importantly, there should be congruence between the values that your school stands for and those promoted by the external agency.

Another problem relates to the way networking activities might make demands on the attention and time of staff members and this could contribute to the disruption of teaching and learning at the school. Too much activity is not helpful, especially if the staff feel they are being pulled in many different directions at once. It is the responsibility of the principal to manage the level of outside activity in the school. Networking is a means to an end, and should not become an end in itself.

5. Establish good working relationships with partners

There are different types of partnerships that you could be involved in. For example, you may have an *informal* partnership arrangement with selected parents who are able to volunteer a variety of services to the school, e.g. gardening, cooking in the aftercare facility, supervising work in classes when teachers are sick. A more formal arrangement with selected parents might be that they offer specified services on a regular basis in lieu of paying school fees. You will then draw up an agreement that specifies clearly what you are expecting from the individual and that their services are considered payment for school fees.

Formal partnerships are usually entered into with businesses, community organizations such as Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and national and international agencies that offer specific forms of support. Formal agreements will specify clearly what the purpose is of the partnership, what kind of support is provided, what the roles and responsibilities are of the partners, and the timeframes during which the support will be provided.



TOOLKIT

Tool 12

Example of a partnership agreement

Partnerships can help schools access expertise, information and resources that would not otherwise be available to schools. They can also lead to more efficient use of resources and provide support in a range of different ways. Some partnerships are simple and do not require much coordination on the part of school management. Partnerships with large, complex organisations, e.g. government, Unicef, and those that involve multiple partners require strong coordination skills. Whether simple or complex, all partnerships have to be managed well if you are to derive optimum benefit for your school.

Here is a checklist of what to watch out for in any partnership.



1. Are all partners clear about what the purpose of the partnership is and what each one is expected to contribute?	
2. Are the partners committed to the outputs of the partnership?	
3. Is there a willingness to give the partnership activities priority so that the promised support can be delivered?	
4. Have all partners signed the agreement?	
5. Is the school leadership able to manage the impetus for partnership support?	
6. Is there a good flow of communication that keeps everyone in the 'loop'?	
7. Are monitoring mechanisms in place to track progress?	
8. Is regular feedback given to the partners about the progress made?	
9. Are there strategies to address problems such as conflict, delivery of support, which is below expected standard, or lack of delivery of support?	
10. Is appreciation of support communicated to partners at regular intervals?	

6. Monitor the support services

Monitoring the progress of the support services provided by external agencies is an integral part of managing the process. Whether the support is initiated by external agencies or whether the principal initiates contact with outside individuals and organisations to provide the support, monitoring what happens and judging whether the support meets the expressed needs is critical.

Monitoring is the continuous assessment of any intervention and its context with regard to the planned objectives, results, and activities. Both informal feedback and communication and formal reporting can be used. In informal partnerships for example with parents who offer support services, the principal or any designated member of the SMT can regularly have a chat with the individuals concerned and discuss with them what is working, what is not and what improvements might be necessary. However, when dealing with outside businesses and organisations, more formal reporting is required. Good monitoring identifies actual or potential successes of failures as early as possible and facilitates timely adjustments and remedial actions to ensure that the objectives set out in the partnership agreement are met.

Effective monitoring requires that principals frequently and routinely keep an eye on what is happening, collect suitable information about progress, and give regular feedback to the partner or partners.

Working with government

Working with government departments also requires networking skills. Identifying the correct section in a department (having a clear vision and mapping the support needed) following through on necessary procedures and managing the necessary service delivery is all part of the process (establishing good working relationships with partners) and monitoring implementation. As part of the state service provisions system, schools are well placed to link up with and maximise the benefits of various government services that provide resources and support for vulnerable learners in a variety of ways. Like schools which are constitutionally bound to provide education for all children of school going age, so our health department, social development department, police and other state departments are equally bound to deliver services to all South African citizens. Accessing state support for OVC should be your first step in any plan of action.

1. Obtain suitable information

Government departments and national agencies offer particular services (including information) through their provincial and local office. Examples include clinics and hospitals (Departments of Health) district and provincial Education Departments, SASSA (South African Social Services Agency), SANAC (the South African National AIDS Council) and the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences/Child Protection Unit. These are some of the agencies and organisations that you can approach.



Tool 13

Extending your network of support: Linking up with your Local AIDS Council

This tool gives you some information about National, Provincial and Local AIDS Councils. The key functions of these councils include, to "create and strengthen partnerships for an expanded response to HIV and AIDS amongst all sectors; to mobilise resources and to collaborate with 'citizen groups', NGOs, CBOs etc".

These government offices can be contacted and requested to provide materials, e.g. pamphlets, guides and books, that you can use in your school or as guidelines for teachers or persons who have been selected to offer counseling to learners.

2. Link up with available support services

Here are some examples

- The Department of Health has established centres for voluntary counseling and testing for HIV and AIDS (VCT) and also offers anti-retroviral treatment and therapy. You can get a list of contact details for these centres at the District Office of the Department of Health in your area.

- The Department of Home Affairs regional offices provide the necessary documentation needed to access various child and support grants.
- The Department of Social Development offers support for families and helps them gain childcare, disability and other grants. You can approach the regional offices of SASSA (the South African Social Services Agency) and get information about what support they offer and what the procedures are for obtaining grants.
- The South African Police Service's Child Protection Units (CPUs) can be contacted if you suspect that learners in your school are victims of abuse of any kind. This unit has trained personnel who give advice about what actions to take.

3. Utilise government sponsored initiatives and programmes

The Department of Education can be contacted through the local district office for information about support initiatives for learners and teachers infected and affected by HIV and AIDS and learners rendered vulnerable through any number of socio-economic reasons.

An example is the school nutrition programme. It is a nationwide programme sponsored by the Department of Education. Reports in recent newspapers have not been complimentary about the way that funds are allocated and used, and how it is being implemented. Use a proactive approach in managing the nutrition programme at your school. Unit 5 is dedicated to exploring what the school nutrition programme should be comprised of and how it can be implemented for maximum benefit to vulnerable learners.

4. Schools can provide referrals to services

You can obtain a list from your Local AIDS Council or the education district office of names and contact numbers for local resources that are available to support vulnerable children. Organisations and people who could be on the referral list are:

- Community organisations
- Primary health care nurses
- Social workers
- Police officers
- Religious ministers
- Agricultural extension officers
- Community development workers.

5. Schools as sites of government service provision

You can help your school by assisting the government to bring services closer to the community. Here is an idea from a Soul City Publication: *Supporting Vulnerable Children, A Guide for School Governing Bodies*.



As you read the excerpt ask yourself:

- What are the benefits for your school?
- What are the practical implications of organising a government services registration day?

SCHOOLS AS PLACES OF GOVERNMENT SERVICE PROVISION

One of the best ways for schools and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to support vulnerable children is to use the school as a place from which to provide people with government services. This will also help to bring government services closer to the community. Schools and SGBs can do this by hosting a Government Services Registration day at their school.

When a school hosts a Government Services Registration day, it means that for one day (usually a Saturday), government departments will bring their officials and their equipment to the school. The community will come to the school to access the different government services that they need; and the officials from the different government departments will provide them to the community. The services they offer can include applications for:

- identity documents and birth certificates
- police affidavits
- child support grants and other social grants.

There are many government departments that can be part of a government services registration day. The most important departments for vulnerable children are:

- The Department of Social Development which brings officials who can take applications for child support grants and social grants.
- The Department of Home Affairs which brings officials who can take applications for identity documents, birth-certificates and death-certificates.
- The South African Police Services which brings officials who can take affidavits for the documents needed for Social Development and Home Affairs applications.
- The Department of Health; which brings officials to provide Road-to-Health Cards, the hospital birth register and information about primary health care for vulnerable children. This includes information about how to get anti-retroviral treatment (ART) for HIV positive children.
- The Department of Education which provides information about no-fee schools and school fee exemptions.

(Soul City: 2006)⁴

The benefits of organising an event of this nature are immense not only for your school but also for the community as a whole. Frequently parents and caregivers of vulnerable children are unable to get financial and other support from available government services because they do not know what services exist and are available, or they do not have the necessary documentation (birth certificate, identity documents etc.) that are needed in order to qualify for various forms of state support.

Organising an event of this nature is not necessarily as simple as it sounds. You will probably have to link up with other schools to find out whether they would be interested in collaborating in such an event. The next step would be to approach your local council to find out if an event of this nature is a feasible proposition. The local council would have to coordinate the event because it involves getting in touch with a number of officials from different departments. In consultation with other principals in your area you could offer the necessary support to your local council in order to make such an event a reality.



ACTIVITY

Activity 5

How do you rate your ability to manage a support network?

The principals who were successful in obtaining suitable support from outside organisations were highly committed, had a strong vision of what they needed, were innovative in finding sources of support, had good communication and people skills and were able to coordinate various initiatives to the benefit of their schools. How would you rate yourself in this regard?



TOOLKIT

Tool 14

Rate your ability to manage a support network

Tool 14 is a self-reflection tool that you can use to examine your own leadership and management ability. This is something the whole SMT can do together.

Comment

The self-reflection activity (above) is intended to encourage you to examine critically how well your management team is able to manage a support network. Regular reflection on skills requirements for management tasks, your abilities and past performance enables you and your management team to identify what expertise you currently have and what gaps exist. This informal needs analysis makes it possible for you to establish who is able to do what, whether you need to bring in expertise from outside to take responsibility for any of the identified tasks, and in which areas you may need support and further training and development. One of the principals we met during the research project realised that her SMT needed additional training in order to be more confident and skilful at managing various support actions in the school. She approached an organisation that conducted management training workshops to build her internal capacity. As principal it is one of your key performance areas to build the capacity of all your staff. Initiate suitable training where possible. You can get help from external individuals and organisations. Also keep a look out for workshops and training activities that are organised by the Department of Education.

Key points

Schools are critical role players in the national multisectoral strategy for combating the spread of HIV and AIDS infection and managing the effects of the epidemic in the local context. Clearly this role is aligned to a principal's key task of mitigating or lessening the effects of HIV and AIDS and poverty on vulnerable learners so that they are able to participate in the learning and teaching activities at the school. Setting up and maintaining networks of support has to be an integral part of the school's overall strategy to provide for vulnerable learners.

In Unit 4 we explored:

- What the benefits of establishing networks of support are.
- The type of support that is available from the state and other external organisations.
- How to manage support networks to get optimum benefits for your school.

Some important insights we gained:

1. Whether your approach to establishing networks of support for your school is proactive or reactive, establishing and managing a network of support requires strong leadership and good management skills.
2. A well-populated database of contacts that shows the range of support services that are available to the school is an invaluable resource. It must be updated continually and be easily accessible to all members of staff.
3. Government departments offer a variety of resources and services that are particularly relevant for the support of vulnerable children. Management can harness these resources and services to assist them in providing adequate support for their learners. Schools are well placed to be proactive in referring parents and other people in the community to relevant agencies that provide suitable help and support.

UNIT FIVE

Good nutrition for learning

Introduction

Research confirms that there is a close relationship between good nutrition, school attendance, and school performance. There are thousands of vulnerable learners in our schools whose growth and development is severely compromised because they do not have food security. As discussed in previous units, schools cannot close their eyes to this social challenge since it directly affects the ability of many learners to learn and develop their potential. Lack of good nutrition may be considered the single most important factor that hampers effective learning in schools in South Africa. By implementing a good nutrition programme at school, management can significantly improve the performance of learners, particularly those who are vulnerable.

We start off Unit 5 with a story that encourages you to reflect on a key question: Why should the provision of nutritious food for vulnerable children be a central concern for school management? We look to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to understand the link between nutrition and learning. His theory suggests that higher cognitive levels of performance depend on basic needs being adequately met. This is backed up by evidence from research that shows the significant benefits to learners who receive regular meals at school. The importance of meeting a basic need such as food prompted the establishment of the National School Nutrition Programme in South Africa in 1994. Since 2002 this national programme has been the responsibility of the Department of Education. We examine critically what this programme is expected to achieve and how it is working in practice. Examples from our research show what can be done to supplement the nutrition programme and to make it work in different contexts. The concluding section in this unit gives guidelines on key aspects of managing a good nutrition programme at your school.

Key questions

This unit explores at the following questions:

1. Why should schools get involved in managing a nutrition programme?
2. What are the objectives of the National School Nutrition Programme?
3. What difficulties do schools experience with the implementation of the national school nutrition programme?
4. How can you manage an effective nutrition programme at your school?

Outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Understand the link between nutrition and learner performance.
- Recognise the need to become involved in managing an effective nutrition programme at your school.

- Understand what the aims and the norms for implementing the National School Nutrition Programme are.
- Analyse and identify common problems experienced by schools in implementing this programme.
- Describe practical ways in which you can supplement the national nutrition programme.
- Explain what is involved in managing an effective nutrition programme at your school.

Food and learning

Principals and teachers would generally agree that there is a strong connection between nutrition and school performance. In general, research has shown that the existence of a school nutrition programme serves to:

- increase enrolment rates
- improve the learner's intellectual capacity
- decrease the school drop out rate
- decrease absenteeism
- generally improve learner's health.

Equally, we know that setting up and implementing a successful school-based nutrition programme can be fraught with difficulties. There may even still be some who are of the opinion that it is not one of the core functions of a school to provide for the nutritional needs of learners. What is your view?

Read the story of a principal who made food security for vulnerable learners in her school one of her main concerns.



ACTIVITY

Activity 1

What are some of the issues in caring for the nutrition needs of vulnerable children?

In Unit 2, Case Study 2, (page 44) we read about Mrs Ndukwana's strategies for sourcing support at Vuwani Lower Primary School. We will now revisit Vuwani Lower Primary School and Mrs Ndukwana in Case Study 6. This time, however, we will be focusing on a different aspect of school management, namely the actions that she and her nutrition task team have taken to respond to the nutritional needs of vulnerable children in the school. It also highlights some of the difficulties in implementing the school nutrition programme. Read the case study on the following page and discuss these two questions.

1. Why was it difficult for the school to implement the nutrition programme?
2. Do you agree that food security is a key area of concern for school management?
Discuss this with your management team.



CASE STUDY 6 – FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Mrs Ndukwana says that the majority of learners at **Vuwani Lower Primary** are vulnerable because of their poor home backgrounds. She claimed that most learners stay with their siblings or with relatives, and as a result, regular food supply is a challenge. Mrs Ndukwana knows that her school cannot get down to teaching and learning while the children are hungry. That is why she has made food security one of her key concerns. The SMT at Vuwani has set up a school-based task team that is responsible for the nutrition programme. This includes taking responsibility for the school food garden, and for administering the national nutrition programme. The school has sought and received assistance from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Water Affairs to support the development of the school food garden.

Working on the National Nutrition Programme, however, is not always easy. There is a lot of paperwork involved. According to the programme children should receive a hot meal every school day. The school is required to keep records of invoices from suppliers, payments to cooks, and the number of learners who are fed every day. The school also has to provide a list containing details of all learners considered needy. Information such as the full names, birth certificate numbers, the parents' name and home address, identity number, state of employment, income etc. must be furnished. 'When you have limited resources, how do you decide which child is needy and which child is not?' asks Mrs Ndukwana. 'That can be a tricky business. Also, if a child is really needy, they need food over the weekend, too. The department does not provide for that.'



Comment

Mrs Ndukwana runs a nutritional programme at the school because she believes that nutrition is the foundation for sound development and growth. In her eyes, lack of nutritious food may be the single most important factor that gets in the way of effective learning in schools in South Africa at present. Teachers in several schools that were part of our study confirmed this view. They reported that learners looked more alert and participated better in class after a meal. Our study also revealed that good nutrition is a key factor contributing to learner attendance at school, especially for vulnerable children including those living with HIV and AIDS. Children tended to stay at home if food was not provided. We came across an example of just this at Madiba Combined School in the North West Province, another of the schools in the SAIDE study. At Madiba, there was no school meal on Fridays, and the principal reported a high absenteeism rate on that day. If hunger is a barrier to learning, schools cannot ignore this. That is why the DoE has set up the National Nutrition Programme, and has given each province the mandate to implement it.

But implementing a nutrition programme is not as straightforward as it first seems. Unfortunately we discovered that the programme implementation falls short in many ways and this leaves schools with challenges that they have to face on their own.

Here is a list of some of the most common problems experienced by schools that try to implement and manage nutrition programmes.

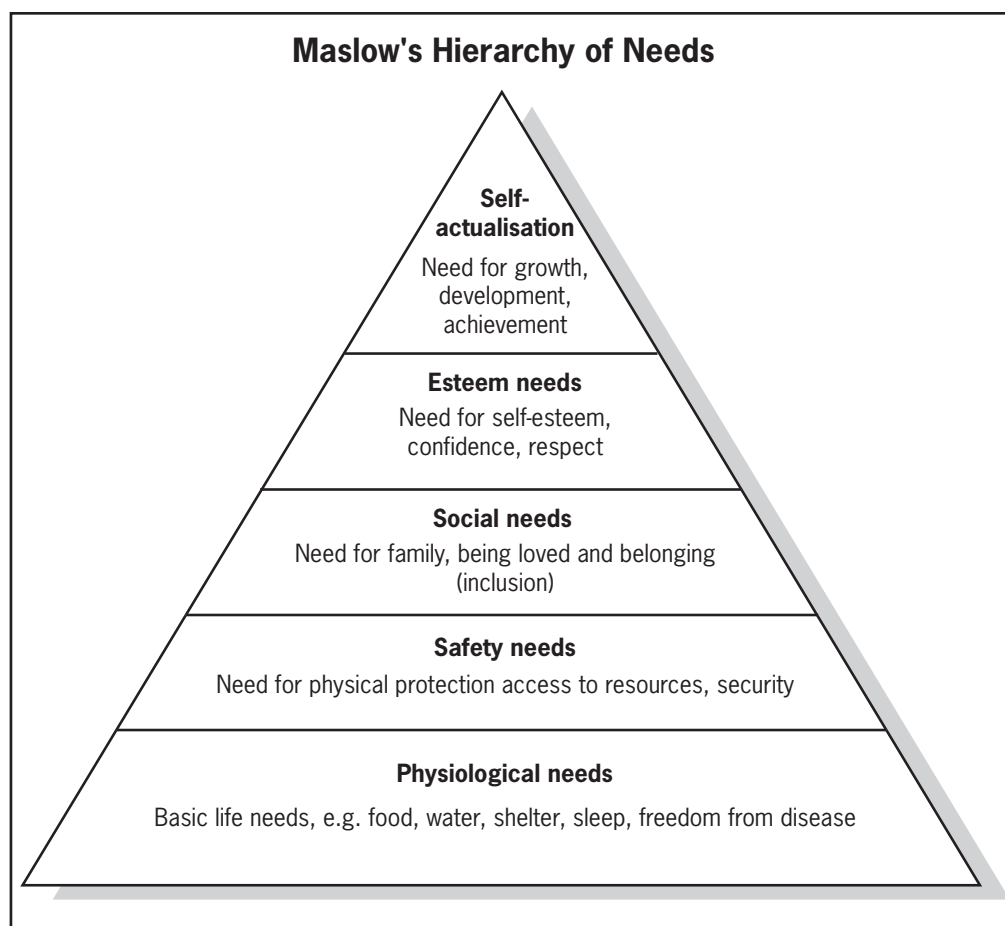
MOST COMMON PROBLEMS OF SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMMES WORLD-WIDE

- irregular supplies
 - food lost through spoilage or the black market and theft
 - inadequate rations in calories and nutrients
 - disruption of teaching for meal preparations
 - unacceptable food
 - burdensome reporting/monitoring
 - burden on school staff
 - logistical difficulties of transporting large quantities of food with poor transportation and poor communication systems
- (Department of Health: 1999)¹

The critical questions for every school principal and school management team (SMT) are twofold: first how do you identify hungry children, and second how do you make nutrition programmes work in partnership with the education department, the learner's families and the community as a whole? These questions are discussed in detail in other sections.

Some people are concerned that school nutrition programmes can set up a cycle of dependence and there is evidence that the programme is open to abuse. Good management will be sensitive to these issues and will find suitable ways of managing the programme responsibly.

A useful framework for understanding the link between nutrition and learning was developed by the American psychologist, Abraham Maslow. You are probably familiar with his *Hierarchy of Needs* model depicted in the diagram below.



According to Maslow all humans experience all the different levels of need and these needs have to be met for full development. The basic survival needs come first and include the need for food, water, sleep and shelter. Our safety needs are the next most important. Safety needs are not only about personal safety and the safety of the family, but also about a safe, crime-free environment and financial security. The third level of need is the need to belong and to be accepted and loved. Maslow calls this the level of social need. It includes a supportive family, but also friendship and acceptance in the larger social group. These first three levels of need are critical for our wellbeing and if they are not met, we will show signs of deficiency. Research into child development has found overwhelming evidence that children who suffer severe malnutrition especially in the first 6 years of life show stunted growth and development, not only physically, but also emotionally, psychologically and cognitively. If our basic need for acceptance and belonging is not met, it will be very hard to develop a healthy self-esteem, which is the fourth level of need.

Maslow argues that the top two levels of need are not about survival, but about the fullness of life. The fourth level is about our self-esteem, our need to be respected and to achieve something in life. Finally, the last level of need is self-actualisation, which is driven by the motivation to realise one's own potential and be the best one can be in life.

When our survival, safety and belonging needs are met, other needs and interests will arise as part of our natural development and growth. However, if these needs are not met, their deficiency will undermine the fulfillment of need on the higher levels.

In the previous units we have discussed the significant role that schools can play in alleviating the effects of social issues. Maslow's hierarchy of needs framework confirms the importance of nutrition as a basic need that has to be met for development to take place. By working in conjunction with government and community initiatives, schools can organise a nutrition programme that benefits vulnerable learners and their families.

Another basic need for children is to develop and prosper in a safe and secure environment. Principals and SMTs have a duty to do everything that is possible to make schools safe. It is their responsibility to ensure the physical safety of learners while they spend time at school. This includes managing the safety of buildings and playgrounds, and keeping the place clean. However, the safety needs of children go beyond the physical and emotional environment of the school. Poverty keeps children financially insecure. Abuse and crime make it hard for them to feel safe in their homes and communities. All of this will undermine their healthy social development. Schools are part of the larger community and as such have a responsibility to work with other organisations to combat the effects of poverty and crime since it directly has an impact on the learners and their development.

In short, learning is most successful in a holistic environment, in which principals and teachers see it as their responsibility to take care of the whole child, not only of the mind. We can see how a caring and supportive school environment in which there is a well-run nutrition programme and where learners feel safe and secure, can contribute significantly to their growth and development.

Although Maslow's model is a helpful instrument for thinking about how children become vulnerable and struggle to learn, it would be a mistake to use it as a tool for predicting development. It would also be a mistake to 'think small' and ignore the possibilities of esteem, achievement and self-actualisation simply because children have a rough start to life. There are many examples of people who have started life off in the most appalling and difficult situations yet who have managed to overcome all obstacles and have become successful individuals who manage to lead a full and meaningful life. In many cases they have gone on to help others who are in situations similar to those that they experienced when they were young.

When we create an environment in which these needs can be met, we open opportunities for healing and growth.

The National School Nutrition Programme

Do you know how the national nutrition programme operates? Here is some information derived from the Department of Education publication, *National School Nutrition Programme, A Guide for Secondary Schools*, (DoE: 2009).²

Since its launch in 1994 the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) had covered only learners in primary schools. In April 2009 the programme was extended to include certain secondary schools.

The programme is funded through a conditional grant that is transferred to provinces four times a year. National and provincial departments of education are responsible for the utilization and management of the funds as well as the monitoring of the programme.

Purpose of the programme

The NSNP aims *'to provide meals to the most needy learners. Good food provides energy for the brain. The meals, which are provided at schools, are intended to give energy for mental and physical activities for the body and brain to function and to make the learners alert and receptive during lessons.'* The objectives of the programme are to:

1. Contribute to improving the learning capacity
2. Promote self supporting school food gardens and other production initiatives
3. Promote healthy lifestyles among learners

Who is it for?

'Currently meals are provided to all learners in Quintile 1, 2 and 3 public primary schools from Grade R to Grade 7. The programme will be extended to Quintile 1 secondary schools in April 2009. All Quintile 2 and 3 public secondary schools will be included in 2010 and 2011 respectively.'

What to include in meals?

Schools are advised to provide nutritious and tasty meals. Each meal must fulfill at least 30% of the child's daily nutritional requirements. The meals must be balanced and include:

- Protein
 - o vegetable protein, e.g. dried beans and peas, soya products, lentils, and nuts;
 - o animal protein, e.g. meat, milk, eggs and fish depending on affordability.
- Starch: e.g. maize meal, samp, mealie rice, rice, bread, potatoes. Maize meal, bread or flour products should have the logo depicting that they have been fortified with essential macro nutrients.
- Vegetables: at least one green and one red or yellow or orange vegetable per meal.
- Fats and oils must be used in moderation.
- Iodated/iodised salt must be used in moderation.
- Learners must be encouraged to drink at least 8 cups or glasses of water per day.

WHEN TO OFFER MEALS?

Learners should eat before 10h00 to enable them to be alert and have enough energy to concentrate in class.

(Extract adapted from the *National School Nutrition Programme, A Guide for Secondary Schools*: Ibid pp 3-5)³

**TOOLKIT****Tool 15**
**National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP)
Key management requirements**
**TOOLKIT****Tool 16**
**Analysis of needs, strengths and threats: Setting up your school nutrition
programme**

Although we will be working with Tools 15 and 16 only towards the end of this unit, you may want to have a brief look at them now. Tool 15 provides an overview of the management requirements of the national nutrition programme in the form of a handy checklist. Tool 16 helps us think about the critical components necessary for implementing a successful school nutrition programme and for conducting an analysis of needs, strengths and threats to setting up an effective school nutrition programme.

How does the programme operate in schools?

Having looked briefly at how the programme is intended to work, let's now look more carefully at what actually happens. As we noticed in Case Study 6, (page 98) principals often experience difficulties in making the programme work in their schools. Most typically we have found that the funding provided by provinces for the nutrition programme falls far short of the needs of the particular school. In our study, we actively sought examples of schools that had developed strategies for dealing with this challenge. Here are two examples of schools located in poor communities that have managed to respond proactively to the needs of hungry learners.

**ACTIVITY****Activity 2**
How are schools responding to the nutrition needs of vulnerable learners?

The first example, Case Study 7 (on the following page) is set in a rural primary school, Ndlovu Primary School, while the second example, Case Study 8 (page 105) comes from an urban secondary school, Hlope Secondary School, which we have already referred to in Unit 4 when we explored setting up support networks. In this instance we will be looking at the school specifically in terms of the nutrition initiative. As you read the case studies take note of the differences in the way the two programmes are run.

1. How is Mrs Nkuna's approach at Hlope Secondary different to that of Mrs Zami at Ndlovu Primary?
2. What will happen if Mrs Nkuna becomes ill or leaves the school?
3. Can you think of a sustainable way of responding to the nutritional needs of vulnerable learners at Hlophe Secondary School?



CASE STUDY 7 – REACHING OUT FOR SUPPLEMENTARY SUPPORT

Ndlovu Primary is located in northern KwaZulu Natal and is a quintile 1 school. This makes it a no fee paying school. The school is in a very poor community where water is scarce and agricultural activity is limited. Most, if not all of the learners may be considered vulnerable and the rate of HIV and AIDS infection in this region of rural KwaZulu Natal is known to be high.

The school's participation in the National Department of Education's Nutrition Programme is vital for the basic survival of many of its learners. All 855 children enrolled in the school receive a midmorning meal at 10h00 on each school day, but the nutrition programme does not operate on weekends and during school holidays. The principal, Mrs Zami, is a passionate and visionary educator. She responded to these limitations by getting outside support. She was able to negotiate that NOAH, an NGO, with support from Phinda Game Lodge (a very upmarket private game lodge that has demonstrated its commitment to developing the local community) set up a nutrition programme for vulnerable children as part of the NOAH/Phinda Ark aftercare programme. The supplementary nutrition programme is offered not only for Ndlovu Primary School, but it also serves vulnerable children in a cluster of surrounding schools. They all meet at the school in the afternoon to participate in activities, which are part of the Ark aftercare programme. The aftercare programme begins with a meal served first to primary school learners, followed by a meal served to secondary school learners. Importantly, this programme runs during the school holidays when the National Education Department Nutrition Programme does not operate and it serves the learners from secondary schools in the area (which the National Nutrition Programme did not do at the time of this research).

CASE STUDY 8 – ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Hlophe Secondary School in Gauteng is a quintile 3 school. It has an enrolment of 1762 learners. The principal estimates that at least a third (500) of all learners would fall into the category of vulnerable children, but the national nutrition programme does not serve secondary schools.

There is only a small nutrition intervention in the school. This was started by Mrs Nkuna, a concerned teacher, who noticed that some learners in the school were too hungry to learn. She set up a group of peer counsellors in the Grade 9 class who donated 50c per week towards the cost of supplying food for these learners. In this way she now gets around R15.00 per week for food. Mrs Nkuna herself provides the stove and utensils to prepare the food. She also contributes money of her own. The peer counsellors assist with cooking. This modest scheme provides soup, rice or pap with soya mince or meat, and peanut butter sandwiches to 12 learners twice a week.

Note: At the time when the research was conducted secondary schools were not part of the National School Nutrition Programme. As from April 2009 the programme has been extended to include Secondary Schools in quintile 1.

Comment

Mrs Zami runs a systematic and well-sponsored nutrition programme that receives help from a Game Lodge located near by and from an NGO. As a result it reaches many children, even those who are not in the school. By comparison the programme at Hlophe Secondary is small, informal and helps only 12 out of the 500 vulnerable children in the school. The problem at Hlophe is that the nutrition programme depends entirely on the goodwill of a few people, who themselves have limited resources. Without outside assistance they will probably not be able to meet the growing needs of the learners for long. The initiative at Hlophe is a good beginning, but if it continues like this Mrs Nkuna could soon become tired and burnt out and in the long run the financial burden on her will be too much.

By networking with outside organisations that can fund the project it can become systematised and sustainable. It is the responsibility of the SMT and the principal to support Mrs Nkuna and use her example to reach out to more children in the school. There are many ways in which they could build on Mrs Nkuna's ad hoc initiative and draw it into a core initiative of the school. The SMT could:

- *do a simple needs assessment survey among learners and set up a system for recording their needs;*
- *plan an internal project to respond to the nutrition needs of vulnerable learners;*
- *identify and contact businesses and organisations that may be able to fund the school's own nutrition programme or provide equipment and food. (Remember Hlope is the school in which the principal had managed to set up a good network to ensure safety and security measures at the school);*
- *find volunteers from among parents and the community to offer services such as cooking and gardening;*

- find information about external organisations such as NOAH or others which have initiatives and programmes for vulnerable learners after school and over weekends. Refer vulnerable learners to these programmes and identify how the school can collaborate with external aftercare programmes;
- link up with the National School Nutrition Programme in 2011 since some Secondary Schools will then be able to participate in this programme.

Challenges and limitations of the National School Nutrition Programme

The three case studies discussed in this Unit have drawn attention to the huge challenge of responding to the nutrition needs of vulnerable learners in schools.



Think about the benefits of strengthening individual initiatives into becoming part of a systematic, school-wide intervention.



Activity 3 What difficulties do you have in implementing the National Nutrition Programme at your school?

Reflect on the following questions and make short notes of your answers.

- Is your school part of the National Schools Nutrition Programme?
If yes, how does it work?
If no, how do you provide nutrition for vulnerable learners at your school?
- Describe the difficulties you have in implementing the nutrition programme at your school if applicable.

You can draw on your written notes when you compile your school care and support plan in Unit 8.

Comment

In a colloquium dealing with education and poverty reduction strategies coordinated by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in Cape Town during 2008, it was concluded that although the National Schools Nutrition Programme is a crucial strategy for alleviating hunger and simultaneously enhancing learners' intellectual capacity, there exists significant evidence to suggest that it is not well co-ordinated. The extract from the colloquium proceedings reflects some of the difficulties experienced by the primary schools that formed part of the HSRC research into this matter.

Read the extract on the next page. Have you found that you have experienced similar difficulties in making the nutrition programme work in your school?

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMME

According to principals and teachers in this HSRC study conducted in KwaZulu Natal, the greatest challenges and limitations are:

- Grade 7 not participating not because they are not hungry but because of peer pressure and stigma felt as they approach puberty or adolescent stage.
- Human resource capacity – only one person assists and this poses problems since learners are often asked to help out with washing dishes and cleaning. This consumes teaching time.
- Structural capacity – storage space and preparation area not conducive because the schools were not erected with programmes such as these in mind.
- Meals are few, only one at mid-morning.
- Meals are incomplete in terms of nutrients since fruits are not included in the meals.

The following challenges were experienced by those who had won tenders to provide nutrition to learners:

- Inadequate funds – these women claim to receive R1 per child, which is not sufficient for a complete well balanced diet, even if they improvise for affordable nutritious items. Soya is the most favoured form of protein. The department expects them to provide a fruit in season at least once a month.
- Salaries for co-operatives – the standard salary for the co-ops (set by the department) is a meagre R300. This often becomes a contentious issue with the women since they feel it is inadequate. At times they resort to augmenting these salaries from their own coffers, a move which depletes their negligible profits.
- There is a lack of community participation and integration of the programme into the broader developmental agenda of the community, which would alleviate lack of capacity and other associated problems.
- Fuel presents a major problem. Two of the schools in this study do not have access to electricity. The gas that is required for cooking costs R600/48l cylinder, whereas the department allocated only R300 for fuel.

(Kiti, Z. *Breaking the shackles of poverty through education enhancing programmes: A glimmer of optimism in the School Nutrition Programme* in Maile, S. (ed): 2008)⁴

In addition to the problems and limitations mentioned above, our research uncovered the following:

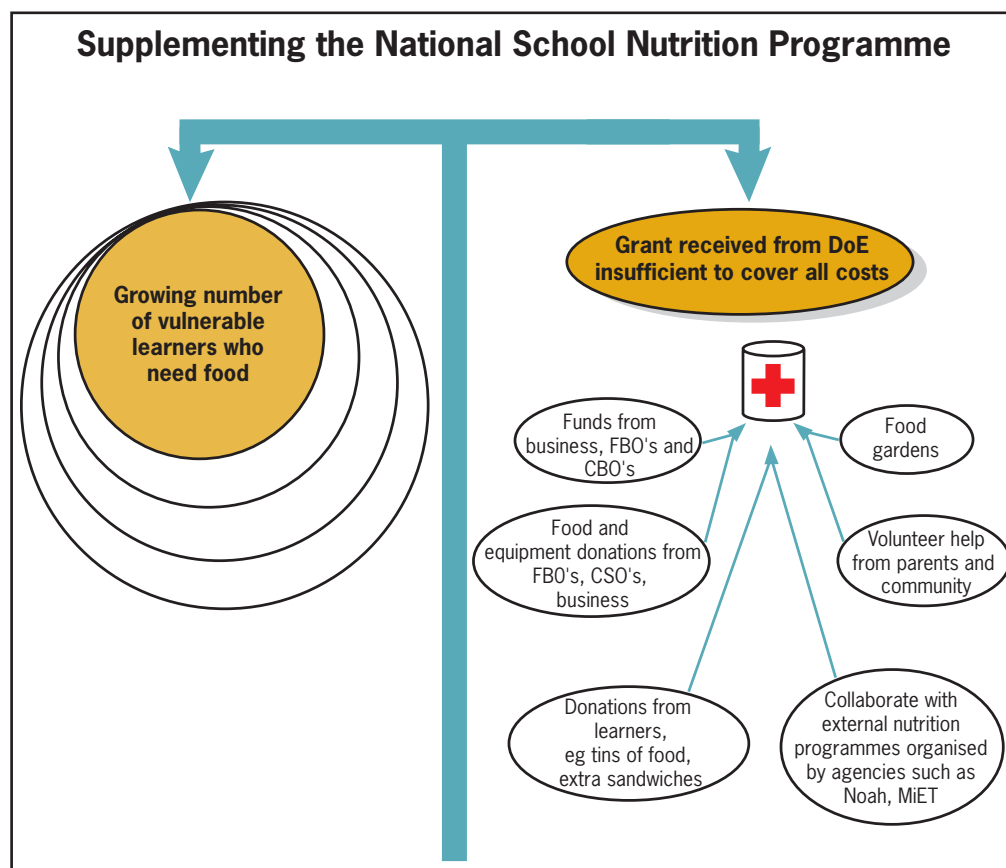
- The nutrition programme does not operate over weekends and during school holidays, and many learners go hungry at these times.
- At the time of our research vulnerable learners in secondary schools were not part of the national nutrition programme. The programme is being rolled out from 2009 and will include all quintile 1, 2 and 3 secondary schools by 2011. Until then, the situation remains problematic for large numbers of young people.
- Nutrition programmes in some provinces or districts are *ad hoc* and diminishing.

- There are no set criteria for deciding how many children are eligible to receive food in any given school. It seems that schools find it difficult to update the information they provide to the Department of Education concerning the growing number of children who require food.
- Grant allocations from the provincial DOEs often fall far short of actual school needs.
- The quintiles in which schools are placed are often inappropriate. For example, a Primary School located in Motherwell, a township adjacent to Port Elizabeth, serves a poor community with many learners coming from a sprawling informal settlement, yet is designated a quintile 5 school. We found the same problem with Oxford Girls Primary School (Case Study 1 in Unit 2). The school is categorised as being in quintile 4, but it serves a predominantly poor, refugee population.
- The food provided in the programme is unvaried and often of poor quality. Examples were cited of consignments of food which had to be destroyed because they were contaminated and of sub-standard quality.

Our challenge therefore is to find doable ways of addressing some of these limitations of the existing nutrition programme and to strengthen what already exists.

How are schools supplementing the National School Nutrition Programme?

The dilemma that faces most schools that participate in the National School Nutrition Programme is that the grant they receive from the Department is not sufficient to meet the nutrition needs of the growing number of vulnerable learners. Principals are responding in a variety of ways to cope. Some use the money provided to reach more learners by reducing the number of meals provided. For example learners get food only on four, three or two days of the week. Others cut down on the cost of food by providing more basic meals that have little variety and nutrition. Our research also revealed that each province has a slightly different approach to implementing the National School Nutrition Programme and each comes with its own challenges. However, the majority of principals we visited recognised the importance of providing adequate meals for the learners who need it and took the initiative to supplement the grant in a variety of ways as shown in this diagram.



There are also many principals whose schools are not eligible to participate in the nutrition programme. They too are challenged to think innovatively about strategies that will help them meet the needs of the hungry learners in their schools. As we can see from the diagram above, the most common activities that principals use to supplement and procure food for their learners are the following.

Fundraising

Local businesses, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) were approached for monetary donations. Some fundraising was a once-off only for specific projects or events. The principals who were most successful in getting a continual stream of funding were those who managed to establish formal links with businesses and organisations that provided sustained support.

Setting up relationships with external agencies

There are three main categories of external agencies that schools contacted and collaborated with.

1. The first category involves setting up relationships with local government agencies like the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) which can be approached for a range of support including child grants and food parcels. Other examples in this category include the Department of Health (local clinics) and the Department of Agriculture which, in the context of nutrition, may assist schools both by providing technical support as well as material support. This point is exemplified on the following page in the section dealing with school-based food gardens.
2. The second are agencies (mainly NGOs) that manage aftercare and nutrition programmes, often, despite collaborative agreements, with very little actual management input from the schools themselves. Examples include NOAH (Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity), MiETA (Media in Education Trust Africa) that operate a programme called Schools as Centres of Care and Support (SCCS), and Save the Children (UK) and many not mentioned here but doing equally good work. Such organisations typically provide the majority of the resources – funding and personnel that run the aftercare and nutrition programmes.
3. The third category is external organisations that provide a range of support services including donations in the form of funds, food vouchers, food, equipment, clothes, and school uniforms. Principals contacted representatives from these types of organisations:
 - NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations)
 - CBOs (Community Based Organisations)
 - CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) such as Round Table and Rotary
 - FBOs (Faith Based Organisations) such as various churches.

Typically, in these instances, the school is responsible for administering and managing the donations (in cash or in kind) themselves.

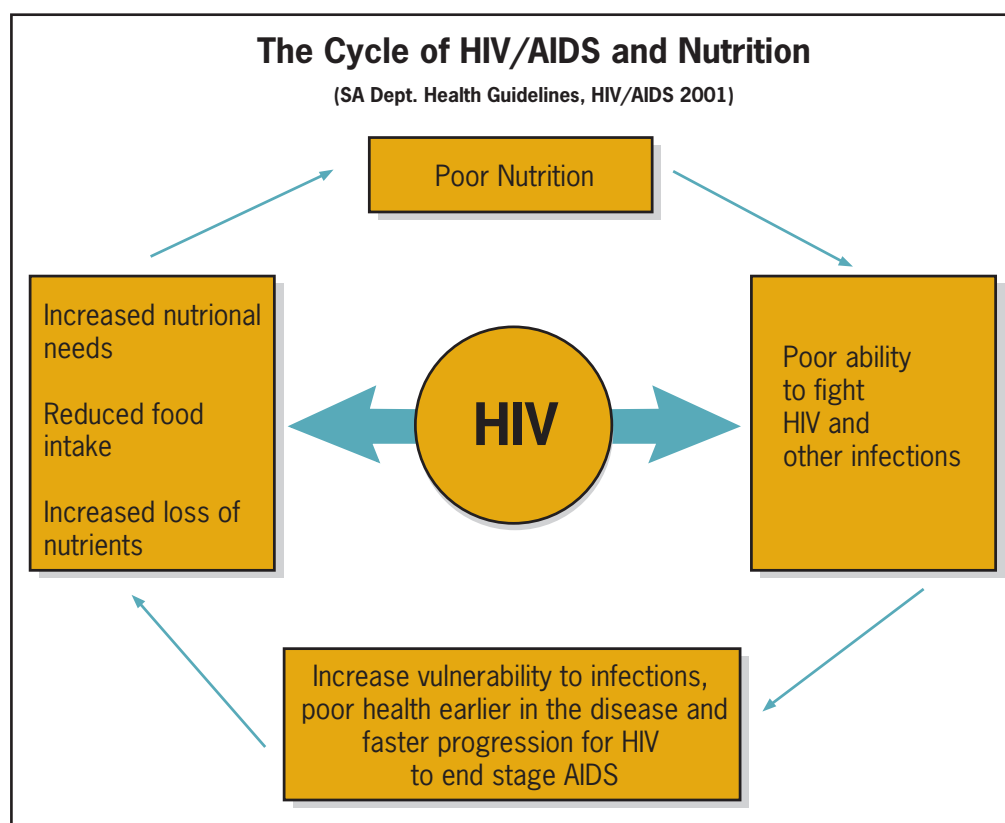
One of the important activities that any school needs to undertake, is to develop a data base, of all the organisations operating in their area.

This will be more fully discussed in Unit 8.

Food gardens

In communities where many are poor and unemployed, have no access to land, and where the levels of HIV and AIDS are high, school-based food gardens can be an important way of maintaining the health of families. In some communities the principal approached extension officers of the Department of Agriculture to run workshops, to test the soil and water, and to provide fencing, poles, seedlings and fertiliser to assist the school to start the gardens. We noted that in schools which do not receive the benefit of training, equipment and advice from the Department of Agriculture or an NGO involved in supporting schools to make food gardens, these gardens do not seem to thrive and do not sustain a high level of productivity. The viability and sustainability of food gardens must be considered if this option is included in your Nutrition Programme.

To sum up, a well-run and sustainable nutrition programme has the potential to have a significant positive impact on the lives of vulnerable learners and their families. For learners who live with HIV infection good nutrition can help to boost their immune system so that they are able to fight infections and live healthy lives. The close link between nutrition and the HIV and AIDS cycle is clearly depicted in the diagram below.

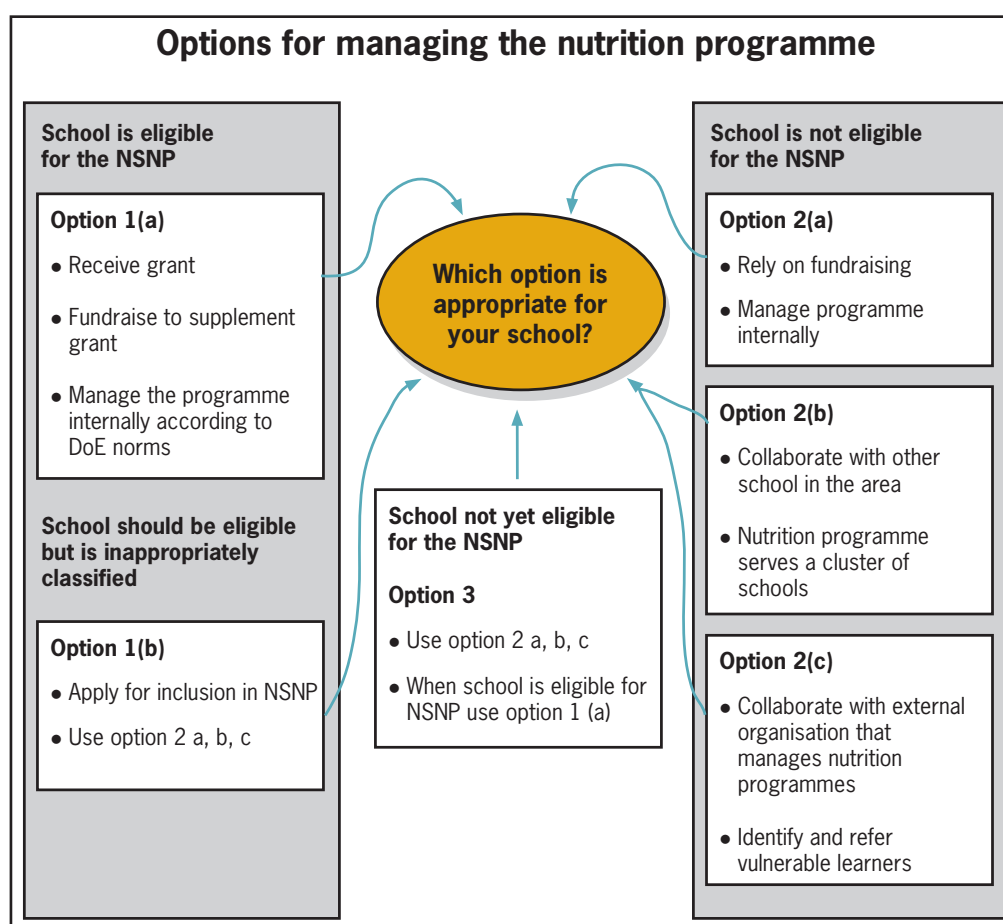


(Source: UNISA,; 2009)⁵

Managing a nutrition programme in your school

We have already established in previous units that the school is a site that is well placed for delivering a nutrition programme for vulnerable children. The learners are there, the management and teachers are in place and the infra-structure, no matter how basic it may be, is available. The approach we have been promoting throughout this Guide is that the school can play a vital role in alleviating the effects of social issues such as HIV and AIDS, poverty and violence. A nutrition programme meets one of the most basic needs of vulnerable children and increases their capacity to learn and develop.

Given the different contexts in which schools are located there are different options open to schools as depicted in this diagram. We will therefore first examine various different options and then go on to examine how best to manage these various options in the context of the environment you find yourselves in.



These options are not fixed and inflexible but must rather be seen as strategic possibilities. For example if your school fits into Option 1, the focus is obviously on working with the National School Nutrition Programme according to the norms set by the Department of Education. But this does not preclude you from collaborating with

external organisations that offer nutrition programmes in your area to enhance the delivery of the nutrition programme. We have added Option 1 (b) because we found instances in our research of schools that are not classified correctly according to the most recent demographic profile of the learners who attend the school. It is up to the principal to contact the Department and supply information that shows the school to have large numbers of vulnerable learners. Getting reclassified is then part of the overall strategy which also includes other arrangements reflected in Options 2 a, b, and c. Option 3 applies to secondary schools that are not yet eligible for the NSNP. They can start implementing strategies from Option 2 until they become part of the NSNP.

Schools that are not eligible for inclusion in the NSNP have a number of strategies open to them. They can raise funds and get outside support to organise a nutrition programme internally. Another strategy, which might be practical in an area where there is a cluster of schools, is for principals to collaborate in organising one nutrition programme that serves vulnerable learners from all the schools. A viable option might be to link up with nutrition programmes that are run by external organisations such as NOAH and MiETA and other such like organisations. The school then identifies vulnerable learners and working collaboratively with the relevant NGO or CBO refers them to the programmes being offered.



Activity 4

What are your concerns about managing the school nutrition programme?



Whether you are already managing a nutrition programme, or whether this is a new venture for you, identify what you are most concerned about.

Jot down the issues that concern you and keep these ideas in a file, you will need to refer back to them when you start working on your school care and support plan (Unit 8).

Comment

Among the biggest concerns that principals have are the time demands that running and managing an effective nutrition programme make on management and teachers. Teachers are already struggling to cope with their current workload and giving them additional responsibilities is usually met with resistance. In addition there is the fact that the school was not designed to run a nutrition programme and so facilities such as adequate cooking and food storage areas may not be available. An added burden is the need to get additional funding through fundraising and other related activities. But we have reflected on these difficulties in an earlier section and saw how they can compromise the quality of the nutrition support to learners. Daunting though the task is of delivering a well-run nutrition programme it remains crucial. We therefore need to find the right strategies for making it work. The first step is for the school leadership to take responsibility for managing the overall plan and to get the right people to do the actual work.

Here are some guidelines drawn from practice on key areas that you need to manage.

Provide strategic direction, manage and support the overall strategy

As leader and manager, you and your team's role is to have a clear and realistic vision of the school nutrition programme and what you expect it to achieve. Having a clear idea of the direction you want to go enables you to create a viable plan to translate the vision into practice. You will need to involve all stakeholders to successfully implement the plan. Communicating the vision is another key function of the leadership role. Communication needs to happen internally and externally. Internally, the buy-in of the teachers and learners needs to be secured. Externally, you need to communicate with individuals and organisations that you think can support the implementation of your nutrition programme plan.



Tool 15 Key requirements for managing the NSNP

Appoint the right people

All successful endeavours start with a clear vision, a realistic and well thought out plan and the appointment of the right people who can give practical expression to the plan. The guidelines provided by the Department of Education specify who should be appointed (refer to Tool 15). The day-to-day operations are taken care of by the NSNP School Coordinator. This person does not have to be a teacher but can be an administrative staff member. The food handler and gardener could well be parents who are appointed to provide these services in lieu of school fees or for an agreed upon stipend. You might also appoint someone from the community to collect food from a central point and transport it to the school. It is critical for the success of the programme to appoint capable persons so that you can rely on them to carry out their tasks well. Why not invite parents and out of school and unemployed young people to assist with the programme? They could help with preparing food and cleaning up. You could give them food or a small stipend to make it worth their while. This type of involvement also means that the programme has a knock-on effect on the community and that even those beyond the school walls can benefit.

Plan nutritious meals

The NSNP guidelines state that school meals are supplementary and are not necessarily expected to meet the full daily nutrition requirements of learners. It is however common cause (and well evidenced in our research) that for many vulnerable children, the food provided at school is the only food they may receive for the day. The challenge is, therefore, how to maximise the nutritional value of meals with limited resources.

The department's guidelines indicate that meals must include a variety or combination of food options from the main food groups: protein, starch, vegetables, fats and oils. Nutritious meals do not necessarily have to be expensive. For example a cup of rice cooked with a cup of brown lentils will provide enough starch and protein for 5 children, and does not cost more than a loaf of bread. Not all food has the same nutritious value, and so the planning of school meals is critical. The following three Tools (18, 19 and 20) provide important information about food types, planning balanced meals and how to work with what you have available to enrich your school nutrition menus.



TOOLKIT

Tool 17

Fact sheet: Food groups and what they do in the body

Tool 17 gives a good overview of the different groups of foods, what kinds of nutrients they contain and how they work in the body.

The NSNP School Coordinator is responsible for the meals planning process and the information contained in the various tools can be helpful resources. The coordinator in conjunction with the food handler can prepare a number of menus that are kept in a file. In this way they can build up a set of menus that can provide the diversity and nutrition that learners need.



TOOLKIT

Tool 18

Ideas for menus



TOOLKIT

Tool 19

Easy ideas for enriching menus

This tool provides some ideas for cheap, nutritious meals as well as giving ideas of how simple menus can be enriched at low cost.

Part of the SMT's management role requires SMT members to be involved in the monitoring and support of school-based initiatives. With regard to the nutrition programme, monitoring the planning of menus, that the menus conform to acceptable standards and that the people involved in running the nutrition programme have the ability to carry out their responsibilities and that they get the resources they need to carry out their tasks, are all aspects of this monitoring role.

Another feature of efficient school nutrition programmes is that food is not wasted. Careful planning around quantities goes a long way to providing healthy meals at low cost.



TOOLKIT

Tool 20

Calculating quantities and cost

This tool shows how to approach the calculation of quantities and costing of meals.

Keep accurate records

We have already touched in Units 3 and 4 on the importance of collecting reliable data, analysing the data, using the information to make decisions and take actions, and communicating pertinent information to relevant people.

The department expects schools that are part of the NSNP to keep the following records:

- number of learners who need food per day
- number of meals served per day
- invoices showing quantities of food purchased and delivered.

This is another example of a monitoring role that needs to be played by the SMT. Your role is to ensure that the NSNP School Coordinator keeps accurate records and to monitor the information gathering process by carrying out regular checks. Since the SMT is ultimately accountable for how the money is spent you will have to keep a watchful eye on the budget. As overall manager school manager, the principal must take final responsibility for the nutrition programme. You are required to submit a monthly report to the District/Circuit Office. While you may involve the coordinator in drawing up a draft report, you will have to check it and finalise it before submitting it. You can also use this report to keep all members of the SMT and SGB (School Governing Body) abreast of how the nutrition programme is progressing.

Manage viable food gardens

Many schools respond to the growing food insecurity in their communities by starting food gardens. This is an especially popular and effective option, if schools have a regular water supply, as well as enough vacant land on their property to produce a reasonable crop. The aim of developing food gardens is usually to produce an affordable source of food to supplement the meals of learners in the school as well as benefit others in the surrounding community. Some schools also use the gardens to teach parts of the natural science curriculum. In communities where rates of HIV and AIDS are high, and where many people are poor, unemployed and have limited access to land, food gardens can be an important way of maintaining the health of households.

During our school visits, it was interesting that one of the most successful gardens we visited was at Oxford Primary in the middle of Johannesburg. Other examples in rural areas were also encountered, although in some instances access to water was a significant problem. The principal at Oxford Primary set up a clear roster of gardening duties involving parents. Two or three parent volunteers were required to commit themselves to tending the food garden for one term at a time. At the end of the term, another two or three parents would be appointed to take over the gardening responsibility and so on. This was done particularly to involve unemployed parents who were unable to afford the school fees.

While food gardens can go a long way toward supplementing school nutrition, running an effective food garden requires careful planning and ongoing maintenance. If at all possible, it is advisable to appoint a permanent gardener who takes full responsibility for the garden and coordinates the input made by parents or other community volunteers. However, if it is not possible to employ a gardener, a volunteer system, like the one instituted at Oxford Primary can be implemented. Again, this will be really successful only if it is properly managed and monitored by the SMT.

While in some schools learners are required to assist with the school garden, this also needs to be very carefully managed. Whereas the learner's participation in food production can be structured to create a positive learning experience, it is important that learners are not exploited and it is unrealistic to expect them to shoulder the full burden for maintaining the garden.



As mentioned in an earlier section, schools that received the benefit of training, equipment and advice from the Department of Agriculture or another service provider, were able to sustain a high level of productivity and the vegetables grown contributed significantly to supplementing school meals.

Manage food budgets

A budget is simply a financial plan. In it you record your expected income and expenses. A basic principle is that once you've drawn up your budget, you have to work within it. That is why it is so important to make sure that your budget reflects real income and expenses that are based on realistic costs. The NSNP School Coordinator can compile the budget, but again, ultimate responsibility falls to the principal who is accountable and has to monitor the budget carefully to ensure that accurate records are kept and that the money is spent responsibly.

In order to draw up a realistic budget you will need information about your sources of income, variable expense items related to food and fuel (wood, gas, electricity) and fixed expense items such as equipment and stipends for the food handler, gardener and any other person who may be appointed to offer a specific service.



Tool 21 Budgeting for the nutrition programme

This tool provides guidelines for accurate budgeting and a template that will help you to draw up your budget and monitor spending.



Tool 22 Selected organisations that offer assistance with school food gardens

Tool 22 gives information about organisations that you can approach to assist you in setting up a food garden.

Our visits to schools showed that schools that run successful school food gardens usually have the following structures and resources in place:

- A gardening 'champion', who is enthusiastic, keeps an eye on things, encourages participation and makes sure that all the activities around the vegetable garden are properly coordinated and ensures that the garden is watered and weeded regularly.
- Enough gardening tools to allow for people to work in teams.
- Fencing to protect the crops.
- An appropriate system for water collection and storage (especially in areas where water is scarce).
- A good sowing guide, to ensure the best crops are sown for each season, and also a regular harvest throughout the year.
- A strategy for feeding the soil with compost, and crop rotation to make sure the harvest is good every time.

Manage collaboration

We dealt extensively with support networks in Unit 4. Your ability to harness support from individuals and organisations can help to establish and maintain the school nutrition programme.



ACTIVITY

Activity 5

Making the nutrition programme work – analysis of needs, strengths and threats

Now that you have a good idea of what is involved in planning and organising an effective nutrition programme at your school, you can analyse your own context to identify:

- what you need
- what capacity and resources you have internally
- the support that is available from external sources, and
- obstacles that prevent you from organising a well run nutrition programme.



TOOLKIT

Tool 16

Analysis of needs, strengths and threats

This is a SMT activity. Use Tool 16 to record your ideas. Resources that you can draw on include: the diagram showing nutrition programme options, Tool 15, and the guidelines contained in the preceding section: managing the nutrition programme in your school.

A contextual analysis is an important part of any planning process. Since the nutrition programme is so critical in alleviating the negative effects of HIV and AIDS and other socio-economic problems that render learners vulnerable, it is important to have a good idea of what is required and how you can access the necessary resources to make your school nutrition programme a viable and sustainable project.

You can refer to the record of your analysis when you prepare your school's care and support plan in Unit 8.

Comment

There are many examples of nutrition programmes that do not provide the support envisaged or that have stopped altogether because there was insufficient capacity and resources to make them sustainable ventures. A critical analysis of the environment in which a nutrition programme has to operate helps management to pinpoint what they have at their disposal and where they need to take action to procure additional capacity and resources. This will inform the planning and implementation of a realistic and achievable strategy.

Key points

We explored in some depth reasons why the provision of nutritious food for vulnerable children should be a central concern for school management. Numerous examples from the field show the benefits of providing nutrition for those learners who are most vulnerable.

In Unit 5 we explored:

- Why it is necessary for schools to get involved in managing a nutrition programme.
- The requirements and intended objectives of the National School Nutrition Programme.
- What difficulties schools experience with the implementation of the national school nutrition programme.
- How to strengthen the existing National School Nutrition Programme in schools where it exists.
- How to manage a nutrition programme at your school effectively.

Some important insights we gained:

1. There is an undisputed link between good nutrition and a child's capacity to grow and develop to their full potential.
2. The school is well placed to offer a nutrition programme that meets a significant basic need that increases the capacity of vulnerable learners to learn.
3. Principals face a number of severe challenges in implementing the National School Nutrition Programme. A major problem is funding because the grant received from the Department of Education usually does not cover the costs of providing meals for the increasing number of vulnerable learners in schools.
4. The main ways in which principals are supplementing the National Nutrition Programme include fundraising, securing food donations, collaboration with external organisations and managing food gardens.
5. Principals and SMTS are expected to provide strategic leadership by creating a realistic vision for the nutrition programme and communicating this vision to both the school and the wider community. Principals are also responsible for appointing the right people who can give practical expression to the strategic vision and plan and for monitoring and supporting the implementation process.
6. A critical analysis of the school context enables principals and the SMT to establish what capacity and resources which are required to make the nutrition programme work in their school, what the threats are, what capacity and resources they have internally, and what support they can get from external sources.



UNIT SIX

School-based aftercare

Introduction

Early childhood development, improved nutritional provision and keeping children in school for as long as possible are considered to be three key educational investment areas for vulnerable children. Increased participation in schooling has long-term development and social benefits beyond education and employment opportunities in adult life. Children who are able to participate successfully in learning and teaching are less likely to stay away from school (Richter, L. and Chandan, U: 2008)¹. But the dilemma facing large numbers of vulnerable children is that their ability to participate fully in learning is compromised because of their disadvantaged home environment in which their basic needs are not met. As the rates of absenteeism, interrupted schooling and drop out are generally higher for vulnerable children, they often fall behind and this in turn leads to poor performance and a higher likelihood that they will stay away from school. The challenge for schools is to break this cycle. They can do this by offering quality education and supporting vulnerable learners to keep up with their schoolwork and achieve success. In the previous unit we established that a well-run school nutrition programme is a key support intervention since there is a close association between good nutrition and increased capacity for learning. Providing support to vulnerable learners in the afternoon when formal lessons are over is not only a strategy for helping to keep learners safe, but also an effective way of helping them to improve their performance and increase school attendance. But are schools getting involved in this kind of support?

Some of the schools selected for our study had aftercare arrangements as part of their strategy for supporting vulnerable learners. In this unit we take a closer look at these initiatives and discuss the different approaches to aftercare that we encountered. We reflect on the role of school management in aftercare initiatives for vulnerable learners and also on how the community and local businesses can be drawn in to support such initiatives. Considering various contexts, we conclude by reflecting on the kind of aftercare support you can provide at your school.

Key questions

This unit explores the following questions:

1. What are the benefits of aftercare support for learners?
2. What types of aftercare support strategies can be organised?
3. What is involved in managing school-based aftercare support?
4. Which aftercare strategy is most suitable for your school?

Outcomes

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Recognise of the benefits of aftercare support for learners.
- Describe the different types of aftercare strategies and what is involved in organising each one.
- Recognise the role that external organisations and the community can play in school-based aftercare programmes.
- Reflect on your own school context and identify the type of aftercare support strategy that would be most suitable.
- Identify the most suitable approach for your school to set up an aftercare facility.

What kind of aftercare do schools offer?

A number of schools have recognised the need to provide learners with some form of support when formal school activities close for the day. Some benefits of this kind of support are reflected in the words of a learner who attends aftercare.

I like staying at the aftercare because I feel safe and have a place to do my homework. I also have fun playing with other children and enjoy the games we play. Before I came to the centre I was alone and felt very sad.

The examples of aftercare support described in the case studies on the following pages will highlight the different ways in which aftercare support can be offered and the value that these initiatives can add to the lives of vulnerable learners and the school.



ACTIVITY

Activity 1

How do principals organise aftercare support at their schools?

As you read the three case studies, you will notice that each of the schools is located in a different context and that their aftercare service reflects the varied levels of resources available to them.

You can compare information about the three aftercare initiatives by writing down your answers to the questions for each school in the table on the following page.

	Oxford	Ndlovu	Ngesi
Who attends?			
What is on offer?			
Who manages the programme?			
Where do the resources come from?			
How does it support the school			

We have already encountered these three case study schools in earlier units of this guide. In this Unit, we will examine the aftercare facilities that these schools have established.



CASE STUDY 9 – AFTERCARE ORGANISED BY THE SCHOOL IN AN URBAN SETTING

The aftercare facility at **Oxford Girls Primary School** runs during school time and in the holidays. The Grade R (Reception) teacher runs this facility and she gets help from parents, who volunteer their services to the aftercare programmes in lieu of fees. The aftercare offers a meal and a set period for the children to do their homework. The Grade R teacher liaises with her colleagues if she picks up a need for remediation in any particular area during the homework session. At the end of the afternoon a programme of 'fun' activities which including reading, drawing, playing and sport activities are facilitated.

The aftercare programme is also available to some young children who attend an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centre that is situated across the road from the school and whose parents are unable to fetch them when the centre closes at around midday. In so doing, the school's services are extended even further into the local community.

CASE STUDY 10 – AFTERCARE ORGANISED BY AN EXTERNAL ORGANISATION IN A RURAL SETTING

Ndlovu Primary School is situated in a rural area of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The school serves a very poor community where water is scarce and agricultural activity is limited to small-scale cattle and goat rearing. We first introduced Ndlovu Primary in Unit 5 when we discussed its nutrition programme that is integrated into the aftercare facility.

The aftercare programme is run by NOAH (Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity). The aftercare facility receives funding from NOAH, as well as from the nearby Phinda game reserve and from the Media in Education Trust Africa (MiETA). It is a community-based programme run at Ndlovu school. It serves about 258 vulnerable children from Ndlovu Primary School. It also takes in orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) from the surrounding schools including the local secondary school. Typically, the teachers from the schools alert the aftercare professional staff and volunteers to the fact that specific children are in need of the support offered by the aftercare facility. The children and their care givers (where applicable) are approached by the volunteers and invited to attend the aftercare. The aftercare programme runs from 13H30 until 16H00 during the school term.

The aftercare programme is comprised of:

- a meal served daily
- supervised homework
- sports on a Tuesday (mainly soccer and netball played on an piece of empty ground and supervised by volunteers)
- craft on a Wednesday (the craft work is taught by traditional crafters from the community – beadwork, weaving as well as pottery - some of which is sold to tourists)
- home visits undertaken on Fridays by volunteers from the aftercare facility
- opportunity for counselling

During the holidays the programme of activities continues, usually starting at 12h00 noon with a meal. The programme then ends with another meal at 16h00.

CASE STUDY 11 – AFTERCARE ORGANISED BY THE SCHOOL IN COLLABORATION WITH A COMMUNITY GROUP IN AN URBAN SETTING

Ngesi Primary is a fairly large school situated in a township of the East Rand of Gauteng. We have also already read about this school in Unit 4 when we discussed setting up networks of support.

One of the more active committees in the school is the Welfare committee, which spearheads the school's programmes for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children. It is led by Mrs Manana, a Grade 5 teacher. The work of the committee includes the aftercare programme, as well as overseeing the provincial nutrition programme and a food garden.

As we have already read, the aftercare at Ngesi Primary School started as an initiative of some grannies in the township. The grannies were motivated by their concern for learners left to their own devices in the afternoons after school. In particular they were anxious about the young girls, who were vulnerable to abuse by unemployed men who hang out in groups on the township streets. The women approached the school offering to set up an aftercare facility in which learners would be off the streets, in a safe place and have a space in which to do their homework. A classroom was made available for this purpose, and the supervised afternoon homework sessions began. A meal is provided and some Life Skills programmes are run for the learners. The women also encourage the children to talk about their problems and help them to wash their uniforms so they looked neat and tidy every day.

Later, with the involvement of the Department of Education, the aftercare programme became more formalised and the two caregivers were recognised as part of the school staff.



Comment

The principals in all three schools claimed that having aftercare for learners supported the work of the school in fundamental ways. It ensured that the basic needs of children (like safety, food and play) were met. The basic homework routines also helped learners to keep up with their academic work. This meant the teachers could effectively continue with teaching and learning because learners came to the classes prepared. While an aftercare programme cannot solve all the problems in the community, it can help to protect the children from harm.

In these and other examples of aftercare that were encountered in this study, we found that in their most basic form the aftercare facilities offered a safe place for children to stay after school. While the best examples offered structured homework support, a programme of extramural activities and recreation as well as an opportunity for psycho-social support.

Here is a quick overview of the different approaches the three schools took.

	Oxford	Ndlovu	Ngesi
Who attends?	- Learners from school, and - Young children from an Early Childhood Development Centre	- Learners from Ndlovu, and - Learners from the surrounding schools including the local secondary school	Learners from Ngesi, who do not have a safe place to stay in the afternoons
What is on offer?	- A meal - Supervised homework - Safe play and other activities - Referral for psycho-socio support	- A meal - Supervised homework - Sports and crafts - Home visits - Counselling and - Referral for more support	- A meal - Supervised homework - Informal counselling - Washing of clothes
Who manages the programme?	- The principal, - Grade R teacher - Parent volunteers	Outside organisations (NGOs) in liaison with the school	Group of interested outsiders (community initiative) in liaison with the school welfare committee
Where do the resources come from?	Within school community	Two NGOs, local business, outside funders in liaison with the school	Local community and local business in liaison with the school
How does it support the school	- Keep children safe and fed - Get homework done/ Academic support	- Keep children safe and fed - Get homework done - Emotional support - Home care visits	- Keep children safe and fed - Get homework done - Emotional support

It has been interesting to note that of the three case studies, only Oxford Primary relies on resources from within the school community, using one of its own teachers to run the aftercare programme. Oversight is provided by the school principal. In the other two schools the resources come primarily from outside the school and teachers do not play a leading role, although at Ndlovu the initial liaison with the NGOs and local business was facilitated by the principal's proactive approach. At Ngesi, it was the grannies from the community who were proactive and approached the school, offering their services. At both Ndlovu and Ngesi the aftercare programme is co-ordinated by people from outside the school although the school personnel do liaise with the outside agencies. In these two instances the aftercare initiative is seen as being separate from the school. Also, the programme in the afternoons seems less formal and more pastoral. After attending their lessons in the morning, the children get fed, have an opportunity to do their homework, have a safe place to pursue extra-curricular interests and also have some free time to play. The arrangements at Ndlovu and Ngesi primary schools exemplify the value added by external organisations and individuals and highlight the immense benefit that support networks can add to a school.





The benefits of aftercare support

These examples have shown some of the main benefits of aftercare support for learners and the school.

Benefits for learners	Benefits for the school
• Provision of a safe place in the afternoon which protects learners from possible abuse and exploitation • Space and time to do homework • Possibility of getting help with schoolwork from adults or other learners • Emotional support from caring adults • Have fun with other children by getting involved in games • Strengthen and develop physical and team building skills through participation in sports activities • Learn life skills through participation in a range of informal and structured activities that teach children how to cope with everyday situations • Have access to information about HIV and AIDS • Have access to counselling (psycho-socio support) • Have access to health care support • Receive food in the afternoon • Some access to home care	• Increased awareness of the needs of vulnerable children • Improved enrolment, attendance, discipline and learner achievement (lower drop out rates) • Strengthened relationships with parents and the wider community • Strengthened links with external organisations that can provide a range of support services to the school • Closer working relationship and sharing of resources with other schools • Improved access to resources for supporting vulnerable learners and teaching life orientation skills.

School-based aftercare support strategies

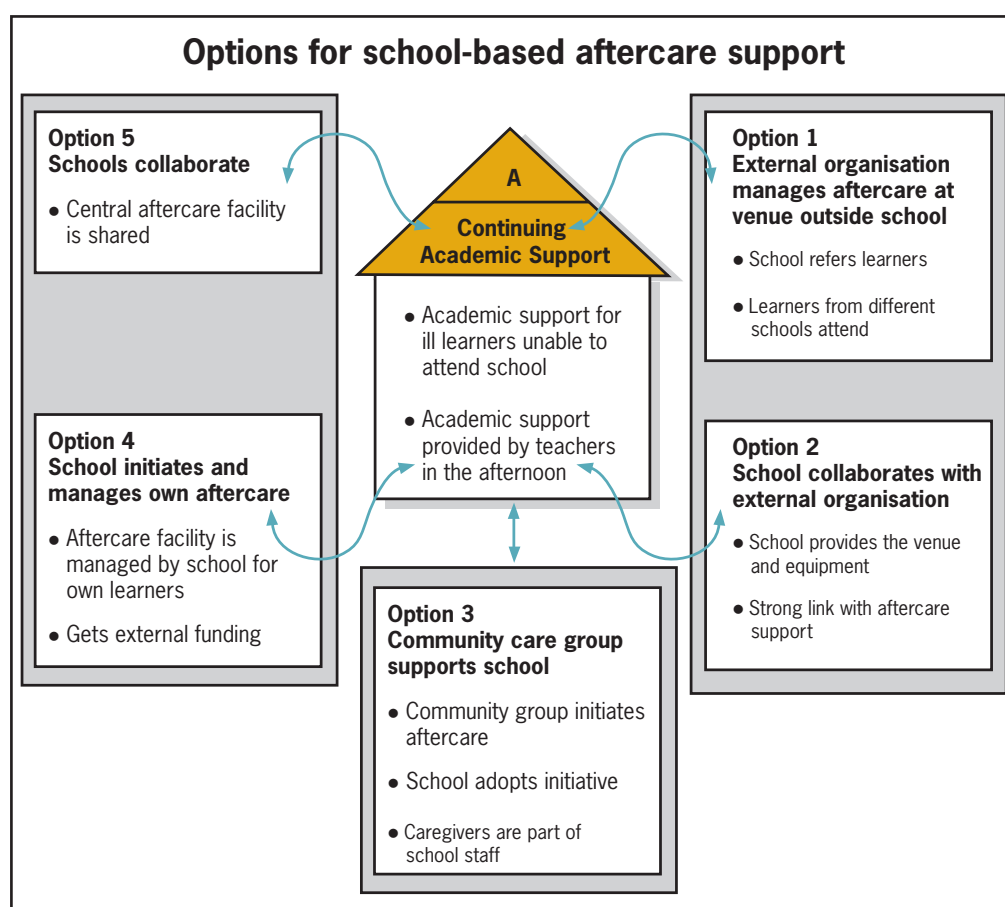
Should aftercare be considered an optional extra? Or should schools seriously see it as an integral part of providing access to quality education for vulnerable learners? In Unit 2 we discussed the implications for schools of several policies that clearly state that schools are responsible for providing quality education for all. This means that schools are required to maximise the participation of all learners in the curriculum and to minimise barriers to learning. In short, the education must be inclusive. Since barriers to learning and development are predominantly socio-economic in origin, schools have to make the necessary adjustments in the way the school programme is managed in order to meet the needs of vulnerable learners.

It is a known fact that vulnerable children often stay away from school not out of choice but because of the challenges in their home environment. During the course of this study we found no instances of academic support for learners who were unable to attend school either due to their own illness or for any other reason. While the *National Policy on HIV/AIDS for Learners, Students and Educators in Further Education and Training Institutions* (DoE:1999)² clearly states that schools are obliged to support continued learning where possible, none of the schools we visited had developed a system of how they would offer academic support.

Providing homework support is a common feature of the aftercare programmes we have looked at so far. In most cases, however, this is limited to setting a fixed time during which the learners can get the homework done. Only Oxford Primary offers a system where learners could get some form of academic and remedial support. The approach used by Oxford Primary is a simple one that could easily be instituted in any school. All it entails is that each teacher be required to stay on in their classroom for one hour after formal classes have ended each day and to purposively spend that time supporting learners who need additional academic support.

Adequate academic support to learners is intimately linked to the school's mission and core business of learning. Committed teachers integrate academic support in their day-to-day teaching. But when schools are faced with large numbers of learners who are unable to cope or who cannot always attend lessons, management is obliged to find alternative ways of providing academic support.

The following diagram gives an overview of the options that schools can use to provide additional academic and other important support to meet the needs of vulnerable learners.



Strategy A: Continuing academic support

We view strategy A as an extension of the school's responsibility to provide adequate academic support to learners. The strategy is two pronged and is comprised of:

- Academic support provided by teachers who are available in their classes for a specified time in the afternoon. During this time teachers are able to offer remedial support to learners as necessary. Many of the learners who participate in remedial support will probably be vulnerable learners.
- A clear plan that specifies how the school intends to accommodate the needs of learners who are unable to participate regularly in the school programme due to illness or for other legitimate reasons.

Academic support in the afternoon

Teachers are required to stay on for extracurricular activities in the afternoon and academic support could be included in the afternoon programme of activities. The burden can be shared among the teachers with teachers being allocated specific days on which they are to be on duty.

Academic support for vulnerable learners who are unable to attend school regularly

The National Policy on HIV and AIDS for Learners, Students and Educators in Further Education and Training Institutions states:

If and when learners with HIV or AIDS become incapacitated through illness, the school should make work available to them for study at home and should support continued learning where possible... Or provide older learners with distance education (Ibid pp 9-13).³

This applies to all learners who are unable to attend school for health or other legitimate reasons. This kind of support is probably more challenging to organise. In the first place you would have to identify those learners who would qualify for this kind of support. In Unit 3 we saw that by analysing the attendance records, the performance of learners on assessment tasks and the teacher's observations of learners during lessons, it is possible to get an idea about which learners may be at risk. A home visit would reveal the learner's home situation and could serve to confirm their vulnerability status.

After the initial assessment, various options for academic support would then have to be sought.

Here are some ideas:

- A parent, caregiver or other suitable member of the community can be approached to visit the learner and assist him/her to complete specified tasks set by the teacher. The tasks are part of a learning pack that also is comprised of helpful guidelines and other supportive learning materials. Completed tasks are sent to the responsible teacher who marks them and provides feedback to the learner. This feedback is mediated by the parent or caregiver for primary school children.
- A peer support group could be formed if there are a few vulnerable learners who live close together. Members of the group receive the learning packs and work together on specified tasks. A parent, caregiver, or other suitable member of the community could provide support to the group and oversee the completion of tasks.
- Vulnerable learners can attend an aftercare facility at the school or at a centre in the community. The school can organise remedial classes as part of the aftercare programme.

By providing additional academic support for vulnerable learners you can increase their chances of keeping up with the work, and strengthen their confidence and motivation, which are important internal factors for achieving success. These simple support actions by committed teachers can have a significant impact on the lives of vulnerable learners.



ACTIVITY

Activity 2

How can you implement Strategy A in your school?

Strategy A is not considered an optional extra but an integral part of the school's programme of academic support, especially for vulnerable learners.

Discuss the following questions with your management team and record the main points of your discussion.

1. What is your reaction to the notion that Strategy A is an integral part of the school's responsibility to provide academic support to learners?
2. What kind of resistance do you expect from teachers with regard to providing remedial support in the afternoon? How will you counter this possible resistance?
3. How would you go about implementing remedial afternoon support?
4. What ideas do you have for providing academic support to learners who are unable to come to school regularly?

You can draw on these ideas when you prepare the care and support plan in Unit 8.

Comment

Making Strategy A work will require strong leadership and an ability to mobilise the right kind of support. Whatever ideas you come up with must be workable in your context. So it might be useful to start implementing something that you have a fairly good sense will work well with minimum effort. Our visits to schools that offered aftercare showed that even homework supervision where little or no remedial academic support was offered was beneficial to vulnerable learners.

You will obviously have to deal with resistance on the part of teachers, since they would be reluctant to get involved in any activity that they perceive would extend their school day. Their initial reaction may also be negative, for they may think that this is yet another burden that they have to carry. You will have to pre-empt this type of reaction by preparing how you will communicate this new initiative to them. Help them to understand that academic support is required as part of the school's responsibility to vulnerable learners, and involve the teachers in coming up with ideas on how this might work. The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) Resolution No 7 - Workload of School Based Educators⁴ – requires that “all educators should be at school during the formal school day, which should not be less than seven hours per day”.



For most primary school teachers, an extra 45 minutes to one hour spent in the classroom each day supporting learners with homework or helping them to catch up missed work after formal classes are completed, will not require additional time over and above the required seven hours.

The equivalent type of support for secondary school learners may require teachers to stay on at school a little longer. However this type of academic support/extra and co-curricular duties, including pastoral duties, are in fact assumed in terms of the ELRC Resolution 7 to be part of the workload of school-based educators anyway!

Academic support for learners who are unable to attend school regularly needs a more considered approach and plan. You may want to set up a small task team under the supervision of the SMT to investigate what methods might be appropriate. A draft set of ideas can be discussed with teachers and can result in a definite plan of action.

School-based aftercare options

Academic support is not the only kind of support that vulnerable children need. Aftercare facilities are able to meet other important needs such as safety, nutrition, play and companionship as well as psycho-social support. In the diagram on page 131 we have seen a number of aftercare options. Let's examine the three main options and find out:

- what is involved in each aftercare option ?
- what kind of support external organisations can offer?
- what the role of school management is in successfully implementing any of these options?

1. External organisation manages the aftercare support (Options 1 and 2)

External organisations like NOAH, MiETA and Save the Children run aftercare programmes in different provinces in South Africa. Programmes are run at centres outside the school grounds as well as at school venues. In the next activity you can reflect on an initiative organised by Save the Children (UK) in the Free State.



ACTIVITY

Activity 3

What is the relationship between the external agency and the school in this aftercare programme?

When you read Case Study 12 on the following page, focus your attention on these three main questions:

1. What activities take place?
2. What is the organisation responsible for?
3. What is the school management responsible for?

We have already looked at the Zama Intermediate School Case Study 3 in Unit 2 when we examined the principal's role in managing a range of external interventions. This time we will be considering how the aftercare programme was established, and the SMT's collaboration with the NGO in running it.



CASE STUDY 12 – COLLABORATION WITH AN EXTERNAL ORGANISATION

The **Zama Intermediate School** aftercare programme started after a Department of Education official introduced the principal to Save the Children (UK). The NGO was already running support programmes for vulnerable children in some school districts of the Free State. In 2006 a contractual agreement between Save the Children (UK) and the school was signed and the *Caring Schools Programme* was introduced. Approximately 200 learners attend the aftercare programme, which always starts with a meal in the afternoon. Afterwards, a programme of activities begins. The programme is facilitated by the Save the Children Youth Facilitators and includes a homework slot.

During homework time the learners are grouped according to their grade and the Youth Facilitators and some teachers (members of the School-based Support Team) help learners with their homework. They also listen to the learners' reading. Once the homework is done the children can take part in a range of activities including drama, sport and games. Gardening activities are also undertaken.

On the basis of the contract that the school signed with Save the Children (UK), the school management team (SMT) and the school-based support team (SBST) are required to play an active role in supporting and guiding the Youth Facilitators to run the aftercare programme. This agreement encourages greater ownership and participatory decision making on the part of the school. The fact that the aftercare programme is based on a formal, contractual agreement seems to ensure that the care and support offered in the programme serves the needs of the learners and the needs of the school.

As part of the contract, Save the Children provides the school with specified funds per year. This payment is made in three parts: the first payment is made immediately after signing the contract; the next two payments are contingent on the school supplying the necessary progress reports to Save the Children. The school also receives materials, which can be used in the programme.

Comment

The aftercare initiative at Zama was started by an outside organisation and did not grow from an initiative within the school itself. This means that at first the school played a more passive role, providing a site where the Caring Schools Programme could take shape.

The contract with Save the Children, however, soon put the school into a more active support role. The school not only provided the location for the programme, but also made teachers from the SBST (School Based Support Team) available to help with written homework. In this way they could share their skills with the Youth Facilitators and also make sure the aftercare programme supported the curriculum of the school. The management of the school (principal and SMT) did not actively participate in aftercare. They were asked to support the programme in a different, more developmental way. They were given the task of supporting and guiding the Youth Facilitators, developing their capacity to organise the aftercare. This developmental role is crucial for making the programme sustainable, should Save the Children pull out. By supporting the Youth Facilitators it is hoped that the local community develops the capacity to support the school through the aftercare intervention.

The previous case study shows the role a school can play in an aftercare initiative that was set up and is managed by an external organisation. The school can collaborate in a variety of different ways with these types of initiatives. Here is a detailed description of another externally initiated aftercare programme, the NOAH's Ark Programme. It shows what the programme offers, what the organisation is responsible for and how the school can collaborate. The example below is taken from the Ndlovu Primary School Case Study 10 on page 125.

	The NOAH's Ark Aftercare Programme
What the programme offers	The aftercare programme runs from 13H30 until 16H00 during the school term. It is comprised of: • a meal served daily • supervised homework • sports on a Tuesday (mainly soccer and netball played on an piece of empty ground and supervised by volunteers) • craft on a Wednesday (the craft work is taught by traditional crafters from the community – beadwork, weaving as well as pottery- some of which is sold to tourists) • on Fridays volunteers from the Ark undertake home visits • opportunity for counselling The meal provided daily is a key component of the programme. The learners are also served food at 09h00 every day during the school holidays. Sometimes food parcels are provided for the children to take home in the holidays (instead of a meal being served at the school). Typically the meal consists of rice or samp or pap accompanied by red meat or chicken or soya mince or vegetables. E-pap, highly fortified mealie meal is also served. A structured homework session is built into the afternoon programme. A volunteer group of out of school youth that have matriculated, and some teachers help the learners with this. However, it appears that this is only done once a week. Additional activities, some with a therapeutic purpose facilitated by another NGO DramAidE⁵, are undertaken to help vulnerable learners to cope with their situations. This includes building memory boxes, participating in drama activities and role-play and having guest speakers speak on a range of motivational topics. On a Friday the Ark volunteers visit the homes of vulnerable learners. Each volunteer is responsible for three homes. They have a form called the Home Visit Checklist, which they fill in to record what they observe and on which any necessary follow up actions are recorded. This form covers a range of information from the appearance of the child and the home conditions, to who is present at the home and their relationship to the child. The form also covers information pertaining to any social assistance the child receives. The Ark manager employed by NOAH is a trained counsellor and is able to provide a counselling service. During the holidays the programme of activities continues usually starting at 12h00 with a meal. The programme then ends with another meal at 16h00.
The roles and responsibilities of the organization	The Ark has three paid employees: the manager, a child minder and a cook, who prepares the food daily. NOAH pays these three staff members a modest salary. In addition there are some community-based volunteers who do home visits and some out of school youth who have completed their Matric who offer homework support and supervise sporting activities. Although they are volunteers, NOAH has a policy of paying a small stipend or providing food parcels as an incentive to volunteers.

	The NOAH's Ark Aftercare Programme
The roles and responsibilities of the school	The teachers are most often responsible for identifying vulnerable learners and alerting the NOAH staff as to which learners need to be part of the aftercare programme. SGB members and other parents are responsible for collecting the firewood that is used for cooking the meals. The SGB chair makes sure that this is done. A large, empty classroom at Ndlovu Primary School is used as a dining room and the school has provided all the necessary crockery and cutlery. The Ark uses the school computer room as its activity room for both homework as well as the other activities such as the craftwork.

We can see from both the above examples that the level of collaboration between the external agency and the school can be minimal or it can be more involved. Where schools play an active role it is possible to create a stronger link between the aftercare programme and the school's efforts. The close collaboration can be of benefit to both the school and the aftercare project, and increase the chances of long-term sustainability of a programme such as this.

2. Community supported school-based aftercare initiative (Option 3)

We have already been introduced to the example of the caring grandmothers in Case Study 11 on page 126. This group of concerned *Gogos* organised themselves into a community care group called *Itso seng*, which was later registered as a CBO by the Department of Social Development. Let's look at how this small initiative developed into a school-based aftercare project. Here is a detailed description of what the programme offers, what support the community provides and how the school is involved.

	Community supported school-based aftercare programme
What the programme offers	Participation in the aftercare programme At the time that this case study was done, there were 72 learners, identified as vulnerable learners who participated in this programme. Children without parents or whose parents are unemployed were given preference. A register recording the names programme participants was kept and updated regularly. The programme The aftercare programme starts at 14H00 and operates from Monday to Friday during the school term. An empty classroom has been furnished for the aftercare programme to use. A weekly schedule is followed at the aftercare programme. • A register is taken of who is absent and who is present. • The learners are then provided with a meal. The menu consists mainly of porridge, rice, vegetable, mince meat, beef, chicken, fruit and fruit juice. • The activities undertaken include singing and prayer (usually before eating). Supervised homework is scheduled three days a week, while on the other two days reading is scheduled for thirty minutes. After the homework or reading, learners do gardening once a week, storytelling, sports and music appreciation activities. • Facilities are set up for boys and girls to wash themselves on alternate days. The caregivers also collect school uniforms that need to be washed and shoe polish is provided daily for the learners to clean their shoes.

	Community supported school-based aftercare programme
The roles and responsibilities of the external organisations (local business, community-based organisation (CBO) and local government structures).	Emperor's Palace (Hotel and Casino): - provides funds for running the aftercare and organises regular audits. - pays the employees who run the aftercare facility directly. The Department of Social Welfare assists the school with home visits, referrals of learners to relevant service providers, and facilitates access to social grants. Women from the community who started off the aftercare programme on a voluntary basis are now paid for their services by Emperor's Palace.
The roles and responsibilities of the school	The School Governing Body, principal and deputy principal are responsible for managing the funds. The deputy principal is responsible for keeping records and writing income and expenditure statements and an annual report accounting for the monies spent. The SGB then allocates money to the employees of the aftercare facility (the two caregivers and the cook) to buy food, soap, washing powder, gas, seeds for the garden etc. The school-based welfare committee, headed up by a Grade 5 teacher, provides guidance and support to the staff of the aftercare programme. In particular, they liaise with <i>Itsoseng</i> (which has grown into a well established CBO) around referrals and grants for vulnerable learners. The Welfare Committee is responsible for establishing and maintaining the vegetable garden at the school. The vegetables are used both for supplementing meals in the aftercare programme as well as for making up parcels to be sent home with needy learners. Two other teachers assist wherever they can. They generally come in to ensure that the aftercare programme is running smoothly and they monitor the quality of the food. They also present motivational talks on interesting topics.

This is a good example of an aftercare programme that started informally as a small venture by a group of concerned grandmothers and has now become integrated into the school set up. Regular funding from a large business makes it possible to offer a structured programme which has a daily schedule of activities and support for vulnerable learners. Links between the aftercare facility and the welfare committee of the school are strong and well managed and the staff involved show a high level of commitment. Effective accounting and financial management ensures that the funders are happy to continue supporting the programme.



3. The school initiates and manages the aftercare programme (Option 4)

The aftercare programme organised at Oxford Primary School (Case Study 9 on page 125) is a good example of an initiative started by the principal who is actively involved in managing the programme.

	School initiated and managed aftercare programme
What the programme offers	The aftercare programme runs from 13h30 – 18h00 daily during the school term and also operates during the school holidays. Approximately 30 children attend the aftercare. It is run by the Grade R teacher at the school with the help of one parent volunteer who comes in before the children get there to prepare the afternoon meal and then stays to assist with looking after the children. The aftercare facility is accommodated in a house on the school property which was originally built for school staff many years ago. It is fenced off from the rest of the school property and is a secure area with its own access gate and dedicated playing area with swings and various other types of playground equipment. The facility is also made available to some young children who attend an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centre (nursery school) that is situated across the road from the school and whose parents are unable to fetch them when the ECD centre closes at around midday. The aftercare offers a structured programme which consists of having a meal, a set period for the children to do their homework and a programme of activities including playing in the garden. The Grade R teacher supervises the homework and signs the children's homework book. She also liaises with the parents regarding any important school notifications. Additionally, she also links up with other teachers in the school if she picks up a need for remediation in any particular area, thus forming a useful feedback loop, which helps to ensure that learners are supported in both teaching and learning.

	School initiated and managed aftercare programme
Funding and external support	There is a monthly charge of R 250.00 to parents who make use of this facility for their children, but even this fee is negotiable and parents pay what they can. Since most of the parents – 65 - 70% – are unable to pay the school fees, the principal has set up a system whereby parents are asked to volunteer their services to the school in lieu of fees. As we have stated previously, this works on a rotational basis with ten parents working at the school for one term at a time. The principal assesses the parents' skill and language levels and deploys them in the school accordingly. Some parents help with cleaning, some look after the garden including the vegetable garden, two work as teachers, assistants in the classroom and even do substitution when a teacher is ill, and one assists with the school aftercare programme.
The roles and responsibilities of the school	The proactive nature of the principal has resulted in a range of initiatives being implemented to support vulnerable learners in this school. These include: • Staff receiving training around a range of issues pertaining to HIV and AIDS • Implementing a process for identifying vulnerable learners and following through with the necessary support actions • Making and maintaining records regarding vulnerable learners and follow up actions taken • Undertaking home visits where necessary • Facilitating and managing a counselling service • Putting in place a systematic process for vulnerable learner referrals • Establishing a large vegetable garden to provide food to the most needy learners • Running a clothes bank – a system for collecting items of the school uniform and providing them to needy learners • Integrating a schoolwork/homework support system in the daily school programme • Offering an aftercare facility at the school that runs during school time and during the holidays.

This is an example of what is possible when management plays a leadership role that is rooted in a value-base of care and which is backed up by good management practice. As a result of the aftercare intervention organised by the principal, the school enjoys a positive relationship with the community. This is particularly apparent in the way that parents are willing to participate in the volunteer system at the school.

A cluster of schools collaborate to provide aftercare (Option 5)

A variation on the above option is for schools that are located within close proximity of each other to collaborate and share an aftercare facility, which is open to all vulnerable learners from their schools. The aftercare programme could be delivered at one of the schools that is central and easily accessible to all learners. A collaborative agreement will specify the nature of the programme offered, where funds will be drawn from to pay for the expenses of running the aftercare support, and what the responsibilities are of the partner schools.

Critical success factors for managing aftercare programmes

All the examples we have examined show what schools can do and how communities and external agencies can assist the school to offer a variety of support services after school for the benefit of vulnerable learners. We can learn both from the successes that were achieved as well from the shortcomings that were noticed. It seems that factors, which increase the likelihood of successful management of an aftercare initiative, include the following.

- *Dedicated and strong leadership and management.* Where principals were dynamic and showed good management practices they were able to recognise external opportunities and negotiate beneficial agreements with external agencies. Frequently schools that experience the biggest challenges are the least equipped to deal with them. Building leadership and management capacity at schools is thus of critical importance for the success of any initiative to provide support for vulnerable learners.
- *Active involvement of the school* in small community initiatives as well as large projects run by external organisations can build a symbiotic relationship that is beneficial for both the project and the school. A sound collaborative relationship can also promote long-term sustainability of the aftercare support.
- *The importance of contractual agreements* between the school and external agencies. For example the agreement used by Save the Children (UK) requires participation in the project by every level of school management. Their active involvement is directly linked to funding becoming available. Clear terms and roles and responsibilities create a solid framework for collaboration between the school and the external provider. This also applies to initiatives in which schools collaborate to organise a central aftercare facility.
- *The importance of getting sufficient funds* to cover all the costs of the aftercare programme. The aftercare programmes we looked were all reliant on external sources of funding. It is essential for the success of the venture that the sources of funding are diverse and reliable.
- *The importance of skilled financial managers.* Building the relevant skills of those who are vested with the responsibility of budgeting, raising and managing the funding is critical. Capacity building courses such as 'Finance for Non-financial Managers' should be prioritised.
- *The central role of nutrition.* The benefits of providing food for learners at the aftercare facility cannot be underestimated. It offers a huge incentive for learners to participate in the programme.
- *The importance of offering a multi-faceted programme.* Since the needs of vulnerable learners are varied and complex, it is necessary to offer a variety of services such as play activities, homework supervision, meals, life orientation skills training, gardening, counselling, home visits and referral system for grants.

What aftercare strategy is suitable for your school?

The case studies that we have examined have shown that aftercare is separate from the programme of learning and teaching that takes place at schools during the day. It is helpful to see the two sets of programmes as distinct. We have already reflected on the academic support role that schools are expected to carry out in their normal daily schedule. We referred to the academic support that teachers could provide for a short period in the afternoon as *Strategy A*. Where feasible, teachers from the school could get involved in offering academic support in an aftercare facility. But it is essential to see the academic support as an integral part of the school's core responsibility and not as an optional extra. By now you will have some idea of how you might implement an academic support strategy at your school.

In addition to the academic support provided by teachers in the afternoon, the school can get involved in collaborating with an existing aftercare programme, working with other schools in the area to set up a common aftercare facility, or set up and manage their own aftercare support programme for vulnerable learners. This programme offers varied support activities designed to meet the needs of vulnerable learners. You have seen what others are doing to provide aftercare for vulnerable learners. The ideas can stimulate you to reflect on what you can do at your school given the resources and capacity you have, and the opportunities that exist in your community.



Activity 4 Identify an aftercare strategy for your school

The challenge for you and your management team is to come up ideas for a workable aftercare strategy. This is essentially an initial planning activity that consists of two main tasks which are described on the following page.

Task 1

This is a simple research task that a couple of members of the SMT can carry out. An important first step in finding the most suitable strategy is to investigate what kind of aftercare support exists in your community, and how individuals, businesses and organisations in the community can support the school in an aftercare initiative. These questions can be used to guide the investigation. The findings are recorded in a short written report.

1. What kind of aftercare support exists in the community? Ask teachers, parents, caregivers, leaders of Faith Based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs operating in your area, clinics, and community development facilitators. Record your findings and give a clear description of the support that is being provided, who is involved, and what their contact details are.
2. What kind of support can you expect from individuals, businesses and organisations in the area? Use similar contacts to get this information and give details about the nature of the support that is potentially available, names and contact number of relevant people.

Task 2

The management team meets for a planning activity, which entails brainstorming, critically reflecting on the written report, and compiling an initial set of ideas for aftercare.

The resources you need for the planning activity include:

- Use **Tool 23: What kind of aftercare service can your school offer?** to record your ideas
- The written report prepared in Task 1
- Ideas from the case studies in this unit.



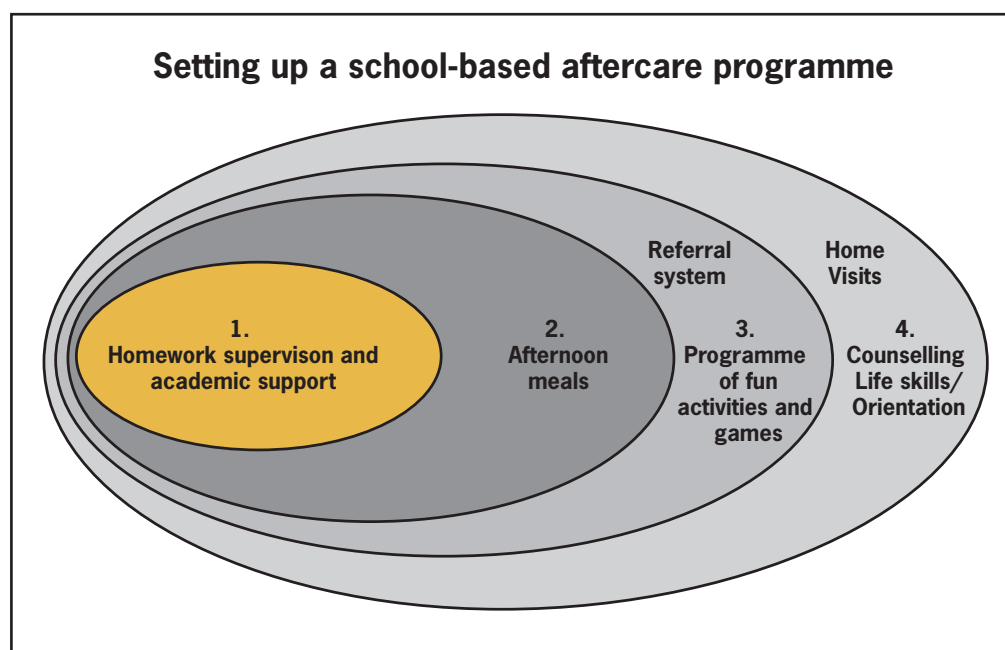
You can draw on the ideas you compiled about aftercare when you prepare the care and support plan in Unit 8.

Comment

Before you even consider aftercare support it is necessary to examine the nature and the scope of the challenge of providing such support at your school. How many vulnerable learners do you have at your school? How do you establish whether they are eligible for participating in the aftercare programme? What are their most urgent needs? What are the implications of setting up, managing and maintaining such a programme? The examples you looked in this unit will have given you a good idea of what is involved.

Your choice of aftercare option is dependent to a large extent on the environment in which your school is located. If there is already an existing aftercare programme run by an external agency, the community or even another school, you could decide that it would be beneficial to look for ways of collaborating with this programme. If no aftercare support exists, then a strong option would be to set up an aftercare programme. You could work with another school in the immediate area, or with the community and involve various people such as parents, out of school and unemployed young people and retired people. Use whichever option you think is most appropriate given the opportunities and constraints of your context. Consider carefully how to use the ideas you have generated to create a workable plan that will result in positive actions.

You do not necessarily have to implement an aftercare programme that offers the full range of services at once. You can use a phased approach whereby you build up the programme gradually as depicted graphically in the diagram below.



You could start with a few activities that you can manage easily with resources that you are assured of. For example, you could begin with afternoon homework supervision, since this might be quite easy to organise. You may be able to get willing parents involved at the start and one of the teachers could liaise with the parents regularly. It might also be possible to get sponsorship from a local business to offer children fruit, a cool drink and sandwiches at the beginning. Later, as you are able to raise regular funding, you can offer light meals. In a phased approach you build the programme up step by step. A challenge in a phased approach is to keep your eye on the big picture and keep expanding the range of support and services and not become complacent by sticking with a programme that offers minimum support.

You could, of course, plan the full range of activities right from the start. This approach requires that you have the necessary funding and capacity to do so. It demands careful planning and a huge input of time and effort on the part of management, because there is so much to organise at once. A challenge in this approach is to 'fly' too quickly without having the necessary resources or the required infrastructure; in the process you might set yourself up for failure.



Tool 24

Some ideas for aftercare activities

This Tool will help you think about a possible range of creative activities that could be offered as part of an aftercare programme at your school.

Despite the obvious possibilities and advantages of having an afterschool programme, there are many educators in management positions and teachers who are resistant to the idea of setting up school-based aftercare. Although they worry about the needs of vulnerable children in their midst and want to respond, they feel incapable of extending themselves because they are barely coping with their existing school and home responsibilities. If they start an aftercare initiative they are afraid that they will be overwhelmed by the new demands. It is helpful to pay attention to these reservations and to find creative ways of working with external partners and harnessing support from the community. Principals must always be careful not to overextend their teachers since this would seriously undermine their ability to carry out their teaching responsibilities.

However, we have seen how principals and teachers in other schools across the country have managed to get support from outside agencies and individuals and have worked with a range of partners. Successful aftercare partnerships can provide a more varied programme of support to vulnerable learners than is possible for an individual school. Well-managed aftercare programmes do not benefit only vulnerable learners and the school but they have a positive knock-on effect on the community.

Key points

Several aftercare initiatives we examined revealed the different ways in which aftercare programmes are set up and managed, the activities and support that are organised, the roles and responsibilities of school management, and the nature of the support provided by NGOs, government departments, businesses, parents and the community.

In Unit 6 we explored:

- The benefits of aftercare support for learners.
- The types of aftercare support strategies that can be organised.
- What is involved in managing school-based aftercare programmes.
- Which aftercare strategy is most likely to be suitable for your school.

Some important insights we gained:

1. Aftercare and support with schoolwork is considered to be one of the interventions, together with basic nutrition and psycho-socio support, that is a precondition for successful learning and teaching. By getting involved in organising aftercare for vulnerable learners, schools can enhance their learning capacity, increase the likelihood of improved performance and boost school attendance.
2. It is part of the school's core responsibility to provide academic support for learners who are not coping or who do not attend school because of illness or for other legitimate reasons. Many of these will be vulnerable learners. But remedial academic support is not the same as aftercare. The aftercare programme is much broader and could incorporate academic support, which remains the responsibility of the school.
3. The successful aftercare programmes we looked at were multi-faceted and integrated a range of support services such as homework support, a nutrition programme, food garden, a referral system for grants and home visits to families of vulnerable children.
4. A variety of approaches can be used to organise aftercare programmes. Schools can link up and collaborate with existing aftercare facilities organised and managed by external organisations; they can integrate community support initiatives into the school system; and they can set up and manage an aftercare programme internally. Given the opportunities and constraints that exist in the school's environment, management has to decide which option is most suitable.
5. School management has to look for assistance with funding and other forms of support both from within and outside of their communities to implement aftercare support for vulnerable learners. Regular funding is a prerequisite for organising a successful aftercare programme and therefore proper budgeting and planning are important.
6. Contractual agreements that specify terms and clarify roles and responsibilities are essential for successful collaboration between the school and external partners.
7. Recognising that good leadership and management are the key to successful and sustainable aftercare programmes, building leadership and management capacity at schools is critical.

UNIT SEVEN

Counselling support for vulnerable learners

Introduction

It is natural for children to have emotional needs. All children seek love and affection and a person whom they can trust. Children need acceptance, stability and boundaries and also require help with understanding the changes that happen to them as they grow up. When children grow up in stable and loving families, they will instinctively look to their parents or caregivers to meet these needs. They will grow up taking the stability and love for granted, unaware of how much of their wellbeing depends on the fact that their emotional needs are being met.

However, if children's lives have been disrupted by HIV and AIDS and other factors which leave them vulnerable or orphaned, they are most likely to grow up without the physical, emotional and psychological security that families should provide. If their emotional needs are not being met, they may easily feel worthless and become unhappy. Such unhappiness may in turn lead to aggression, anxiety or depression. These are all factors that may result in children finding it difficult to concentrate in class. Often when children struggle with school work, they become disruptive and difficult to manage, or they just withdraw and switch off. Teachers therefore need to be aware that these 'difficult' behaviours may be a sign that children are emotionally vulnerable and that they need psycho-social support.

Our study showed that many schools are aware of the problem of orphans and vulnerable learners. This was generally both because vulnerable learners were identified by the more obvious external signs of vulnerability such as, hunger or neglect, but also in some cases, because teachers had identified disruptive classroom behaviours as a symptom of their learner's vulnerability.

Teachers interact directly with learners in the classroom on a daily basis. For this reason they are well placed to play an important role in the school-based support system. First, because of this interaction, teachers are able to identify those who are vulnerable. Second, also as a result of their ongoing contact with the learners, the teachers are in a good position to listen to their learners' concerns and to offer support in the form of *basic counselling*. Third, teachers can support vulnerable learners if they know *where* and *how to refer* them for professional psycho-socio support.

However, the teacher's involvement does need to be carefully managed, for, as has been stated before, teachers have a big enough job just teaching children without being additionally burdened by being expected to become counsellors as well. Added to this is the fact that unless the teachers have had relevant training, it is not appropriate to allow them to engage with distressed learners because they may (unintentionally) cause more emotional harm than good.

This unit explores the role of the school management team (SMT) in managing a strategy for the school to identify and support vulnerable learners holistically. This strategy will involve teachers at the level of the classroom and will examine a simple system for referring vulnerable learners to the appropriate services for help.

Key questions

This unit explores the following questions:

1. What are the benefits of counselling support for learners?
2. What types of counselling support strategies can be organised?
3. What is involved in managing school-based counselling programmes?
4. Which counselling strategy is likely to be most suitable for your school?

Outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Understand why a holistic approach to support involving psycho-social support and counselling is important.
- Identify the different types of psycho-social support strategies available and what is involved in organising each one.
- Identify individuals and external organisations in the community that can offer counselling to vulnerable learners.
- Identify the most suitable approach for your school to access and manage counselling for your learners.



The importance of psycho-social support

Up until this point in the guide, we have largely focused on managing strategies that support the physical needs of orphans and other vulnerable children. But activities that support orphans and other vulnerable children need to do more than simply meet their physical needs. They also need to address their emotional and psychological needs as well as their needs for social interaction. These are termed *psycho-social* needs.

In this unit we therefore expand our examination of various support strategies to include psycho-social support. We believe that a caring school is one that tries to ensure that learners are supported, not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically as well, thus providing a holistic approach to support.

The extract from the Alliance NGO website below provides a simple account of what psycho-social support is and why it is important in the context of supporting orphans and vulnerable children.

WHAT IS PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT?

Psycho-social support has been defined as an ongoing process of meeting emotional, social, mental and spiritual needs, all of which are considered essential elements of meaningful and positive human development. It goes beyond simply meeting children's physical needs. It places great emphasis on children's psychological and emotional needs, and their need for social interaction. Many programmes of support for orphans and other vulnerable children have focused almost completely on their physical needs only. Programmes which aim to meet the psycho-social and physical needs of a child are called holistic.

Orphans and other vulnerable children require psycho-social support because of the trauma and stress they have experienced. Trauma is an emotional shock that produces long-lasting harmful effects on the individual. Parental illness and death are causes of emotional trauma for children and young people. Stress is an emotional condition experienced or felt when an individual has to cope with unsettling, frustrating or harmful situations. It is a disturbing sense of helplessness, which is uncomfortable and which creates uncertainty and self-doubt. Psycho-social support aims to help children and young people cope with emotional trauma and stress.

(www.ovcsupport.net)¹



Resilience refers to the positive capacity of people to cope with stress and trauma. Counselling helps learners build resilience.

In a caring school environment teachers quickly realise if children are feeling unhappy, and they often try to offer some form of comfort and advice. But apart from a demonstration of care and concern, facilitating access to skilled counselling is one of the main activities that a school can undertake to support learners coping with emotional trauma and stress.

In the course of our study we visited some schools where the SMT understood the need to set up procedures for identifying and supporting learners with emotional problems. In some cases schools attempted to provide some *basic* counselling for distressed learners. But this type of counselling was mostly provided on an *ad hoc* or informal basis by teachers who were not trained counsellors, and who listened to the children out of concern for them. However, in two cases, in particular, we noticed that systematised counselling procedures had been set up. Here counselling was provided at school level by a person specifically trained to do the job, although *how* it was implemented was very different in each case.

Let's explore these two cases and see what lessons can be learnt and how these learnings can be transferred and adapted (if necessary) to help schools to offer a sustainable counselling service.

Counselling strategies for vulnerable learners



Activity 1 Exploring school-based counselling support

The experience of Zwelitsha Primary School is interesting because it is a school-based counselling service that is both initiated and run by the school. As you read the case study on the following page keep these two questions in mind:

1. What are the benefits of having the emotional needs of learners taken seriously by the school?
2. How does counselling link to other care initiatives in the school?

CASE STUDY 13 – SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELLING FOR LEARNERS

Zwelitsha Primary School is a township school located just outside Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. The school deputy principal, Mrs Dladla, is in charge of the counselling service since she holds a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree in Guidance and Counselling and has also attended several workshops on counselling run by the provincial Department of Education. She told the story of a learner who had almost dropped out of school at Grade 3 level due to HIV and AIDS related illness. The learner was said to be sick and almost bed-ridden three years ago before someone from the school visited her home. The school got medical support for the learner and provided the right type of food. The school also got sound counselling services for her, which resulted in her not only accepting her condition, but also getting to appreciate that it is possible to lead a normal life even if she is HIV positive. After getting the right support, the learner managed to regain her health and come back to school. The school continued to provide her with ongoing counselling and support with her academic work. At the time of the research, the learner's physical condition had dramatically improved. Her school performance was said to be normal and she was doing well in Grade 6. The school had made a difference in this child's life. The poor grandmother, with whom the learner stays, regards Zwelitsha School as more than just a learning centre; to her and others in the community, the school is a saviour and a source of hope. According to the principal of Zwelitsha School, there are 17 HIV+ learners in the school and all of them are getting medical, food and counselling support through the school. They are free to come to the school principal and deputy principal if they need to talk about their problems. Their parents and guardians also do the same. Because the school has been so effective in helping these needy learners, members of the surrounding community now feel free to come to the school and talk openly about their HIV or AIDS status and related problems to Mrs Dladla and to the principal. The school, in turn, refers these people for relevant assistance, mainly to facilities of the Department of Health. In so doing, the school observes high ethical standards regarding matters of confidentiality.

Comment

The main benefit of counselling at Zwelitsha was that it helped learners to manage their problems and build resilience. Resilient learners are better able to thrive in the face of difficult circumstances, and continue to grow and learn. This is especially true if the counselling acknowledges learners' feelings and nurtures their self-esteem. When learners feel accepted and supported, it is easier for them to manage their negative emotions in daily life. Counselling, together with practical interventions like school nutrition, aftercare and social support can also make learners more resilient by encouraging them to find practical solutions to their problems and by nurturing their coping skills.

At the heart of Zwelitsha's case study is the realisation that the educating function of the school can be effective only if the emotional, physiological and psychological needs of the learner are adequately taken care of. The counselling offered at Zwelitsha Primary was thus part of a wider and systematic care response. The emotional needs of learners were not seen as isolated, but were immediately related to their deeper psychological and social roots. The school also offered support for learners and their families, trying to strengthen the capacity for care at home. Although the school offered food and helped with medication, they also had a referral system so learners and their families could get additional help from other social services, like the Department of Health.

The counselling service at Zwelitsha Primary is championed and driven by Mrs Dladla

with the support of the principle, but in fact, this is only one aspect of the care and support system at the school. It is therefore important that we examine exactly how this counselling initiative fits into the *whole* care and support system at Zwelitsha.

Zwelitsha Primary School has, as its vision, the creation of a caring school in which all children feel included and in which all children can succeed. This vision has been actualised, not only through individual acts of kindness, but through the principal and the SMT's management approach. This is reflected in the principal's open door policy, as well as in the role played by management to create systematised and sustainable, school-based structures and processes to support all forms of caring in the school.

Activity 2

Components of, and processes for, managing an integrated psycho-social support programme



ACTIVITY

Read the description of the overall approach to counselling and support established at Zwelitsha Primary by the SMT and the SGB (Case Study 13 continued on the following page). Take note of the various components and processes that make this a well integrated and holistic system of support.

Once you have read this case study, workshop with members of your SMT the lessons learnt from Zwelitsha Primary that you could adapt and/or apply to your school context. Think about how you could strengthen and expand any existing components of support in your school. Also think about how you might go about identifying individuals and organisations in your community that could help you achieve an expanded counselling and care programme of action at your school.

CASE STUDY 13 – SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELLING FOR LEARNERS (continued)

The role of the School Based Support Team

Zwelitsha Primary School has a School Based Support Team (SBST) consisting of seven educators and some School Governing Body (SGB) members that is responsible for taking care of the counselling needs of learners. Both the school principal and her deputy (Mrs Dladla) are part of this team, with Mrs Dladla playing the central role of coordinator. Most of the teachers in the committee were selected on the basis of their interest in providing care and support to vulnerable learners. The establishment of this School Based Support Team demonstrates the awareness the school has for the need for this kind of support initiative in the school. The main role of this team is to work with individual teachers in the school in identifying learners in need of special care, including counselling and then facilitating access to counselling support.

Identifying vulnerable learners

Teachers identify these learners by following the patterns in their school performance (e.g. a drop in performance) changes in their behaviour, and through general interaction with learners (taking a personal interest and talking to learners). This process of identifying vulnerable learners is something that is systematised in the school. All teachers are briefed on the need to be aware of learners exhibiting signs of neglect or difficult behaviours. Identifying vulnerable learners is seen as a role that all teachers are required to play. Once a learner is identified as being in some way vulnerable or in need of support, they are referred to the coordinator of the School Based Support Team (Mrs Dladla). She then interacts with the learner in order to try to establish the nature and source of the problem/s being faced by them.

Keeping proper records

Once the nature of the problem is established, the case is recorded in the school Intervention Book. The details of all learners deemed to have special educational or emotional needs are recorded in this book. This record is confidential and is kept in the principal's office.

Counselling

If possible, the principal invites the parents/guardians of vulnerable learners to her office to discuss the problem/s and the needs of the child and the support action that the SBST proposes to implement (e.g. referral to the school counselling committee, referral for external specialised counselling, or medical referral, etc). The proposed course of action is recorded in this book and all subsequent interventions are also recorded – this includes providing a detailed account of the nature of the action or intervention, who is responsible for it and when and how often the action is taken.

Tracking the learner's progress

The learner's progress is carefully tracked, so that the principal can see to it that the learner's needs are being met. The principal and SBST Coordinator schedule regular reviews of the cases recorded in the Intervention Book.

Confidentiality

Mrs Dladla notes that client confidentiality is a very important element of counselling. Reporting on learners' progress has to be carefully managed. The amount of detail discussed depends on the nature of the case – if the case is of a more generic nature e.g. a learning difficulty, a number of teachers may participate. However, if the case pertains to a child's HIV status or deals with issues of abuse which are highly confidential, Mrs Dladla may provide only a general sense of the child's progress without revealing any specifics.

CASE STUDY 13 – SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELLING FOR LEARNERS (continued)**A sick bay and a space for counselling**

A dedicated room with a bed and a place for storing the medical aid kit and other equipment was established in the school. This room is also used for counselling services. This ensures privacy during counselling.

A referral system

An important aspect of the counselling programme at Zwelitsha is the fact that the school has been able to set up a referral system. For instance, through the regional South African Social Services Agency office, specialised psychotherapy may be organised for those learners who need it.

School links with the local clinic and nearby hospitals

The principal and deputy have established support linkages with the local clinic. A trained nurse from the local clinic visits the school regularly and assists in identifying learners who need special medical attention. She also provides support to the SBST. The nurse brings health education resources like posters and pamphlets and helps in disseminating information to learners.

Links have also been established with some of the state hospitals in Port Elizabeth. Here the principal and deputy have managed to ensure that very needy learners are able to access free medical care and medication. By establishing relations with particular doctors, HIV+ learners receive expert advice on diet and generally on how best to manage their health at school and at home.



Having a School-based Support Team (SBST) to identify and assist with support for OVC is a requirement set out in the National Education Policy on HIV/AIDS for Learners and Educators in Public Schools (DoE: 1999)²



Comment

Zwelitsha Primary School is a good example of a school in which a culture of caring and support has been developed. The starting place for this is the vision that the school has of itself as a site of caring, a vision that has systematically been translated into action by the principal, the SMT and the SGB working together. Secondly, the leadership of this school has been able to communicate the vision to the teachers and parents of their school community and by so doing, secure their buy-in and their support. Thirdly, the SMT and SGB and its subcommittee, the School Based Support Team have built on and strengthened the efficacy of their own existing resources and expertise by making links with outside organisations - the clinic, hospitals and counselling services. Finally, all the components of this support system are carefully managed by those entrusted with the management and leadership of the school. Have you noticed the principal and deputy principal's involvement in making key links and monitoring the progress of learners who need support?

The teachers at Zwelitsha are required to be alert to learners who show signs and symptoms of abuse, stress, hunger, ill health or any other barriers to learning that may require special intervention. This practice has gone a long way in helping to identify learners with problems early so that measures to mitigate the effects of various problems on learning can be taken early enough. The teachers work closely with the School Based Support Team which is responsible for following through on the various support actions required.

It is interesting to note how Zwelitsha used the 1999 DoE policy on HIV and AIDS to help set up the structures and systems designed to respond to the needs of their learners, in particular those affected by HIV and AIDS. The policy requires that the SGB set up, as one of its sub-committees, the School Based Support Team, to support vulnerable learners.

Having a system not only for identifying vulnerable learners but for recording, tracking and updating information on learners and supportive interventions and progress made, is a key aspect of good management. The use of a confidential Intervention Book at Zwelitsha to document and record any concerns regarding vulnerable children is a simple, cheap and yet powerful management tool that helps with the sort of record keeping that enables good management. Another positive feature of the care system at Zwelitsha is the conscious effort that the principal and her deputy put into communicating with staff and parents, thus keeping them involved in all processes, and eliciting their support.

There are many benefits of having clear management processes like those described in the Case Study 13. Firstly, they enable the school to provide regular support for vulnerable learners. Secondly, they protect teachers from feeling overwhelmed. Thirdly the processes also ensure effective referrals and professional help. The greatest benefit, however, is that a well managed 'care system' nurtures caring relationships among teachers and learners (as well as their families), and this in turn builds a more caring culture in the school.



The main purpose for collecting, storing and processing information is to promote proper planning.

Confidentiality and care

From our research it is clear that the issue of confidentiality is a complex one. On the one hand we came across those who were anxious that what they had said in confidence would not be respected, and, on the other, we came across those who almost seem to use the issue of confidentiality as an excuse for not getting involved.

We found some situations where learners and teachers had negative feelings about offering counselling at school level. They said they would not like to talk about their problems at school, because they saw schools as hotbeds of gossip. This made us realise that gossip was a problem and that it can make learners who disclose their problems become more vulnerable than before. This is especially true when learners' problems (e.g. like HIV in the family) feed prejudice and discrimination in the school.

At the same time, we also came across school principals and teachers who said that that they were reluctant to approach learners and their families, even when they had observed that the learners were struggling and thought that they may be affected by HIV and AIDS, because they were worried that by so doing, they would be breaking confidentiality. However, concerns about confidentiality should not be a reason for not getting involved or for not supporting vulnerable learners.

If we want schools to offer effective counselling support for vulnerable learners, we need to ensure that vulnerable learners are approached and supported, but that at the same time, confidentiality is respected. We need to look at how information is managed at school level. We need to ensure that principals or those entrusted with sensitive information, can ensure confidentiality.



Silence around HIV and AIDS fuels stigma



Activity 3 Confidentiality is about managing information

Read through Case Study 13 again and think about how information is managed at the Zwelitsha Primary School.

1. Do you think the approach at Zwelitsha ensures confidentiality?
2. What else do you think the principal could do?
3. When do you think it is important to break confidentiality?
4. How should such a situation be managed so it does not undermine the trust learners have in the school?

Comment

When children talk to teachers about their problems, this should be kept confidential. This means the teacher cannot talk about it to anybody else without the learner's permission. If teachers want to report a learner's problem to the principal or a school-based counselling committee, for example, they must tell the learner what they are planning to do.

At Zwelitsha the principal tried to keep information confidential by keeping the Intervention Book in her office, so not everybody could get to it. Also, she tried to ensure confidentiality by keeping the circle of people who would work with the confidential information small. While all teachers were asked to look out for vulnerable learners, only Mrs Dladla interviewed them about their problems and only Mrs Dladla and the principal knew what was in the Intervention Book.

Another thing the principal could do is to challenge people who gossip at the school. If teachers gossip in the staffroom, the issue of gossip should be addressed and stopped. If learners gossip the matter also needs to be properly addressed. It would help to talk to the whole school about why gossip is harmful and how it can destroy trust. It may be a good idea to include the issue of gossip in your school code of conduct so that everybody is made aware of it.

Some schools use a post box into which learners can drop a note (even anonymously) to let teachers or the principal know about their problems in a safe and confidential way. Once a week a designated teacher or the principal opens the box and reads the notes. They know that the information has to be kept confidential and that they are tasked with addressing or referring the problem to the appropriate person or organisation for help.

There are times, when teachers or counsellors feel they need to break confidentiality. This can happen, for example, when learners are abused or threaten to hurt themselves. In such a case teachers must tell learners that they have to break confidentiality and explain to the learners why. The teacher must make sure the learner is safe and protected, when the information is disclosed. Confidentiality is therefore an important feature of any counselling initiative at any school. It builds trust in the school. It also allows learners to be honest about their problems and this in turn makes it easier for the school to come up with an effective and caring response.

Finding external help with counselling

Not all principals will have skilled and dedicated teachers like Mrs Dlada on their staff. Many schools that try to offer basic counselling find that it is not effective, because confidentiality and trust are low, or because it is done only on an informal basis, without proper training, resources and time. While it is true that all teachers can support learners emotionally by being sympathetic listeners, there are many cases in which learners need more sustained support. Children who are traumatised or grieving, need more than a kind ear. As we have said before, if teachers have to contain emotional trauma without proper training, they might unintentionally make things worse if they respond in an inappropriate way. Also, they themselves might become traumatised and overwhelmed.

These difficulties, however, do not mean that teachers cannot set up a 'care system' and offer systematic counselling at school. What it does mean, however, is that schools that do not have skilled counsellors among their staff or parents will need to set up a support network that brings these skills into the school. The experience of Oxford Primary School offers us insights into how this can be done. It is an example of how a caring and proactive school principal set up a counselling partnership with a professional organisation outside of the school.



ACTIVITY

Activity 4 Harnessing professional skills

As you read the following Case Study about Oxford Girls' Primary School, take note of how the principal manages the counselling service at her school.

1. How is she harnessing professional skills in the community to benefit her school?
2. What can you learn from her experience?
3. If you reflect on Case Studies 13 and 14, what common lessons can you see?

We have discussed Oxford Primary earlier on in this guide in relation to both nutrition and aftercare support strategies. We will now look at how the principal and staff at this school manage counselling support.

CASE STUDY 14 – MAKING LINKS, SETTING UP COUNSELLING SUPPORT WITH AN EXTERNAL ORGANISATION

We have previously noted that **Oxford Girls' Primary School** has a large number of vulnerable and traumatised children among their learners. Many of the learners are affected by HIV and AIDS and a large number are refugees. The principal realised that even though a number of the teachers had Life Skills training, they did not have the skills to support the children in their psychological needs. The principal therefore carefully investigated organisations that offer counselling services in the areas that are in close proximity to her school and identified an organisation that would assist her - the Johannesburg Parent and Child Counselling Centre (JPCCC). She then approached this non profit organisation with the proposal of working together and a contractual agreement with the JPCCC was set up. The precise nature of the services to be offered is described in a contractual agreement. It includes:

- A description of the JPCCC counsellors and their skills
- The professional supervision of the counsellors
- The day, time and duration of the weekly visits
- The nature of the service offered
- Confidentiality
- How feedback to the principal and staff would be managed
- The cost of services
- Who would pay for additional costs
- Duration of the contract
- The school's input into the service.

The school took responsibility for identifying and referring children to the counselling service and for fundraising for the service. The principal also took responsibility for communicating with the parents and the children's caregivers about the need for the counselling support service, thus securing the parents' buy-in and support.

The professional counsellors in turn agreed to come to the school to do the counselling and to remain accountable to the principal for their work. Their regular feedback and advice helped not only the children, but also the teachers to cope with the high incidence of trauma at the school. When the principal decided to look for a professional counselling service, she was not happy to simply 'hand over' the children to outside counsellors. She understood that the school was the site of care and support in the children's lives and therefore made sure that the work of the outside service provider was managed as part of the school's systematic care response.

Comment

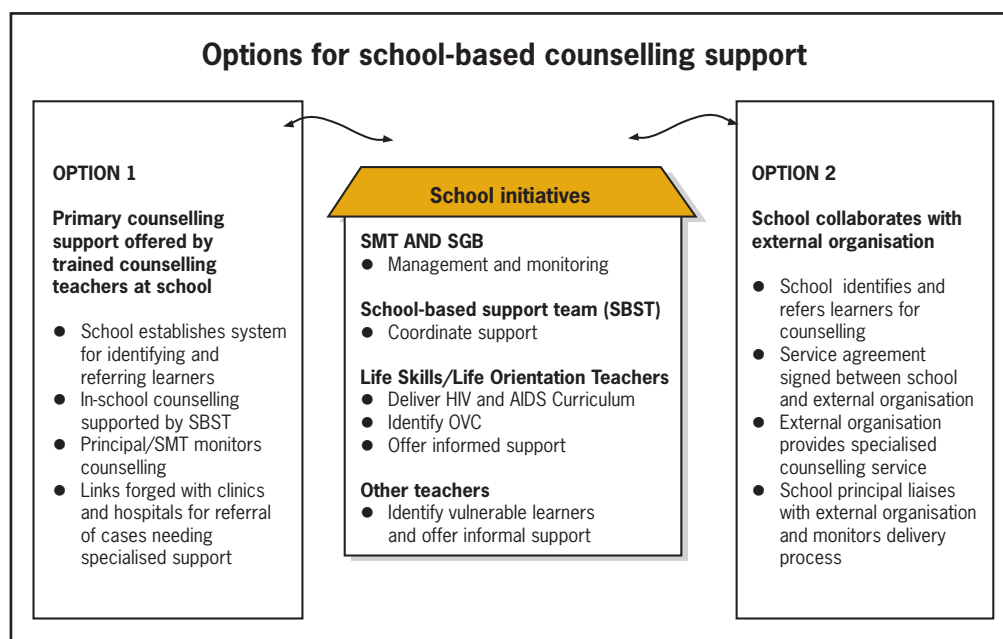
The case of Oxford Girls' Primary School is another good example of the difference that strong leadership can make. The principal's proactive leadership and good management are critical for setting up partnerships with various outside organisations such as the professional counselling service in this case. This partnership comes with a clear contract that allows the principal to present the needs of the school and to receive feedback on the learner's progress. In this way the contract also becomes a tool for the principal to monitor what the external provider is actually doing.

The first lesson is that outside help is most useful when a good match exists between the needs of the school and the services offered by the external provider. The second lesson we draw from the Oxford School experience is that principals need to be realistic about the capacity for counselling among the teachers at their school. While general counselling skills are useful for all teachers and support the basic pastoral role that all teachers are expected to play, these skills do not turn them into professional counsellors overnight. It takes a long time to train as a counsellor and all counsellors need to be professionally supervised in their work. Both Zwelitsha and Oxford show us that school-level counselling needs a lot of resources, including time for administration and feedback, space and time for counselling sessions, a budget for professional fees, as well as physical resources such as a user friendly, quiet room in which to conduct counselling confidentially. The third lesson here is that networking is vital for an effective and sustainable counselling service offered by a school. Finally, both schools can teach us a fourth lesson. Counselling at school level is most effective if it is embedded in a wider and systematic care response. In both schools the care systems were proactively managed by the school principal, who promoted a pastoral culture at the school.



While the counselling service at Oxford Girls' Primary is effectively outsourced, the school still remains in control of the nature and quality of the service offered to them.

The experiences of Zwelitsha and Oxford Primary, although both located in very different contexts, show that it is possible to provide some level of counselling at the school. They also show that this is most effective, if the relevant skills and processes are in place. It is therefore advisable for principals and SMTs to carefully analyse the capacity of their systems and their staff, before making any decisions about how best to offer a counselling service at their school.



Which psycho-social support strategy is suitable for your school?

The two options above are derived from the two case studies that we have examined in this unit. It is important to note that they are not intended to be mutually exclusive. Depending on the context that your school is located in, you might find yourself more easily able to implement one or the other. However, even though Option 1 is largely driven by the in-house counselling capacity of the school, it does also make use of assistance from external specialist organisations. Equally while Options 2 is primarily reliant on specialist input from an external organisation, the principal and Life Skills/Life Orientation teachers do also engage with some basic aspects of counselling and play a key role in managing the external provider. You will therefore need to develop a counselling strategy, selecting the elements that best suit your needs and context.

As in the previous units, where you were required to start thinking about how to implement a strategy for dealing with nutrition or aftercare, the purpose of the following activity is to get you to assess your own context carefully and to start thinking about relevant options for implementing a counselling service. However the detailed planning will happen when you engage with Unit 8 in which all the various aspects of supporting vulnerable learners come together in a school care and support plan.



ACTIVITY

Activity 5

Identify a counselling strategy for your school

The challenge for you and your management team is to come up with ideas for a workable counselling strategy. This is essentially an initial planning activity that requires you to assess your current situation: You need to assess “how big the problem is”: how many vulnerable learners are there in your school and how many are in need of counselling? You need to establish what resources, both human and other, you already have and identify what additional resources your school may need to establish a well run counselling programme. You also need to assess what processes and procedures are already in place and how you can strengthen them if necessary.



TOOLKIT

Tool 25

What kind of counselling service can your school offer?

This tool will assist you to do a systematic assessment of your current situation and an analysis of the elements that you would need to introduce in order to enhance your current offering or to establish a counselling service from scratch, if needs be.

Comment

Before you even consider counselling support it is necessary to examine the nature and the scope of the challenge of providing such support at your school. How many vulnerable learners do you have at your school? How do you establish whether they are need counselling or not? What are their most urgent needs? What are the implications of setting up, managing and maintaining such a programme? The examples you looked in this unit will have given you a good idea of what is involved.

A good starting point may be to think about how best to draw in the support of the parents and community representatives on your SGB. You need to strategise around how to establish, or strengthen (if necessary) the capacity of your School-Based Support Team SBST whose responsibility it is to facilitate support to vulnerable learners. Discuss with your SMT the processes and procedure that the SBST should follow. What will your role as principal be? What role can other members of the SMT play?

The SBST need to be encouraged to forge links with relevant government or non government organisations in your area, such as clinics, hospitals, the regional South African Social Services Agency (SASSA) and church-based organisations that may have some counselling facility.

Your choice of counselling option is dependent to a large extent on the environment in which your school is located and the capacity for counselling in your school. Find out what exists in your area. If there are already any existing counselling organisations in or around the area where your school is situated you may decide that it would be beneficial to look for ways of accessing the services they provide. If no counselling support exists, but you do have one or more teachers who have counselling qualifications, you would need to develop your strategy around how best to maximise the use of their skills. If neither is an option, you may need to think about identifying one or more staff members to undergo training in this field.

You may not necessarily be able to implement a full counselling programme with skilled counsellors and a referral system at once. As discussed in previous units, an incremental approach may be used. You can build up the counselling programme gradually, possibly starting with a discussion with teachers on how to identify vulnerable learners and the importance of confidentiality. Then establish a simple system for recording and tracking vulnerable learners. Establish a SBST that can refer learners to a state clinic or hospital and so on.

You can start with a few activities that you can manage easily with resources that you are assured of. At the same time, keep your eye on the big picture and keep expanding the range of support and services until you have an integrated system in place. Do not become complacent by sticking with a programme that offers minimum support.

Comment

From the many school visits in this study we concluded that schools seem to have a greater capacity for offering counselling if the culture of care in the school is strong. It is carried both by the school's good intentions (expressed through values and vision), and the day-to-day behaviours of teachers and learners at the school. A caring spirit among the staff, therefore, is a great strength. We have also found that school management and teachers who have good listening skills, who keep their eyes and hearts open, and who are able to plan and implement projects are an asset to a school.

Counselling aims to help people cope better with situations they are facing. This is true for counselling children and young people too. This involves helping the child to cope with their emotions and feelings and to help them make positive choices and decisions. Doing this involves:

- Establishing a relationship with the child
- Helping the child tell their story
- Listening carefully
- Providing correct information
- Helping the child make informed decisions
- Helping the child recognise and build on their strengths
- Helping the child develop a positive attitude to life.

When teachers are motivated and caring, they will find many opportunities to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable learners. They will look for chances to learn more about counselling or connect with counselling organisations such as Childline for support. Many service providers are very aware of the plight of vulnerable children and will readily enter into service contracts with schools to support them.

Unfortunately, we have also seen many examples of schools in which, despite the best intentions, nothing actually happened because people spent a lot of time talking, but in the end nobody got around to doing anything about their concerns. Too much talk and lack of strong management undermines the trust vulnerable learners may have in the systems the school is trying to create. Often, another weakness is the lack of confidence and skills among staff and parents who are not used to working with emotional needs.

Finally, the two biggest threats to setting up counselling initiatives seem to be like two sides of the same coin. On the one side we have the low level of trust in school communities, and on the other side, apathy or lack of involvement under the guise of not wanting to break confidentiality. The first – low levels of trust – is made worse by gossip that feeds stigma and discrimination. The second, hiding behind the notion of not breaking confidentiality, perpetuates the silence and stigma, especially regarding HIV and AIDS.

School principals will have a hard time setting up an effective counselling initiative if they do not at the same time open up discussion about these two key issues and try to limit the harm that comes from these attitudes.



Silence around HIV and AIDS fuels stigma and perpetuates discrimination

Establishing and maintaining a caring culture

It is helpful to remember that the caring culture of a school is not determined by once-off projects or interventions, but rather by the daily routines and interactions, when nobody is watching. In the caring schools we visited, teachers and learners listened to one another respectfully in all daily interactions. Gossip was not condoned. Teachers and learners cared enough to approach a child or a teacher who was clearly distressed. Rules were respected and enforced. There was also a commitment to the greater good of the community. This was largely expressed in the way in which children were treated, not as learning machines, but as precious individuals, even if they had difficult lives. The acceptance of vulnerable children and generosity toward them in daily interactions changed the learning environment of the schools. They were experienced as warm and hopeful places, despite the many real limitations and problems they faced. A counselling initiative worked best in a culture of care, but the reverse also seemed true. Counselling and other care initiatives were of benefit not only to vulnerable children. They also were excellent ways of building up the school's resilience and compassion, making them stronger from within.

Andy Dawes³, well known for his work on the impact of HIV and AIDS on the lives of children suggests that, though some children may need special counselling, the broader challenge of psycho-social support for children is not a matter for specialists: *Rather it lies in creating school environments within which children feel safe and supported, rather than excluded and vulnerable.*



Tool 26

Towards creating a safe and supportive school environment

This tool provides some basic guidelines that can help your teachers to build up a trusting and safe relationship, in which learners feel free to share their anxieties.

Key points

In this unit we have seen that psycho-social support in the form of counselling is vital to supporting successful learning. A learner's ability to participate fully in learning hinges as much on their emotional sense of well being as it does on their physical well being. We have therefore seen that an integrated and holistic approach to the support of vulnerable learners is important.

The two counselling initiatives we examined revealed the different ways in which counselling programmes can be set up and managed. We looked at key support activities that need to be institutionalised, from informal support offered by individual teachers to specialised counseling offered by qualified counsellors and psychologists. We noted the key roles and responsibilities of school management and leadership (the principal, SMT, SGB and its committees such as the School Based Support Team) in facilitating and monitoring delivery of any school counselling programme. We also examined the nature of the support provided by external organisations such as state clinics and hospitals, the South African Social Services Agency (SASSA) and NGOs offering counselling like the Johannesburg Parent and Child Counselling Centre (JPCCC).

In Unit 7 we explored:

- The benefits of counselling support for learners.
- The types of counselling support strategies that can be organised.
- What is involved in managing school-based counselling programmes.
- Which counselling strategy is likely to be most suitable for your school.

Some important insights we gained:

1. School-based counselling requires professional skill. This poses a challenge for SMTs to ensure that staff with adequate skills are employed or that specialist training is organised to up-skill at least one or two staff members, or that the services of one or more professional counsellors are bought in. Each of these has its own pros and cons and each option will have its own resource requirements and management implications. These will need to be carefully weighed up by the SMT.
2. Counselling is most effective if it is part of a larger system of care. As has been established in this guide, the support and care of vulnerable learners needs to be approached in an integrated and holistic way to be effective. Counselling as a support strategy needs to involve proper planning, accurate information collection and management, coordination and monitoring of counselling activities.

3. Counselling as a support strategy ideally needs to be linked to learners' academic progress as well as to other aspects of support, such as the school aftercare programme (if one exists).
4. Principals and SMTs must ensure confidentiality during counselling. Gossip needs to be stopped. At the same time using the notion of confidentiality or the issue of the sensitivities around HIV and AIDS as an excuse for not acting also needs to be urgently addressed – both these attitudes fuel stigma and discrimination.
5. Principals need to carefully assess the capacity of their systems and their staff before setting up a counselling service at the school. Proper planning must take place. This includes thinking about the necessary funding to support your counselling strategy.



UNIT EIGHT

Developing a school-based care and support plan

Introduction

Throughout this Guide we have seen that schools are well placed to play a significant role in the country's efforts to respond to the devastating effects of socio-economic issues such as HIV and AIDS, poverty and violence on children, their families and communities. School leadership can no longer ignore the challenge of responding to the increasing number of vulnerable children who are attending their schools. It is time to take a fresh look at how schools can provide a supportive environment that makes it possible for every learner to participate in learning and teaching.

We started this Guide with a reflection on the changing role of schools. We recognise that school leadership can no longer simply focus narrowly on implementing national policies and managing pedagogical processes. They are expected to expand their responsibility and become involved in actions and collaborative initiatives with a range of external partners in an effort to lessen the effects of social issues that prevent learners from participating in learning and teaching. This demands a new vision of how schools can play this role and how they can utilise resources both inside and outside the school in new and optimum ways.

The examples and case studies that we have reflected on in the previous units have shown how principals and their management teams are supporting vulnerable learners and creating beacons of light in otherwise dark and seemingly hopeless situations. By now you will have a good idea of how you might be able to create a supportive school environment in your school that offers vulnerable learners care and support and hope for the present and the future. But being aware of the situation and having an overview of how to respond is not enough. What is needed is a well-conceived strategic plan that is driven by a clear vision of the school as a centre of care and support.

Unit 8 is a planning unit. The insights gained from the previous units and the activities you completed up to now are building blocks that culminate in a well-considered integrated and coherent strategic plan of care and support for your school. Unit 8 is entirely activity driven and each activity is part of the planning process that results in an informed plan to create a supportive environment in your school and start building it as a centre of care and support.

Key questions

This is an opportunity for the principal and management team to get involved in preparing a care and support plan. These are the key questions that guide the compilation of your strategic plan:

1. Where do we want to be? (Vision for your school as a centre of care and support)
2. Where are we now? (Analysis of your present situation)
3. How will we get to where we want to be? (Strategic plan consisting of clear goals)
4. What are our priorities? (Identification of priorities and achievable goals)
5. What is involved in implementing a strategic goal? (Action plan that spells out details of actions to be taken)

Outcomes

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Describe the nature and scope of the challenge of dealing with the effects of social issues such as HIV and AIDS, poverty, violence and abuse on your school community.
- Increase your awareness of the purpose of a vision statement.
- Prepare a draft vision statement for your school as a centre of care and support.
- Strengthen your understanding of what a strategic plan is and what it aims to achieve.
- Describe the strategic goals that you have identified in your plan.
- Explain the difference between a strategic plan and an action plan.
- Prepare action plans for realising your strategic goals.

Suggested approach to the planning activity process

This strategic planning activity should be carried out with the entire management team. We recommend that you set aside at least a day for your strategic planning workshop. If you are unable to set aside a whole day, we suggest that you organise 2 – 3 hour sessions on three successive days. This is a large and complex task, but one worth doing and one that is worth doing well!

Overview of the planning process

We are constantly involved in planning for future events in our personal and our professional lives. Some planning activities happen quite informally and require little effort to get results. Take for example travelling from your home to school each day. You don't even think that this is a planning activity but it requires a number of planning steps:

- clear idea of where you are going (location of the school)
- knowing where you are starting from (location of your home)
- understanding how to get from where you are to where you need to be (route between your home and the school)
- choice of a suitable travel strategy (own car, share with others in a pool car arrangement, walk, bicycle, bus, train. The choice depends on the resources you have access to and on the mode of transport that enables you to achieve your goal. For example if your goal is to arrive at school punctually then having access to a reliable car is probably the most effective way of ensuring that you arrive in time.)
- having a good idea of the timeframe (clarity about the time it takes to travel between your home and the school. This determines when you have to leave your house so that you can arrive at school on time.)
- Indicator/s to monitor your strategy (an indicator could be *Arrival at school on time*). By keeping a record of your arrival times at school per week and per month you can determine whether your strategy is working. If you often arrive late, you have to review your strategy and make the necessary adjustments.



How do you plan?

As a principal you are continually involved in informal and formal planning. Stop and reflect for a moment on your planning practice.

1. Think of a planning activity that was particularly successful. Why was it successful? Analyse what made it so successful. Jot down for yourself the elements or factors that made it a success.
2. Think of a planning activity that was unsuccessful. Why was it unsuccessful? Can you identify the elements that caused this activity to fail?
3. How do you go about planning?

Comment

We consider a planning activity successful when the plan we prepare achieves what we set out to achieve. So a plan that has a high likelihood of being successful must have clear and achievable outcomes, suitable methods to realise the outcomes, a clear indication of who is responsible for what, and a way of checking whether the outcomes are being met, so that corrective actions can be taken.

Planning is often messy and may seem confusing. We are usually not aware that we follow a number of steps. Some people like to start with a vision of what they would like to achieve, while others like to start by reflecting on the context to get a better idea of what the reality on the ground is. Whichever approach you prefer to use, it is obvious that planning is a process that is comprised of a number of steps.

But why spend time on planning? The extract that follows reminds us of the benefits of setting aside time to plan now in order to create a caring and supportive school environment and a future of hope for the vulnerable children in our school.



PLANNING OVERVIEW

Planning is thinking about the future so that we can do something about it now.¹

The combination of a good strategic framework (arrived at through strategic planning) and a good operational plan or action plan:

- Provides a clear understanding of what you need to do in order to achieve your development goals;
- Guides you in prioritising and making decisions;
- Allows you to focus possibly limited resources on the actions that will benefit your work the most;
- Keeps you in touch with your context – global, national and local;
- Provides a tool to help you communicate your intentions to others;
- Provides a coherent guide for day-to-day implementation.

It is important to think about the benefits of planning because there will be many excuses for not doing it and for just “getting on with the work”. Sometimes it seems easier **not** to plan, because:

- Good planning takes time and money. But if you do it well, it is worth the investment.
- Sometimes “effective muddling” can see you through. That is true – if you are lucky. But muddling can be costly and confusing, as well as inefficient (poor use of resources) and ineffectual (not achieving desired results).
- You can’t plan in the middle of a crisis. But if you plan well, you will avoid some crises, and while you may have to deal with your crises immediately, irrespective of your plans, once the crisis is over the plan will give you a way to engage with the work again.
- Planning is useful only if people are committed to implementation. True. But, don’t use this as an excuse for not planning, along the lines of: “No-one ever follows the plan, so why bother?” It is the role of the leadership in the organisation to make sure that the planning is useful and that it gets implemented. People buy into a plan they have been part of developing, as long as it makes sense and is possible.

(Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation: <http://www.civicus.org/resources>)¹

Preparing a care and support plan for your school is a **strategic planning** activity and it requires a systematic approach.



What is a strategic plan?

1. Do you have a strategic plan for your school?
2. What is its purpose?
3. How often do you review the plan?

Comment

Compare your ideas about strategic planning with the points made in the extract below.

STRATEGIC PLANNING², OR DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK, IS ABOUT THE BIGGER PICTURE.

Organisations often get so caught up in everyday problems that they do not think about the big picture. They are too busy planning “to do things”, something that falls under business/action/operational planning.

It is through strategic planning that an organisation develops a strategic framework. This framework helps the organisation determine its priorities and the strategies that are likely to help it achieve its vision of the future.

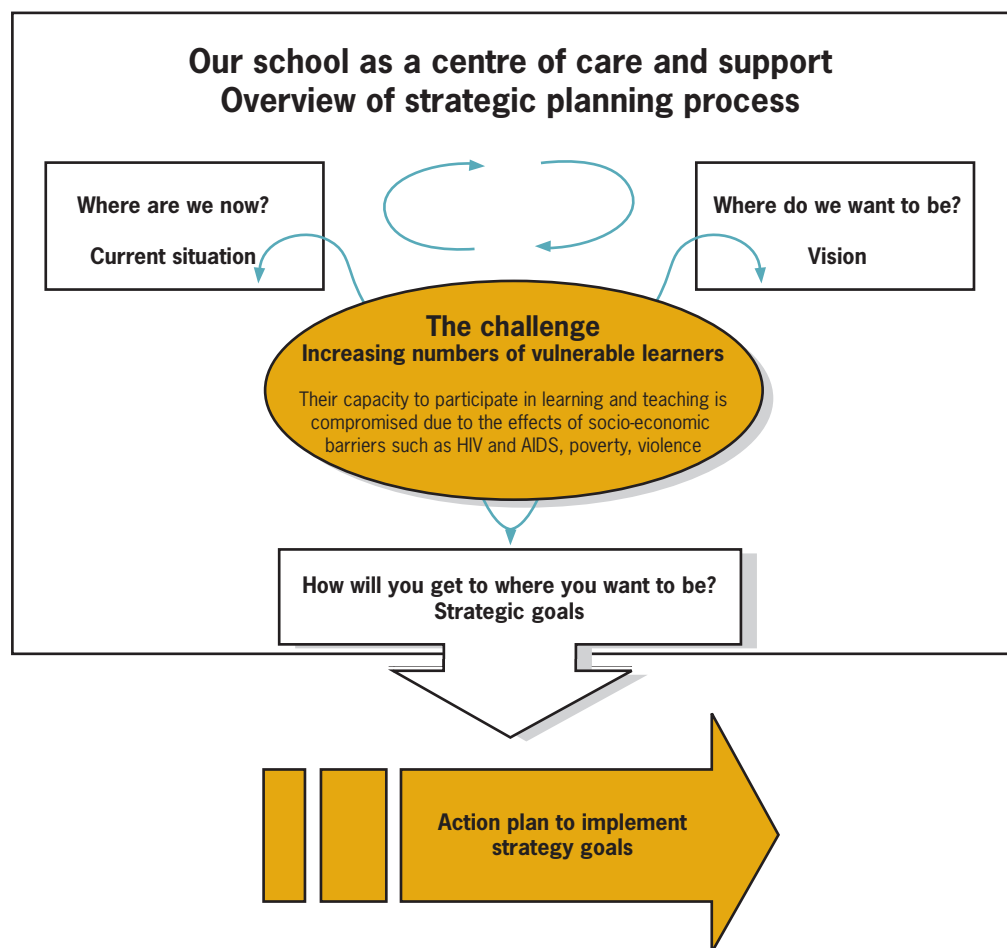
A strategy is an overall approach, based on an understanding of the broader context in which you function, your own strengths and weaknesses, and the problem you are attempting to address. A strategy gives you a framework within which to work, it clarifies what you are trying to achieve and the approach you intend to use. It does not spell out specific activities³

Without the strategic planning phase, it is very likely that you will end up doing a range of activities that may not always add up to a co-ordinated effort. The strategic plan keeps you on track. It provides a touchstone against which to answer questions such as:

- Is this the sort of work we ought to be doing?
- Will this activity contribute to the achievement of our vision and goals?
- Given that we have scarce resources, is this the most strategic action for us to take?
- Will it have the maximum impact for the investment of resources made?
- Is this the most appropriate way for us to go about achieving our goals?

(Ibid)²

To make it easy for you to follow the strategic planning activities, here is an overview of the main components of the planning process.



The strategic plan is the framework or overall map that is used to guide operational or action plans. Action plans turn the strategy into implementation and give specific answers to questions such as:

- What needs to be done?
- How will it be done?
- Who will do it?
- By when must it be done?
- What resources (human and financial) are needed to do it?

The answer to these questions will also give you a good idea of how much to budget for and how much money to raise or income to generate.

Our focus in this unit is mainly on creating a strategic plan. But you will also get an opportunity to work out action plans for your strategic goals. This will enable you to see the connection between the strategic plan and action plans.

1. What is the challenge?

Before going off to create a vision of the school as a centre of care and support, it is essential to pinpoint accurately what the actual challenge is of responding to the needs of vulnerable children within your school context. Throughout this guide we have encouraged you to get clarity about the nature and scope of the challenge that faces your school, in particular, we asked you to think about nutrition, aftercare and counselling challenges.



TOOLKIT

Tool 27

The challenge of providing support for vulnerable learners

Use this tool to refine your ideas and to compile a detailed description of the challenge for your school.

2. Where do we want to be? (Our vision)

Now that you have a good idea of the nature and scope of the challenge of responding to vulnerable learners in your school, your next step is to create a picture of what you want to achieve and where you want the school to be in the future.

The word vision comes from the Latin video, 'I see'. This link to seeing is significant: the more detailed and visual the image is, the more powerful it will be. In English we say, *Do you see?* And in IsiZulu, *Uyabona?* when we are asking whether someone has understood something. This illustrates the idea that if we can 'see' or 'visualise' something, we have understood it.

A vision is usually recorded as a vision statement that shows:

- where you want to go or be in the future;
- what goals or milestones you expect to reach; and
- what values and ways of working you commit to in order to achieve the vision.

Thus the vision statement is more than just a dream or a set of hopes. It also needs to reflect the actions that are needed to realise the vision. A vision is an image of your desired future. It is not a vague statement. It should reflect choices of what to do and what not to do, and have definite goals.

An example of a vision statement

An example of a vision statement that you are probably most familiar with is your school's vision statement.



What does your school's vision statement reveal?

- What are your school's values?
- What are your school's goals?

When you are thinking about the values or principles that underpin your school's vision for a caring school, you need to ensure that they are consistent with the values contained in your school's mission statement.

Now let's look at an example of a possible vision statement for a school that is committed to creating a caring and supportive environment. As you read it ask:

- What kind of school is envisaged?
- What values does the school promote?
- What are the main goals?
- How does the school intend to achieve its goals?

THE SCHOOL AS A CENTRE OF CARE AND SUPPORT: SAMPLE VISION STATEMENT

Learners, teachers, families, and the community collaborate to make learning accessible for all learners, where the school actively promotes initiatives designed to create a supportive school community free of stigma and discrimination and where the rights and dignity of all are respected.

We are committed to responses to HIV and AIDS, poverty and abuse that result in:

- **A school environment** that is safe, adequately resourced, and is a multi-purpose centre of care, support, hope, learning and service in the community.
- **Learners** who are given equal access to knowledge and skills, health care, and nutrition that sustain them in mind, body, and spirit; and who are aware of and committed to behaviours that protect them from HIV and AIDS infection.
- **Teachers** who are equipped and supported to teach about HIV and AIDS and are role models for responsible behaviour to their learners and communities.
- **Partnerships** with relevant government agencies, non-government and community-based organisations, donors, communities, faith groups, and others that are based on mutual respect and shared commitment to the future of a healthy, caring school where quality education is provided, that is free of discrimination against those living with HIV or AIDS and where the effects of poverty and abuse are diminished.

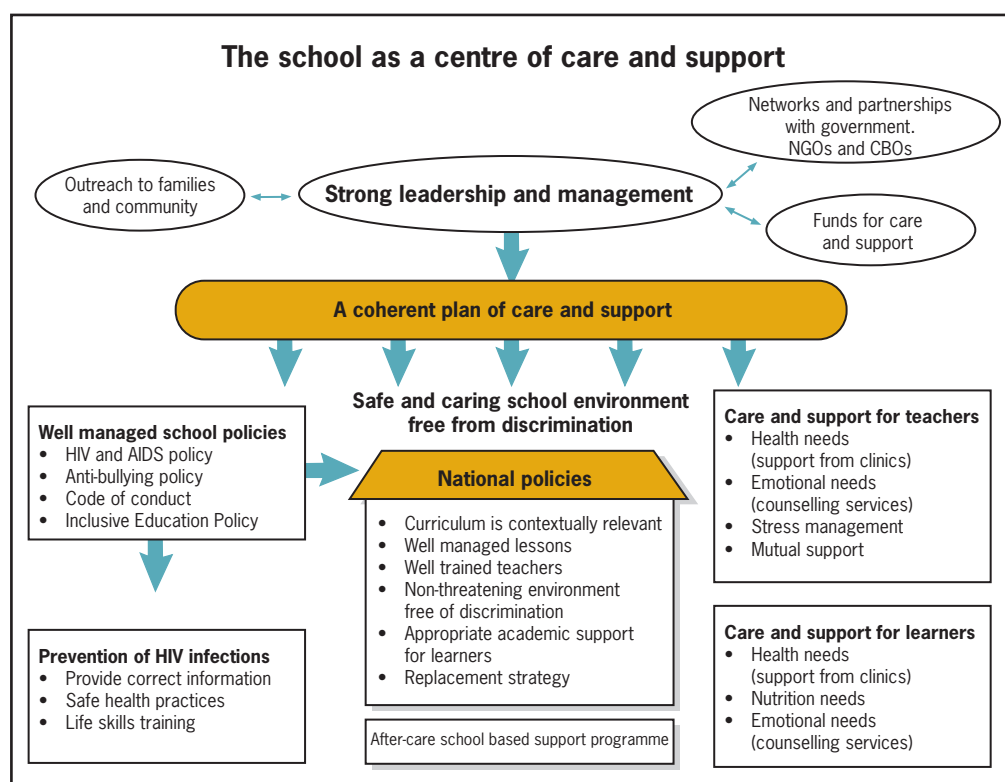
From the vision statement we can deduce that:

- The overall vision is of the school as a centre for care and support where learners are safe and able to learn.
- Values of respect for the rights of individuals, mutual respect, non-discrimination, and collaboration underpin their way of working.

- A strong commitment to a multi-pronged strategy to combat the effects of HIV and AIDS and poverty that requires the collaboration and the formation of partnerships with key stakeholders is in place.
- A description of the goals for learners, teachers, and the school environment show clearly where the focus must be.

Picture of a school as a centre of care and support

The examples of support offered to vulnerable learners in the schools we visited as part of our research helped us to create a picture of what a caring school might look like. Do you remember the diagram in Unit 2 that showed the essential ingredients of a caring and supportive school? Here it is again, take a moment to look at it.



We recognise that there are different needs in different communities, and different ways in which each school can interpret and respond to these needs. But this picture can help you to visualise the kind of support that could be available to vulnerable learners and teachers affected or infected by HIV and AIDS at your school.



ACTIVITY

Activity 1

Create a vision statement of your school as a centre of care and support

Creating a vision and recording it in the form of a statement requires that you think big but remain rooted in reality. The statement must be an ideal towards which your school can strive and it must energise people into action. At the same time your school community must perceive the vision to be achievable otherwise it will not inspire them to become involved.



TOOLKIT

Tool 28

Creating a vision statement: The school as a centre of care and support

Use this tool to compile a draft vision statement.

Comment

The vision, or image of the your school as a centre of care and support in the future, is a statement of intent and commitment to a set of values, purposes and goals that you have agreed are appropriate for your school. However, it is important to keep the vision flexible because visions are always evolving. As you work towards your vision you learn more about yourselves and your context and other possibilities become clearer.

The draft vision statement that you have created is just that – an initial draft. The challenge is to communicate it to the SGB, your teachers, learners and their parents as the primary role players of the school community and to involve them in refining it.

Having a clear vision means understanding what you want to achieve. But in a school environment, unless there is a shared vision or understanding, the chances of success are limited. To the extent that people understand and are committed to that vision, individuals are in a position to take responsibility, contribute their creativity and work together as a team. You can use diverse methods to involve your school community in contributing and making this vision their own. For example in a consultative approach you can elicit feedback on the draft vision statement and use the inputs made to refine the vision statement. A clear vision guides the development of the strategic plan, and a shared vision gives all members of the school a common direction and enables people to work together.

3. Where are we now? (Our current situation)

The vision gives clarity about the future direction in which you want to move. The next step is to find out what enables you to move towards the vision and what prevents you from doing so. By analysing your internal school environment and the external environment, you are able to determine the forces that you can draw on to achieve your vision and the forces that could jeopardise your efforts. This kind of analysis is often referred to as a situational analysis or SWOT analysis.

What does SWOT stand for?

You may have been involved in a SWOT analysis before and know what the letters represent. (For anyone who may not have encountered a SWOT analysis, it is an analysis of **strengths**, **weaknesses**, **opportunities** and **threats**). Here is a summary of the focus for each component of the analysis.

Internal environment	
Strengths <i>Internal resources and capabilities that we can use to achieve our goals</i> • What do we do well? • What advantages do we have? • What relevant resources do we have access to? • What do other people see as our strengths? • What would we want to boast about to someone who knows nothing about our school? Think about: Your capabilities, resources, assets, people (e.g. a strong champion to drive the interventions), experience/knowledge, systems, processes, achievements	Weaknesses <i>Internal forces that could be barriers to achieving our goals</i> • What do we do poorly? • What can be improved? • What must we avoid? • What do we lack? • What are we not proud of? • What could we do differently? Think about: Disadvantages, gaps in capabilities, low morale, weak leadership, lack of proper systems and processes, work overload, lack of shared vision/buy-in, stigma and discrimination attached to HIV and AIDS
External environment	
Opportunities <i>External forces that enable us to achieve our goals. Favourable situations now and in the future</i> • Which organisations and government departments offer services that we can link up with? • What support is available from the community? • What funding can we obtain? Think about: Possible funding, partnerships, services, support, people, collaboration with other schools, government driven initiatives	Threats <i>External forces that could weaken our chances of achieving our goals. Any unfavourable situation in the external environment that is potentially damaging now and in the future</i> • What obstacles do we face? • What is our biggest threat? Think about: Poverty and unemployment in the community, unsustainable financial funding, support from community not forthcoming/not reliable, rising costs, collapse of partnerships

People sometimes find it difficult to know what information to include in a SWOT analysis document. The questions and guidelines in the table above should guide you. In addition you may find the following example helpful.

Example of a SWOT Analysis for a school committed to becoming a centre of care and support	
Strengths - There is a positive attitude in the school towards community initiatives. - The principal is good at networking. She has many contacts in the community and supports community initiatives. - The school participates in the national school nutrition programme. Meals are provided to a group of learners every day of the school week. - Two teachers have participated in counselling workshops. - Most teachers keep attendance records up to date.	Weaknesses - The school has an HIV and AIDS policy but there is no evidence as to how it works in practice. - Most teachers are overworked and stressed and reluctant to get involved in additional activities at the school. - There is no adequate substitution strategy for teachers who have to take leave because of illness. - There is a high level of absenteeism and drop out. - Learners and teachers complain about the lack of security and many incidents of violent behaviour have been reported. - There is a lot of bullying at the school. - There is no timetable slot dedicated to staff or development meetings. - There is little formal staff development. - Learners who fall behind do not receive academic support to catch up. - Information about HIV and AIDS and safe sex practices are not integrated into the life skills programme. - Teachers are reluctant to teach learners about HIV and AIDS because of the sensitivity around this issue.
Opportunities - An NGO in the area offers a referral service for accessing grants. - A clinic offers free testing for HIV and provides anti-retroviral treatment. - A church group has started collecting clothes and uniforms that are made available to needy learners. - A school in the area has started an aftercare programme in collaboration with an international organisation. - An initiative called 'Health Promoting Schools' is looking for schools to join the network.	Threats - There are high levels of unemployment, poverty and crime in the area surrounding the school. - There are few businesses in the area that are able to provide regular funding for community initiatives. - The grant from the department for the nutrition programme is not always available in time.

The SWOT analysis is a quick way to get an insight into the internal and external forces that will influence your strategic plan. You have a measure of control over your internal environment and can seek to build on your school's strengths and address its weaknesses. While you do not have direct control over opportunities and threats in the external environment your plans need to take them into account.



ACTIVITY

Activity 2 Conduct a SWOT analysis

You have already done a few activities in previous units that encouraged you to reflect critically on your internal capacity to manage interventions such as the school nutrition programme, the aftercare programme and the provision of counselling support. You also reflected on the kind of support that might be available to you from external sources. This activity gives you an opportunity to consolidate your understanding of the internal and external school environment. Add any information already gathered to the SWOT analysis.



TOOLKIT

Tool 29 SWOT analysis

Use this tool to conduct a SWOT analysis.

Comment

The summary of the resources and capacity that is available to you in your school environment and the support you can expect from your community has a strong influence on what you are able to achieve. The SWOT analysis has reminded you of those weaknesses in your school environment that may prevent you from achieving your goals. They highlight areas for attention and it is in your control to do something about them. One of the biggest threats to your ability to achieve your goals is possibly access to adequate and regular funding. This is not something that you can control directly. But you can take proactive measures by incorporating in your plan diverse sources of funding. This increases the likelihood for continuing with your funded initiatives.

From your SWOT analysis it is possible to deduce a few key critical success factors that have to be in place if you are to achieve your goals and realise your vision. Here are a few that we think are necessary.

SOME KEY CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- Committed and strong leadership capacity
- Buy-in from all levels of the school community, i.e. SGB, management, teachers, learners and parents
- Well trained teachers
- Access to required resources and support through collaboration and partnerships
- Adequate funding to support specified interventions
- Effective information system for gathering and analysing data, and generating suitable information that informs decision-making
- Good communication amongst all parties.

4. How do we get to where we want to be? (Our strategic goals)

You have the vision of where you want your school to be and you have a good idea of where you currently are. Now is the time to identify how you want to get to your destination. This is where we look at the **goals** that are most likely to help you realise your vision.

But which goals are the most important? How do we prioritise? Have you heard of the Pareto Principle?³ It is also referred to as the 80:20 rule (the **law of the vital few**, and the **principle of factor sparsity**) states that, for many events, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. For example, it is a common rule of thumb in business that "80% of your sales come from 20% of your clients." If we apply the Pareto Principle to the strategic plan we must try to identify the most important goals that will have maximum impact.

Five key goals

Our research findings indicate that there are five key goals that potentially have the most significant impact on lessening the effects of HIV and AIDS and poverty on vulnerable learners and their families as well as teachers infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. These are nutrition, aftercare and psycho-social support for learners, care and support for teachers and addressing HIV and AIDS prevention through the curriculum.

In our research we found that four of these areas were to some extent being addressed in various schools, but we found very little evidence of any systematised support and care for teachers infected or affected by HIV and AIDS⁴. This is a serious cause for concern given that in 2005, the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) found the prevalence of HIV infection among teachers nationally to be 12.7% (which was higher than the 11% national average at the time). Significant provincial variations were also found and reported as follows: Mpumalanga (19.1%), KwaZulu Natal (21.8%), E Cape (13.8%) Free State (12.4%), N West (10.4%), Limpopo (8.6%), Gauteng (6.4%), N Cape (4.3%) and W Cape (1.1%) (Shisana et al, 2005: p59)⁵. These figures illustrate the large scale of the problem in particular provinces, notably KwaZulu Natal, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape. Care and support of teachers is clearly an area in need of urgent attention that needs to be prioritised.

Five key areas of focus for which goals in your strategic plan should be included.

Nutrition for learners	Aftercare for learners	Psycho-social support for learners	Support and care for teachers	Prevention of HIV/AIDS
A system for data collection and management (cross cutting priority goal)				

What do you associate with the word *goal*? If you are a soccer fan you may associate the word with the game of soccer. The aim of the game is for teams to score as many goals as they can in order to win the game. Each team has a clear idea of what constitutes a goal and they plan and execute a strategy on the field to enable them to score as many goals as they can within the duration of the game. They also know immediately when they have been successful because there is an agreement between all parties about what constitutes a goal.

Let's look at an example of a strategic goal for nutrition. It will help you to see the kind of detail included in a goal statement.

GOAL STATEMENT

Goal 1

The school nutrition programme is well managed and provides vulnerable learners with a nutritious meal every day of the school week to enhance their capacity to learn.

Objectives

1. Establish and maintain an up to date list of vulnerable learners who need nutritional support.
2. Find identified additional funds to supplement the grant from the Department of Education.
3. Monitor that the meals provided meet accepted nutritional criteria.
4. Assign clear roles and responsibilities to the appointed persons who run the nutrition programme.
5. Conduct a monthly review of all aspects of the nutrition programme.

The **goal statement** describes in precise terms **what** the end result or achievement will be. In this example the goal states clearly:

- **who** the nutrition programme targets (vulnerable learners)
- **what** is provided (nutritious food)
- **when** the food is provided (every day of the school week)
- **how** the programme is run (well managed)

Because goals are something you want to make happen in the future, it is wise to have some more immediate checkpoints along the route. These checkpoints are objectives: they describe the short-term steps, which you must reach along the way to achieve your goals. Note that each objective starts with an action word.



Which goal statements and objectives are the most effective?

Think of the practical day-to-day activities that you have to manage to give expression to your strategic goals. Which goal statements are the ones that are easiest to implement and monitor?

You have probably heard of SMART goals. This acronym stands for **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**ealistic and **t**ime linked. Here is a checklist you can use to guide the development of goals and objectives to increase the likelihood of achieving them.

How effective are your goals and objectives?	✓
1. Are your goals specific and measurable? Do they spell out in enough detail what exactly you want to accomplish? A clearly stated goal gives direction about what is expected and makes it possible to monitor and evaluate progress towards achieving the goal.	
2. Are your goals attainable? Goals need to be challenging without being discouraging. Sometimes a goal can seem overwhelming because of its size. However, if you divide it into smaller steps (objectives), it becomes easier to manage and possible to achieve success. As ability, success and confidence grow you may decide to aim for more challenging goals.	
3. Are your goals realistic? You have to take into consideration the opportunities and constraints within your school environment. Goals must be manageable so that you can be successfully implemented.	
4. Do your goals have timeframes? You are likely to take action when you set a realistic time frame for accomplishing the goal. Schedule enough time to reach the goal, but not so much time that you lose interest in it.	

The above criteria apply to all the planning components, i.e. the strategic goals, objectives and the action plan that gives detailed descriptions of the implementation activities.

Based on the SWOT analysis, you will be able to identify key areas for change. It is not wise to undertake change in too many areas at once since it may be difficult to find all the resources needed to accomplish the change, such as time and money. (Remember, apart from physical resources such as money, you also need to budget for the time spent on managing the change process.) It is therefore necessary to prioritise a few key issues to work on. Once these are achieved, you move towards achieving the next set of objectives and so on.

The key issues you prioritise must be in line with your vision for a caring and supportive school. Your priorities must build on your strengths and opportunities, address the main weaknesses and deal with the threats.

Some questions to bear in mind when choosing priority areas

Choosing priorities may be more difficult than you think. In order to help you choose your priorities, you will need to answer some difficult questions for yourselves. These include:

- What resources are available?
- Where should the emphasis in the allocation of resources be?
- What *should* be done now? What should be done later? And what should not be done at all?
- What *can* be done now?

The choices are about what is most important to deal with first, even if there are other valid and important concerns. The problem usually comes down to the fact that there is simply not enough money or time to do everything. Effective prioritisation helps you to focus on how to overcome these constraints and to work out the best way for working within them.

GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING PRIORITIES TO BUILD A CARING AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL

- Select priority areas that are in line with policy statements on Inclusive Education and HIV and AIDS. For example, setting up a school based support team to help identify and refer vulnerable learners to various government agencies for support. Because these are the kinds of interventions that are nationally recognised as contributing towards the alleviation of the negative effects of HIV and AIDS on vulnerable learners, when you report back, progress is quickly recognised.
- Choose priority areas in which you believe you will be able to make rapid and visible progress. For example the national school nutrition programme is an initiative that has the backing of the department of education and with minimum effort you could ensure that it runs well at your school. You could also easily find ways of enhancing its impact by, say, starting a food garden.
- Select priorities which, when they have been achieved, are likely to help you address other priorities later. For example ongoing training and development of teachers is essential for you to achieve the goals you set.
- Address weak areas at the school such as security. Since this is an issue which the whole school community is likely to feel strongly about, you will most probably find a lot of people who are committed to becoming involved in a project to make the school a safe environment.
- Differentiate between concerns that are important, but which can wait, and those that are pressing and critical.
- Include data collection as a priority activity. Without accurate data, you will not be able to prepare a care and support plan properly.
- Check the financial sustainability of the priorities identified before going ahead with implementation.



If people can clearly see the benefits of a particular action or project, it is easier to secure their buy-in.

Effective prioritisation enables you to create a plan that has a high likelihood of succeeding. We suggest that you include in your plan the five priority areas that our research has shown to be essential for building your school as a centre of care and hope. But within these areas you will have to prioritise and identify the level of care and support that you will be able to implement. (For example in Units 6 and 7, we talked about phased or incremental approach to implementation of aftercare and counselling support.) We suggest that your plan follows a three-year cycle. So you will have to ask yourself what you can realistically achieve in each of the five priority areas in three years. Since nutrition is such a basic need, you may want to identify this as a goal that receives comprehensive attention. In schools where the nutrition programme is going quite well the focus may be on specific aspects that will increase its effectiveness. In each of the recommended areas, select those objectives that are important for you and that you are convinced you are able to achieve.

The importance of accurate data for planning

A good strategic plan relies on accurate information to make it relevant and appropriate. For example, if we know how many learners in the school are vulnerable, we know how many meals we have to plan for, what kind of venue we need for aftercare, and how many helpers we have to appoint in the aftercare facility. Reliable information enables us to draw up an accurate budget for our care and support interventions.

Setting up and maintaining a basic information system to gather data about vulnerable learners is therefore a cross cutting strategic goal. As a prerequisite for any initiative to succeed, a process for collecting data for proper planning is essential. The task of systematising data collection must therefore be included as a priority goal when you draw up your priority list.



Proper planning prevents poor performance



Tool 30 Identifying and describing strategic goals

This tool focuses on prioritising goals in key areas of support identified in this guide. Also exemplified as priority areas are support for teachers infected or affected by HIV and AIDS and the importance of including data collection as a priority goal.



Tool 31 A guide to managing an information system for vulnerable learners

This tool consists of a *set of templates* that you can use to collect and collate relevant data about vulnerable learners and it provides guidelines on how to set up a basic information system.

Are you ready to start identifying your priority goals?

**ACTIVITY****Activity 3****Identify and describe the strategic goals for your school**

This is an activity that initially needs to be undertaken by the principal and SMT. If your school has a school based support team (SBST) you may want to involve the members of this team or some SGB members as well. Once you have developed your strategic goals, you can cascade the process of sharing these with the rest of the teachers and later with learners and parents too.

To assist you in compiling a set of strategic goals for your school, we have prepared a set of sample goals and objectives in the five key areas identified as essential for creating a caring and supportive school environment.

Engage critically with the set of goals in Tool 30 and adapt them into achievable goals for your school.

Comment

Strategic goals must be prepared and owned by those who are responsible for implementing them and making them happen. As the SMT it is your core responsibility to compile a strategic plan that you are committed to implement. This is why your involvement in adapting the sample set of goals and objectives is so essential. You now own a plan that you are confident you can translate into activities that will enable you to achieve your intended goals. Most strategic plans are made for 3 – 5 years. Since developments in society are changing so rapidly, it may be more feasible to look at a strategic plan for 3 years. You can then review the situation and start the planning process again.

Since all schools are expected to already have a strategic plan, it is important not to end up with another separate care and support plan. We therefore suggest that it is useful to incorporate the goals of your care and support plan into your overall strategic plan. Or, you may choose to attach this set of goals as a supplementary section of your school strategic plan. Whichever method you choose, the idea is that the focus on a caring and supportive environment must not be seen as an extraneous or separate set of activities but rather as a core focus that is integrated into your school system and practice.

5. Plan of action for a priority goal

Once you have conducted an analysis of your current situation, identified priority areas and set goals and objectives, much of the initial planning phase for building a caring and supportive school environment is complete.

The next stage is to draw up a detailed *action plan* to implement the process towards achieving the goals you have identified. Action plans help you to identify the necessary steps or a series of specific activities needed to reach your goals and objectives. In an action plan you must be able to answer questions such as: Who is supposed to do what and by when?

Although there is a variety of ways in which one could write up an action plan, there are certain elements that any action plan should include for it to be effective.



What information must be included in an effective action plan?

Think of the actions plans that you have compiled over the years. What information is essential for the action plan to achieve the stated results? Compare your ideas with the elements listed in the text box below.

ELEMENTS OF AN ACTION PLAN INCLUDE:

- The *objectives*, results or outputs that must be achieved in order to achieve a goal
- The *activities* that must be undertaken to achieve those objectives, results or outputs
- How will you know that the objective or activity has been completed? An *indicator* will verify your achievements. Clear and measurable indicators can be linked to both process and outcomes. For example, a report can be an indicator that an evaluation or research process has taken place. A drop of 10% in absenteeism can be an indicator that efforts to keep learners at school are working.
- The *time frames* for the achievement of the objectives, results or activities must be established. Be realistic and give yourself manageable deadlines.
- The *person* or persons (e.g. individual, team or committee) who will be *responsible* for each task and/or activity must be decided upon.

These elements are covered by five basic questions:

1. What must be done?
2. How will it be done?
3. How will we know that it has been done?
4. By when will it be done?
5. Who is responsible for doing it?

Answering these questions will give you the basis on which to plan a budget and raise money or generate income.



Activity 4 Prepare an action plan

Preparing an action plan challenges you to look at the practical activities and resources required to achieve your specified strategic goals. We have prepared a template to assist you with your planning.



Tool 32 Developing an action plan

Use Tool 32 which is based on the five questions outlined at the bottom of page 188 to develop your action plan.

You will notice that the action plan starts off with a sample set of activities for one of the nutrition objectives. This is merely to illustrate the kind of detail required. Your first task is to interrogate this set of activities and modify them to suit your own context. Once you have completed the action plan for the nutrition goal, you can proceed with action plans for each of the other strategic goals.

Comment

Plans in themselves, no matter how detailed they are, have no particular value unless they lead to the desired action. In fact, when plans involving considerable effort have been produced, but have not been implemented, this is demoralising to everyone concerned.

However, as you start implementing your action plan for creating a caring and supportive school environment where the needs of vulnerable learners and teachers infected and affected by HIV and AIDS are addressed by specific interventions, it is important to remember that this is a process. Introducing something new means new routines and new ways of doing things. It is also often necessary to go through a period of trial and error until new practices become integrated with existing aspects of thinking and practice – all of which takes time.

Moreover, attempts to introduce some of the interventions can easily be frustrated if the necessary resources and capacity are not available. It is therefore important that you and the management team give careful thought to the implementation process and to creating the necessary climate at the school for supporting it.

Budgeting for care and support interventions

Throughout this unit, with its focus on strategic and action planning, we have referred to the need for financial planning and budgeting. Clearly, proper budgeting for care and support interventions needs to be *integrated* into your action plan, rather than being seen as a separate activity. However, we think it may be useful to highlight some important aspects related to fundraising. Unfortunately without some funding, schools are often so constrained that they are unable to act at all. On a positive note, we found that in many instances, “volunteers” such as parents and community based youth workers, were prepared to offer their services for relatively small stipends. In this way many of the schools in our study were able to offer the kind of support that they did to vulnerable learners. From working with food gardens and cooking to assisting with helping orphans and vulnerable learners to access government grants, “volunteers” were enabled to carry out these activities because they were being financially supported albeit very modestly. (In some instances volunteers were compensated with food rather than with money).

To start with, we advocate that SMTs engage various local government departments and seek information about grants and any other support (support in kind if not in monetary terms) that is available from the state and that can assist vulnerable children.



See the section in Toolkit: Some useful resources

Check this list for contact details of the SASSA regional office as well as details of other government departments. SMTs need to be proactive and to make it their business to know what other kinds of support are available from the various state departments (e.g. technical support, tools and seeds from the Department of Agriculture), as well as from non-government organisations.



Fundraising is a people business.

Much success in fundraising is linked to being proactive about establishing a network of contacts and maintaining good relations with *individuals*, be they government officials, businessmen and women or individuals working in external organisations such as NGOs or CBOs. It's about tapping into people and understanding their reasons for wanting to support a particular cause or venture. When you meet a potential donor, it is wise not just to talk about money. Take time to get to know them as a person and understand why it is they want to be involved with your school. Funding proposals that appeal to the donor's personal motivation are likely to have the best chances of success.

Successful fundraising begins with careful and realistic planning. The task of principals and SMTs (or a sub committee of the SMT/SGB) is to make sure that the fundraising work supports the objectives set out in the school care and support action plan. The actual fundraising, therefore, must be seen as a plan within a plan. A fundraising plan in particular needs:

- a compelling motivation that is linked to the vision of the school as a site of care and support
- clear and realistic goals that can be achieved (as set out in your action plan)
- a funding proposal
- a list of all possible funding partners (state, organisations, individuals)
- a time frame, with deadlines and follow-up meetings
- a list of up-front costs that must be covered by the school.



Tool 33

Guidelines for fundraising

This tool will help you to plan and manage your school's fundraising and help you to think about the specifics of formulating funding proposals.

Key points

You have been involved in an intensive planning process that has culminated in two linked plans: a strategic plan of priority goals to build your school as a centre of care and support, and action plans that deal with the more practical aspects (including funding) and provide the details of how you will achieve these goals.

In Unit 8 we explored:

- Where we want to be (Vision for your school as a centre of care and support)
- Where we are now (Analysis of your present situation)
- How we will get to where we want to be (Strategic plan with clear goals)
- What our priorities are (Identification of priority and achievable goals)
- What is involved in implementing a strategic goal (Action plan that spells out details of actions to be taken).

Some important insights we gained:

1. A strategic plan gives a framework within which to work. It clarifies what you are trying to achieve and how you will achieve it. The strategic plan consists of a set of priority goals that provide the overall direction in which the school can move forward in order to build the school as a centre for care and support.
2. A strategic plan consists of a number of key components:
 - A detailed description of the nature and scope of the challenges that are created by the impact of HIV and AIDS, poverty and various types of abuse on the school community and in particular vulnerable learners and teachers infected and affected by HIV and AIDS;
 - A vision statement that shows where the school wants to be in the future;
 - A SWOT analysis of the internal and external school environment that indicates the resources that can be drawn on to achieve the vision and the forces that could jeopardise your efforts;
 - A list of priority goals that describe in broad terms how the school intends to get to the destination described in the vision statement;
 - A detailed action plan that specifies what activities will be done, by when, who is responsible and how we know when we have achieved the intended results. These include having a proper budget and funding plan.
3. The five goals that potentially have the most impact on lessening the effects of HIV and AIDS and poverty on the school community are in the areas of nutrition, aftercare, psycho-social support, care for teachers and an awareness programme for the prevention of HIV and AIDS.
4. Accurate and reliable information is needed to develop relevant and appropriate plans. Establishing and maintaining a basic information system to gather and manage data about vulnerable learners is a cross cutting strategic goal. It is a prerequisite for proper planning and must therefore be prioritised.
5. The SWOT analysis enables you to identify key areas for change. Although you may have included strategic goals in the five key areas of impact, the level at which you respond in practice depends on the capacity and resources that are available to you from the internal and external environment. It is not wise to undertake change in too many areas at once since it may be difficult to find all the resources needed to accomplish the change. Prioritising actions remains a challenge in the implementation phase.