

*Preventive Education and Civil Society*  
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## **Introduction**

The focus of this essay is preventive education, as defined in the UNESCO strategy paper, which guides the organization's contribution to the United Nations Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS during 2001-2005.<sup>1</sup> In the initial section, preventive education is defined with a view to the link the strategy paper establishes between "learning and acting," as well as the way in which it identifies the extent of the ignorance about HIV/AIDS in the developing world, specifically among the illiterate.<sup>2</sup> Among the results expected in preventive education that the strategy paper acknowledges is the "empowerment of vulnerable groups, particularly the young, women, minorities and migrants."<sup>3</sup> The essay's next section analyzes UNESCO's blueprint for reflection and action through the prism of Paulo Freire's vision of education, notably learning as "movement toward critical consciousness."<sup>4</sup> The third section analyzes the challenges HIV/AIDS poses in the context of migration, particularly in southeastern Europe, and

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<sup>1</sup> *UNESCO's strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education*, Paris: IIEP Publications, 2001, p. 20, <http://www.unesco.org/iiep>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> John L. Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation*, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1994, p. 129.

discusses the implications of preventive education for intercultural communication in civil society. The essay closes with some reflections for the future.

The thrust of this essay's argument is that HIV/AIDS is increasingly less like one of the "problems without passports," to which we must respond primarily as a global community of citizens. HIV/AIDS is now part of the human condition and, as such, requires an original approach to learning. This approach has the potential to shift the focus away from traditional conceptions of "banking education," in which "students receive, file and store the deposits made by teachers."<sup>5</sup> Its originality relies on designing pedagogy to adapt to a broad range of multimedia applications that figure prominently alongside personal face-to-face encounters. In this way, the daily realities of a specific local context are made an integral part of an emerging dialogue without borders. During the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), it is our common global responsibility to place innovative and unprecedented uses of communications technologies at the service of humanity, both to bridge the digital divide and to pioneer in the development of new approaches to multimedia pedagogy for active learning.<sup>6</sup>

## **Preventive Education**

### **"Learning and Acting" to Empower the Vulnerable**

UNESCO's strategy paper underlines the transformation of HIV/AIDS from a "medical curiosity to an international emergency" in less than a generation. Beyond its impact on global health, HIV/AIDS is identified as a "security crisis" in light of its grave social impacts. UNESCO's strategy paper likens these social impacts to that of a war.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 113.

<sup>6</sup> Colette Mazzucelli and Roger Boston, eds., with the assistance of Adrienne Bortree, *Preventive Education for Human Security in the Balkans*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., manuscript in

HIV/AIDS is now a pandemic<sup>7</sup> that is likely to spread over the next few years. Those peoples who suffer most include youth, women and the underprivileged in societies. At the heart of that which sustains the HIV/AIDS pandemic are inequalities “due to lack of resources, gender and race.” Clearly the HIV/AIDS pandemic affects the elites and thereby takes its toll on groups essential to a country’s development. The focus in this essay, however, is on those peoples vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because of a widening gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots” or because of a disadvantaged position in their local environments.<sup>8</sup>

There is urgency to renew our efforts in preventive education, as the strategy paper emphasizes, because of the nature of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the extent of ignorance about the virus. These two factors point to the reasons why “learning and acting” is a constructive and compassionate tandem for societal transformation over time. The challenges of preventive education in this context must be understood given the cycles of underdevelopment in the world’s poorest countries. More significantly, these challenges must be analyzed in light of the digital divide’s contribution to widening the chasm between developed and developing areas. In terms of “learning and acting,” communications technologies can have the adverse influence of broadening feelings of alienation that accompany “us” versus “them” perceptions on the part of an excluded majority around the world. This is a consequence we must bear in mind as we contemplate a fundamental common global responsibility: to identify the ways in which, alternatively, communications technologies become the instrument to create an

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review; April Morgan, Lucinda Peach and Colette Mazzucelli, eds., *Ethics and Global Politics: The Active Learning Sourcebook*, Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2004, forthcoming.

<sup>7</sup> The UNESCO strategy paper, completed in 2001, refers consistently to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The term **pandemic** is cited here to refer to the spread of the infection to peoples around the globe.

intercultural dialogue at the level of civil society. By virtue of an intercultural dialogue, knowledge can be shared and skills provided to reduce risk, improve care and lessen the HIV/AIDS pandemic's impact.

HIV/AIDS strikes people first. In so doing, the pandemic devastates countries, limits their development potential and contributes to a global security crisis in human and financial terms. For this reason, teachers must move beyond the traditional classroom “to being, and preparing their students to be, citizens of the world.”<sup>9</sup> Their task in what is actually the learning society, in which we are continuously breaking down barriers to learning and communication, is to help their students realize a commitment, a vocation to a strong and vibrant civil society, involvement in their community, local, national and global as well as instilling through dialogue the sympathy and care for people in other cultures at the heart of cosmopolitan identity.<sup>10</sup> In this context, we have the ethical responsibility to question critically the reasons why we choose to develop this kind of education with a preventive focus at this point in history. We must also inquire about the type of difference preventive education can make in the kind of world that is emerging. Statistics that indicate the costs of non-intervention are enormous provide a point of departure in this line of inquiry.

UNESCO's strategy paper identifies five core tasks in support of its objective to be dynamic in its responses to HIV/AIDS: (1) advocacy at all levels; (2) customizing the message; (3) changing risk behavior and vulnerability; (4) caring for the infected and

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<sup>8</sup> *UNESCO's strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education*, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Andy Hargreaves, *Teaching in the Knowledge Society Education in the Age of Insecurity*, New York: Teachers College Press, 2003, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

affected; and (5) coping with the impact.<sup>11</sup> Each of these core tasks is an integral part of a holistic approach, anchored in UNESCO's interdisciplinary experience.<sup>12</sup> The next section of this essay analyzes the fundamental challenge these tasks face bearing in mind the perspective of "a pedagogue to the world," Paulo Freire.

### **UNESCO's Strategy for HIV/AIDS Preventive Education in Freirean Perspective**

Freire is widely acknowledged as an educator who focused initially on adult literacy training among the poor in his native Brazil. Through his early work there, Freire became dissatisfied with traditional methods that addressed illiteracy by positing a relationship between teacher and pupil that was authoritarian.<sup>13</sup> As Freire became more involved in various reform movements in northeast Brazil, it was evident that literacy was key to all the reform movements. Only literates were permitted to vote. A high correlation between illiteracy and socioeconomic stagnation left elites in the country open to the charge that this situation was fostered to maintain the *status quo*.<sup>14</sup>

As Freire's literacy program spread through Brazil, opposition to his methods in conservative circles maintained that his literacy training was used to spread subversive ideas. Freire's main interest as an educator, democratization, is particularly relevant to preventive education and civil society. Only as people realize more of a stake in a country's future, economically, legally, and socio-politically, are they more inclined to reject the risk-taking behavior that increases their vulnerability in society. Along these lines, this essay is concerned specifically with Freire's rejection of authoritarian methods in education and the ways in which his work helped disadvantaged people in Brazil to

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<sup>11</sup> UNESCO's strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education, pp. 12-19.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation*, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

comprehend the oppressive reality of their lives. It is true that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, one of his most famous books, may be considered a handbook for revolutionary education. Yet, that volume must be regarded specifically in the Brazilian context where social and political change seemed possible only through revolutionary action.<sup>15</sup>

There is a religious dimension that infuses Freire's works as an educator. In *Education for Critical Consciousness*, his first book, Freire identifies with the ideas of the French Christian personalist, Emmanuel Mounier. In an article on Christianity and progress, Mounier argues that liberation, which is linked to advances in science and technology, depends on the actions of persons. For Freire, the personal relationship that a human being has with the Creator is a model for the relationships that humans should have with others and the relationships that should exist in society.<sup>16</sup>

Of note here is that Freire's is a "hopeful pedagogy" with "the vision of the person" as the focal point. The pedagogy's relevance to this essay's subject is underlined by virtue of its development in poorer countries, previously defined as the Third World. Freire presents the essence of this pedagogy in his own words:

Our pedagogy cannot do without a vision of man and of the world. It formulates a scientific humanist conception that finds its expression in a dialogical praxis in which teachers and learners together, in the act of analyzing a dehumanizing reality, denounce it while announcing its transformation in the name of the liberation of man.<sup>17</sup>

As we bear these fundamental tenets of Freire's pedagogy in mind, let us analyze the challenge that is central to the five core tasks presented in UNESCO's strategy paper for HIV/AIDS preventive education. In the emerging global dialogue about HIV/AIDS awareness, the need is likely to increase for a culture of prevention and the search for

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

treatment, especially in developing countries, to walk hand-in-hand. How do we instill an awareness of a culture of prevention through learning in societies for which oppression, domination and fatalism are the norm in daily life? How can our utilization of new technologies through initiatives like Global Learn Day VII<sup>18</sup> be put at the service of people, of humanity, in this quest? Or, in Freire's vision, what is our ability as persons and educators to change the world through our thoughts, through the language we use, through our praxis of engagement in dialogue? How do we begin a dialogue, in this era of the digital divide, which has the potential to create a shared history and an interactive culture about the challenge we face to develop the human potential of those most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS?

The first task in the UNESCO strategy paper, “advocacy at all levels,” calls for outreach to the widest audience in the history of communication. As the strategy paper emphasizes, in order to achieve this reach the messages conveyed must be culturally sensitive and the communication relevant to local mindsets and motivations. UNESCO aims to engage ministries, agencies and non-governmental organizations, particularly those in education, sciences, culture, communication and sports. More critical to this essay’s analysis are concrete examples of the advocacy efforts towards civil society “to muster support and focus energy and resources on preventive education.”<sup>19</sup> As more institutions of learning accept the challenge to educate for prevention, it is essential to develop organized channels to realize their efforts to halt the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.bfranklin.edu/gld7>

<sup>19</sup> *UNESCO’s strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education*, p. 12.

Rotary International and its campaign to eradicate polio is a unique example to cite because of the concerted efforts of Rotary Club members to commit scientific expertise, human know-how and financial resources to the campaign on a global scale. The PolioPlus Campaign<sup>20</sup> demonstrates that individual efforts, when joined in fellowship, can have a tremendous impact on the transformation of health situations in local contexts. In Freirean perspective, there is “dialectic” between persons and the world. If the world, defined as history and society, comes about through the activity of persons, how do we live, and not merely exist, in the world? If, as Elias argues, reflection and activity, that is praxis, actually create meaning and culture, how do humans fulfill their essential function, to be an active participant in the world (a subject) and not merely a passive object?<sup>21</sup>

Clearly the HIV/AIDS pandemic constitutes a different societal health challenge than polio. This fact points to UNESCO’s second core task, “customizing the message.” The UNESCO strategy paper rightly emphasizes that understanding the nature of an infection, and how the virus is disseminated, is the precondition for changing behavior that leads to its spread. The prevention of HIV/AIDS is relatively straightforward. The infection, and its dissemination rate to pandemic levels at the dawn of the new century, can be stopped through informing people about the choices available, either to risk infection or take precautions to remain healthy. Knowledge about what to avoid – unprotected sex, shared needles, is key.<sup>22</sup>

It is the way in which this knowledge is shared, however, that is crucial to preventive education. In developing countries, a knowledge campaign’s success hinges

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.rotary.org/foundation/polioplus/donate/information.html>

<sup>21</sup> Elias, p. 55.

on its ability to project a constructive, positive tone. Negative campaigns that can lead to stigmatization and discrimination are counterproductive and may only result in greater risks of infection.<sup>23</sup> An awareness of this fact allows us to observe that the challenge facing all the core tasks is to facilitate a dialogue through learning. This dialogue can help attitudes evolve as we create a shared history and an interactive culture about HIV/AIDS. Freire's pedagogy speaks directly to this challenge in his criticism of banking education in the name of fraternity.<sup>24</sup> It is a pedagogy that is noteworthy when we speak of interaction with those suffering from HIV/AIDS in a considerate way.

The term fraternity in the Freirean context is concerned with the quality of relationships among persons in society. Some of the characteristics noted in this regard are an equality of social esteem, a lack of manners of deference and servility, a "sense of civic friendship and social solidarity."<sup>25</sup> Freire's term for the ideal of fraternity is communion. His words express the depth of meaning this term has in his vision of education:

Men free themselves only in concert, in communion, collaborating on something that they want to correct. There is an interesting theological parallel to this: no one saves another, no one saves himself all alone; because only in communion can we save ourselves or not save ourselves.<sup>26</sup>

Fraternity rejects any form of education in which there are subjects, i.e., teachers, and objects, i.e., students, in what may be defined as less than true partnership in the learning process. Freire, in one of his most significant later works, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, writes

...teaching is not about transferring knowledge or contents. Nor is it an act whereby a creator-subject gives shape, style or soul to an indecisive and complacent body. There is in fact no teaching without learning.

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<sup>22</sup> UNESCO's strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Elias, pp. 116-19.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, pp. 116-17.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 117.

One requires the other. And the subject of each, despite their obvious differences, cannot be educated to the status of object. Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning.<sup>27</sup>

What may be understood from this passage is that preventive education, in Freirean perspective, must realize genuine communication anchored in dialogue and, by extension, solidarity.<sup>28</sup>

The Freirean vision of learning is one that has tremendous significance as we contemplate the third core task in UNESCO's strategy paper, "changing risk behavior and vulnerability." In many developing countries, schools have the farthest reach into local communities. In other words, schools are accessible in terms of communicating with the highest priority age group in question between 10 and 25. However, in those places in which schools put children, particularly girls, at risk, the main priority is to avoid doing harm.<sup>29</sup>

Groups in society are left exposed and vulnerable when control over life's conditions is limited and when there is no autonomy over critical choices that impact on their welfare. Children, women and minorities are particularly vulnerable to infections that can be inflicted by others. Although one of UNESCO's objective is to support school programs that are healthy and protective and to ensure that concerns about these issues are enforced through laws and regulations,<sup>30</sup> there is likely to be an on-going tension between the objectives established by an international organization, no matter how great its local experience, and the needs and desires voiced by an area's inhabitants. Particularly in the development of curricula sensitive to gender and culture, there is a

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<sup>27</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Elias, p. 117.

<sup>29</sup> UNESCO's strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

need for the type of learning highlighted by Freire, that of learning as “the movement toward critical consciousness.”<sup>31</sup> The objective in the learning process is to challenge and be challenged by the given character of one’s life situation and of the socio-cultural reality in which one lives.<sup>32</sup>

In many of the countries in question, the increasing drop out rate among students by the age of puberty and the spread of false information to the young through peers creates an urgent need for preventive education beyond schools. Highly exposed groups, including migrants, soldiers and sex workers, are audiences which must be reached through non-formal education involving all social institutions, including religious ones.<sup>33</sup> UNESCO aims to address this need through various channels. One channel is through staging plays in local communities, performed in ways to reach semi-illiterate or illiterate persons. These plays may capture local traditions, enabling those who take part as actors (teachers) and observers (learners) to experience the richness of the past and its customs. As someone who never experienced this kind of performance, it makes me wonder if the staging of such plays can also establish over time a relation identified by Maxine Greene as that “between the release of the imagination and the pursuit of identity.”<sup>34</sup> Here we may realize a vision of learning that engages us in aesthetic discoveries and experiences together with members of local communities. We are obliged, therefore, to question the effect this can have on the borders we move beyond in our classrooms, on the perceptions we transform in our minds and on the dialogue we must strive interculturally to create.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Elias, p. 129.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> *UNESCO’s strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education*, p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> Maxine Greene, “Thinking of Things as if They Could Be Otherwise: The Arts and Intimations of a Better Social Order,” in *Variations on A Blue Guitar* The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education, New York: Teachers College Press, 2001, p. 116.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 119.

Another channel is through radio dissemination of non-traditional classes that invite local and global participation in which teaching creates “the possibilities for the construction of knowledge.”<sup>36</sup> These are essential forms of learning and outreach. <sup>37</sup> Of critical importance here is the creativity educators demonstrate in curricula designed to make local forms of non-traditional learning an intrinsic part of a global dialogue facilitated through innovative radio applications. This objective places the needs of those most vulnerable at the heart of learning that is by definition inclusive. It is essential here not to rely primarily on Internet usage. We must acknowledge critically its existence as a two-edged sword, pregnant with unexplored learning possibilities as it simultaneously creates and sustains the digital divide.

In Freirean pedagogy, learning is active. Among the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS, we must bear in mind the enormous difficulties posed by illiteracy and the lack of control human beings have over conditions in their daily lives. The United Nations Literacy Decade, which posits “literacy as freedom,” is an initiative designed to “‘free people from ignorance, incapacity and exclusion’ and empower them for action, choice and participation.”<sup>38</sup> In this context, Freire’s perspective may contribute much to the UNESCO strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education.

Under specific circumstances, the traditional lecture style in teaching has its merits, which Freire does not acknowledge. This criticism of his theory of learning is less relevant here than the charge, made by Elias, that possibilities for “subtle manipulation”

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<sup>36</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, p. 30.

<sup>37</sup> *UNESCO’s strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education*, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Horst Rutsch, “Literacy as Freedom The United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012),” *UN Chronicle* No. 2, 2003, United Nations, p. 29.

exist “even in ‘free’ dialogue among students and teachers.”<sup>39</sup> This criticism is noted with the caveat that multimedia approaches to active learning must rely on numerous sources that learners identify on their own. The unprecedented availability of multiple sources and the inability of any one person to control access to source materials available online or through novel multimedia applications lessens the likelihood of manipulation based on exposure to one dominant agenda or school of thought.

Of critical relevance to this essay is that, in the HIV/AIDS context, the use of Freire’s training method may contribute substantially to address the challenge of illiteracy as well as contribute to peoples’ critical awareness of their social reality and the steps that must be taken to transform their destinies.<sup>40</sup>

As we reflect on the fourth core task, “caring for the infected and affected,” it is invaluable to consider the ways in which a message of hope can enrich the lives of HIV/AIDS patients. The ways in which this message may be disseminated through learning suggest the following needs. First, it is imperative to be able to reach multiple audiences, especially the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. It is constructive to convey knowledge to these audiences that instills an understanding of how HIV/AIDS can be prevented as well as how those infected can live productive lives with treatment, social support and the proper nutrition.<sup>41</sup>

Second, it is essential to communicate that preventing infection cannot be separated from caring for those already living with HIV/AIDS. The dialogue we create to embody “learning and acting” must focus on developing as well as sustaining “communities of care.” The ethical implications of the availability of funding for

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<sup>39</sup> Elias, p. 131.

<sup>40</sup> Elias, pp. 129-30.

treatments, investments in vaccine research, providing hospices for the sick, and medical testing in developing countries concern local communities. The dialogue we construct about these issues calls not only for solidarity, as the UNESCO strategy paper underscores. Our reflections must also have as a foundation the fraternity, the communion, which is expressed in Freire's writings. This is essential as we advocate compassion and care to reduce trauma and stigma and as we show respect for more local forms of healing.<sup>42</sup> We must acknowledge and honor those local practices that exist alongside the search for treatment made available through Western medical research.

Third, we must be aware that educational systems in many countries must undergo significant changes, suggesting perhaps more of a movement towards the dialogue between learners and teachers that Freire envisaged. These changes are necessary to cope with HIV/AIDS' enduring impact on the availability of teachers professionally trained to engage in preventive education across multiple segments of civil society. As educational institutions evolve, their focus should be on the creation of a safe and supportive environment to protect the underprivileged and the vulnerable, particularly children and AIDS orphans.<sup>43</sup> The HIV/AIDS pandemic has the potential to wipe out generations of educators who could be trained to initiate a dialogue of hope. For this reason, greater attention must be focused on linking preventive education to treatment and care. Our common global responsibility is to foster dialogue that instills a critical consciousness about HIV/AIDS as it reduces the stigma associated with the pandemic in the general public.

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<sup>41</sup> UNESCO's strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> George O. Ndege, *Health, State and Society in Kenya*, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2001, pp. 74-95.

<sup>43</sup> UNESCO's strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education, p. 18.

As this dialogue takes shape, it will be imperative to focus on the fifth core task, “coping with the impact.” The disproportionate number of institutions that are likely to be influenced negatively in societies will leave entire countries destabilized.<sup>44</sup> For this reason, the HIV/AIDS pandemic must be addressed in terms of human security,<sup>45</sup> in which transformative learning, an “emancipatory approach to education, formal and nonformal,” is a fundamental priority to allow people “to educate, learn and work collectively for change outside and within institutions, state controlled and non-governmental.”<sup>46</sup> In the framework of human security, it is possible to address the ways in which huge migratory flows impact on the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Let us turn briefly in this essay to the migratory situation in the Balkans, a crossroads area with significant trans-border traffic.

### **HIV/AIDS and the Challenges of Migration**

#### **Implications of Preventive Education for Intercultural Communication in Civil Society**

The dialogue learners create to foster awareness about HIV/AIDS must encounter the myths and realities about the pandemic, particularly as these concern AIDS and migration in civil society. One popular myth is that “migrants bring HIV to countries.”<sup>47</sup> The reality, grounded in evidence from several countries, is that migrants are more vulnerable to become infected with HIV once in their point of destination. The idea of migrants as HIV/AIDS carriers has credence to the extent that HIV is carried in peoples’

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/>

<sup>46</sup> Peter Mayo, “A Rationale for a Transformative Approach to Education,” *Journal of Transformative Education*, Volume 1, Number 1, 2003, Sage Publications, p. 43.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Haour-Knipe, “HIV/AIDS and Migration,” in *HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care among Mobile Groups in the Balkans*, Michela Martini, ed. International Workshop, Urgent Intervention to Reduce and Control the Spread of HIV/AIDS and STDs in the Balkans, Rome, January 2002, p. 143.

bodies from one place to another. The myth that must be dispelled is often likely to be based on the fears that fuel racism or suspicion of foreigners.<sup>48</sup>

While it is true that recent evidence from several European countries also indicates that the new HIV infections are found disproportionately among migrants, it is not clear when the migrants are contracting HIV/AIDS, before their travel or after their arrival in destination countries. It is evident that the migration process increases the risk of vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. There are specific factors that increase the vulnerability of those who are mobile: alienation, loneliness and social pressure; lack of access to prevention efforts; exploitation, lack of power and economic need; and having been trafficked.<sup>49</sup> The myth that mobile persons are high risk to be affected by HIV/AIDS leads to the danger of stigmatization. A preventive education program for migrants that relies on the increased likelihood of risk to be infected is likely to be perceived as pointing the finger, especially if the program originates from outside a local community. This can lead to a rejection of prevention efforts and to a communication rift in which ethnic minority communities question the very nature of HIV/AIDS preventive education and its perceived relevance to their communities.<sup>50</sup>

It is also necessary to question as we learn together in dialogue why migrants and those persons who are mobile are harder to reach for those engaging in preventive education. The cultural and linguistic differences migrants face in a destination country may account for this as can fear of government authorities or legal status within the country. The creation of “communities of care” must acknowledge the specific cultural and linguistic needs of migrants. Here it is essential that preventive education is

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Mary Haour-Knipe, “HIV/AIDS and Migration,” p. 144.

perceived by migrants and other mobile groups as well meaning, not accusatory, by those engaged in these efforts.<sup>51</sup> Thoughtful intercultural exchanges are essential in the design of programs for the learning communities we create.

Reducing risk and reducing vulnerability for mobile populations are intrinsically related. Although risk is unique to an individual person, vulnerability is more collective in that it includes the conditions that increase the tendency for people to engage in high-risk behaviors. Lack of employment and insufficient measures to facilitate integration in a destination country contribute to vulnerability. HIV/AIDS prevention programs that include the most vulnerable among the general population avoid stigmatization and lay the groundwork for more targeted intervention programs. A wider audience is informed at the start of efforts to initiate a communitarian dialogue that is inclusive and participatory.<sup>52</sup>

Another approach to prevention concerns mobile populations and goes beyond local or national responses. In the Balkans, this regional approach is exemplified in the European AIDS and Mobility Project,<sup>53</sup> a network to support organizations working specifically with migrants, ethnic minorities and other mobile groups. Among its objectives are to identify and address specific vulnerability issues related to AIDS, to develop interventions that are appropriate in terms of culture and language and to raise awareness.<sup>54</sup> A regional initiative in the Balkans is important given that there are still outstanding issues in the national context, i.e., the future status of Kosovo/ a in relation to Serbia, which complicate local efforts, particularly in terms of education and inter-

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 145.

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.aidsmobility.org/>

cultural dialogue through learning. It is likely to require a generation or more of educational reforms to construct institutions and create a foundation of social interactions that move away from the authoritarian “strong man” attitudes so dominant in the region’s history, inter-ethnic relations and political culture.

### **Reflections for the Future**

This essay is an initial inquiry into UNESCO’s strategy for HIV/AIDS preventive education. Through references to Freire’s vision of pedagogy, the essay analyzes the possibilities that may arise in “learning and acting” as we become more aware of the plight of the vulnerable. The challenges we face to create a dialogue among teachers and students, in which we all are learners about a subject that incites fear, stigmatization and trauma, are enormous. Our common global responsibility is to create possibilities for the construction of knowledge inspired by a pedagogy of hope.

As teachers we are guided by a belief in the development of human potential in the most vulnerable. We are also aware that a novel approach to learning is required if we are to reach those most in need and to learn together with those who strive to control their destinies. We have unprecedented possibilities to innovate in the uses of communications technologies, focusing initially on radio dissemination of the knowledge we share. The challenge of HIV/AIDS forces us to contemplate a world in which we move beyond the digital divide. It is not enough to imagine this world; we must encounter the feelings of alienation on the part of an excluded majority as we strive to realize its promise.

The Balkans region is one in which the challenges of migration force us to confront myths as we cope with realities of HIV/AIDS. These myths reveal that inter-

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<sup>54</sup> Mary Haour-Knipe, “HIV/AIDS and Migration,” p. 146.

cultural communication, to lessen feelings of alienation, despair and exploitation, is the fundamental starting point in the realization of preventive education for civil society.