

Office of the  
**UNDP Resident Representative**



**Official launch of the  
Teacher Capacity Building Project**

Gaborone, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003

by Bjoern Foerde  
Resident Representative

*Honourable Minister of Education, Mr. Kgoroba*  
*Honourable Minister of Local Government, Mr. Tshipinare*  
*Honourable Minister of Telecommunications, Mr. Sebetela*  
*Members of Parliament*  
*Members of Diplomatic Missions*  
*Chiefs*  
*Councillors*  
*District Commissioners*  
*Director of Ceremonies*  
*Colleagues from the UN Family*  
*Distinguished guests*  
*Ladies and Gentlemen*

I would like to ask for your indulgence and share with you my experience to illustrate the importance of teachers in a society and continue to share with you my thoughts about the Teacher Capacity Building programme which we are gathered here to launch.

I grew up in a small provincial town in Denmark in the 50'ies and 60'ies, as the oldest son of two teachers. My father was the Headmaster of a primary and secondary school, and my mother was a teacher in the same schools? I actually had my father as my class teacher during grades 4 to 7, something I at that time found extremely unjust, because it meant that I would always be punished harder than my classmates if homework had not been done in the way my father expected it to be done.

At that time, three people played a paramount role in the local community: the headmaster and teacher; the chairman of the community council; and the minister of the church. Often the teacher would have the same standing in the community as the minister – or as the psychologist or counselor has today. I remember parents coming to see my father after work, asking him for advice on issues of a very personal nature, when sickness had struck, a divorce was developing, when death had caused havoc for the family, or unemployment threatened the future, and of course when the behaviour of a child was to be discussed.

Since those times, I have time and again had the opportunity to reflect on the role of teachers in our lives. Being the father of three children, I am sure that I share with all parents the concerns we have about how they will do in the future. I therefore always have many questions.

- *Are the teachers trained well enough?*
- *Are they as dedicated as we would like them to be?*
- *Do they pay particular attention to **my** child?*
- *Do they perform as the role models we would like them to be?*

I would like to suggest that there are few other professions to whom we as adults and parents put as many demands and expectations – all too often without providing them with the support they need and deserve.

I would like to believe that through this project, we will in the years to come be providing them with some of the support they need and deserve! Because we recognize that the teachers of this country hold the key to some of the dramatic changes needed to turn the tide of the epidemic that is presently debilitating the bodies and minds of the people, including the teachers themselves and their students.

Because I am the son of teachers, and because as a parent I recognize the important role of teachers, I am indeed delighted to be a part of the TCB project in my capacity as the UNDP Resident Representative. And I would like to assure you that UNDP is extremely happy to have contributed to the conceptualization and design of this project, and to be so closely associated with the TCB project throughout its phases in Botswana as well. There are other reasons as well, and let me briefly mention a few.

This project is an example of **South-to-South cooperation** that we in UNDP believe to be vital to the future development of the South. In this case we are happy to be able to facilitate knowledge and skill transfer between Brazil and Botswana. UNDP subscribes to the fact that there are important and relevant lessons within developing countries, which other developing countries can learn from. We should not just concentrate on North-South cooperation.

As you might be aware, Brazil is known internationally as having managed to significantly reduce HIV infection rates. This was achieved largely through an aggressive response actively involving all sectors, including a diverse range of civil society actors. Within the education sector, the response is complimented by a well-structured TV programme, specifically designed to assist teachers in managing complex issues such as HIV/AIDS in the context of the classrooms.

The idea of sharing the Brazilian experience was 'sold' to the UNDP Administrator, Mark Malloch Brown, and he then identified Botswana as a possible country for such cooperation. The Botswana country office was then delegated the responsibility for approaching the relevant authorities to explore the possibility of establishing such collaboration.

When the Ministry of Education was approached, it welcomed the possibility of cooperation. A programme support document (PSD) was developed by UNDP in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, BTV and other stakeholders. This was instrumental in mobilizing resources.

The African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnership (ACHAP) was approached for possible funding and agreed to participate. A study tour was later undertaken to Brazil by Botswana key officials to familiarise themselves with the Brazilian program and identify elements which could work within the Botswana context.

Today TCB has procured TV, Decoders and VCRs through ACHAP's component of the entire stakeholder's contribution. I would like to recognize this important contribution and thank ACHAP and its Board sincerely for their generous contribution.

The other component of contributions from UNDP/UN Fund and indeed from the UN family has resulted in the production of the TV programme, the development of curriculum and the facilitation and coordination of the TCB activities, including the TV programme we are launching today.

I would like to recognize the contribution that the Government of Botswana has made in this programme. The Government of Botswana has committed

its human resources, equipment from BTV as well as its time and other resources. The Government of Botswana through the Ministry of Education has provided the necessary guidance. I want to sincerely thank the Government of Botswana and indeed the Ministry of Education and BTV for these contributions. And I would like to recognize and thank NACA.

To my colleagues from the UN Family, I would like to say to all in and outside Botswana that you have done an excellent job! These include colleagues in Brazil and NY as well. I want to underscore my appreciation of the generosity of the Brazilian Government for collaborating with UNDP. And I want to thank the Brazilian team, which is doing splendid job indeed.

So the TCB is a **partnership**, where the final impact can hopefully be more than just the sum of the input from each partner because of the synergies created. This is not always as easy as it might seem, but I do really believe that a variety of different and creative types of partnerships are needed if the HIV/AIDS challenge is to be overcome. Both the magnitude and complexity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic dictate that we form functional partnerships and alliances to address it. No single sector can sufficiently address it. We need to get all the pieces of the puzzle together; each sector has a piece, which must necessarily be there to complete the picture. We must safeguard against feelings of self-sufficiency and work together using our relative strengths.

I also believe that TCB has the potential to **strengthen linkages** among a multitude of other HIV/AIDS related programmes and projects in Botswana. While targeting primarily teachers, it will also invariably benefit the students and the community, and therefore there will be a need to consciously and systematically link it up to other existing programmes with similar target groups. This will have to be done to reconcile messages and ensure optimal use of resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen! This is certainly a **teacher** capacity building project! But I very strongly believe that we need to exploit its potential for becoming a genuinely **nation** capacity building project. Through the tens of thousands of teachers and hundreds of thousands of students, it touches

on every inch of land and sand in this country, on every community, every family, every individual.

This is what is needed to break those walls of silence and stigma that contribute to the persistence of high levels of prevalence. This is also what is needed to break the cycle of transmission across generations, which the Botswana Human Development Report identified as one of the key factors which fuel HIV transmission in Botswana.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen!

When I grew up, children and students were always told not to **'talk back'** to their teachers or their parents for that matter. So naming a programme **'talk back'** would not have been wise at all. But then again I take it that we should not understand the title as literally as that, but rather as meaning that we are inviting the audience of teachers around the country to call in their questions and concerns. Let us hope that those responding can provide the teachers with the necessary guidance.

So this is inter-active. This is a dialogue. Hopefully the contribution to a profound nation-wide dialogue needed to ensure the future of the people of Botswana. Through the teacher to the student and finally to the backbone of our social fabric: the family as a whole.

I hope the TCB and its TALK BACK product will contribute to behavioural change>

I hope it can contribute to the de-stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS.

As the representative of UNDP, I feel deeply privileged to be given the opportunity to be a small part of this endeavor.

Thank you!