

11th African Regional Meeting
Addis Ababa

Information Note

Parallel Session II: Tackling HIV/AIDS in the World of Work

Thursday, 26 April

10.00-12.00

Introduction

Africa is a priority for ILO/AIDS work: more than in any other region, HIV/AIDS has affected the social and economic dimensions of life in Africa, from the village to the public sector, and its people – especially women and girls. The loss of skilled and experienced workers is reducing productivity and rising costs related to the epidemic, from health insurance to replacement costs, put a strain on enterprises – consequences include falling profits and enterprise closure, reduced tax revenues, and less investment. Individuals are losing their health and their livelihoods; children and grandmothers are becoming both carers and breadwinners.

The impact on employment and labour is even harsher for small businesses and the informal economy— sources of work for most women and men in low- and middle-income countries. Almost invariably, workers in the informal economy lack health insurance or access to medical facilities at their workplaces, and their livelihoods are heavily reliant on their labour and skills.

In this context, the ILO – through its tripartite approach – has a vital role to play, bringing together workers’ and employers’ organizations, governments and their authorities, as well as relevant associations, enabling them to design and manage a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS, integrated in the broader UN support to the national response. Through direct provision of programmes and services, as well as information and referral, the workplace contributes significantly to achieving Universal Access to prevention, treatment, care and support – the target agreed by the United Nations General Assembly on 23 December 2005¹.

ILO approach:

- Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), integrating the issue in existing world of work structures and programmes such as apprenticeship training or occupational safety and health.
- Mobilizing the commitment, networks and resources of its constituents, and supporting their capacity to take effective and sustainable action.

¹ This requested UNAIDS and its co-sponsors to assist in “facilitating inclusive, country-driven processes ... for scaling up HIV prevention, treatment, care and support with the aim of coming as close as possible to the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010 for all those who need it.”

- Helping put in place comprehensive workplace programmes as well as an enabling legal-policy environment, with an emphasis on the defence of rights and prohibition of discrimination.
- Outreach into the informal economy and initiatives to promote employment opportunities for those infected and affected with HIV.

Objectives

The session will provide an overview and update of ILO work on HIV/AIDS in Africa and will show how Universal Access can be extended through workplace action.

Key issues and challenges

Principal areas of ILO action

i) Strengthening the legal-policy framework for action on HIV/AIDS in the world of work:

- Enabling laws and national policies developed through ILO support in 12 countries in Africa (e.g. the National Policy on HIV/AIDS and the world of work in Benin, 2005; Lesotho's Labour Code (Amendment Act), 2006).
- Sector-specific guidelines, including a workplace policy for the education sector in Southern Africa (with UNESCO), and the health sector (with WHO), cross-border harmonization and guidelines for the transport sector.

Key message: *the legal and policy framework promotes and supports effective action in the workplace, and provides a regulatory framework for HIV/AIDS responses.*

Challenges *include application of the law and implementation of policy at workplace level, especially in view of persistent stigma and discrimination – this is the context for discussion of a new international labour standard on HIV/AIDS.*

ii) Integration of HIV/AIDS in existing world of work structures:

- Training of labour judges and industrial tribunal officials on non-discrimination and HIV/AIDS (Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DRC, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo and Zimbabwe).
- Training for labour and factory inspectors to deal with HIV/AIDS (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Lesotho, Swaziland, Benin, Ghana, and Botswana).
- Integration of HIV/AIDS in vocational training and apprenticeships for young people.
- Start Your Business (SYB) training in Zambia for workers living with HIV.

Key messages: *that every aspect of the decent work agenda is conducive to a component on HIV and that existing workplace mechanisms support enforcement at national and workplace level to ensure occupational health and safety and respect for labour rights.*

Challenge: *to make HIV an integral part of the agenda, not an add-on, and to demonstrate that effective HIV responses strengthen decent work, as well as vice-versa.*

iii) Extending workplace action on HIV/AIDS: making workplaces centres of hope

- Activities in 23 countries to promote and support comprehensive workplace programmes to tackle stigma and discrimination, based on the ILO Code of Practice, and move towards Universal Access , and approximately 300 enterprises receiving direct support from ILO projects.
- Workplace policies developed through joint efforts between employers and workers in 11 countries in Africa (e.g. Kariba Minerals and York Farm in Zambia, Finlays Tea estate in Uganda, Swaziland Milling enterprise, Lesotho Electricity Corporation).
- Over 1,000 peer educators trained.

***Key messages:** the workplace programmes should be gender-sensitive, protect rights, encourage 'know your status' and include prevention, care and treatment (directly or through information and referral);and effective workplace action is the result of collaboration between management and workers.*

***Challenges:** include to strengthen and extend workplace responses so that a majority of workers and employers, and their families and communities, have access to needed services;and to challenge gender inequality, especially in terms of education and employment opportunities, in order to empower women in the face of an increasingly feminized epidemic.*

iv) Reaching out from the workplace to the community and the informal economy

- Capacity building for cooperative society members in Ethiopia with 70 primary societies federated to five cooperative unions - 52.8% of members trained, plus cooperative leaders, managers and peer educators.
- Innovative project to mobilize informal economy organizations and strengthen capacity, targeting cooperatives, small and medium enterprises (SME) and community-based organizations (CBO). Three types of activities: production and use of knowledge and learning toolkit; training activities for trainers, peer educators and activists; pilot projects for cooperatives, SME and CBO to fight against HIV/AIDS and social exclusion.

***Key message:** HIV/AIDS programmes must use all entry points to the informal economy, including informal sector associations, cooperatives, business development services, the supply chain, and social protection programmes.*

***Challenge:** to develop integrated responses to the informal economy and bring informal enterprises and workers – especially women operators - into mainstream HIV structures and processes.*

Possible questions for debate

- How can HIV/AIDS interventions be made more effective in reaching the informal economy and addressing the needs of young people?
- How can the workplace become a force for gender equality and the empowerment of women?

What is the role of an international labour standard in taking forward the response to HIV/AIDS in the world?