

Meeting the needs of Africa's informal workforce

Eighty per cent of Africa's labour force works in the informal economy. Poverty and vulnerability to HIV are daily realities aggravated by erratic income, lack of social protection, limited access to health facilities and information about HIV. The ILO in consultation with its constituents, has designed a specific response for operators in Africa's informal economy. It focuses on:

- Increasing access to information and awareness about HIV and AIDS by integrating messages into high-demand programmes that help boost employment opportunities (for instance training in business development and literacy).
- Increasing the ability of informal workers to access health care and gain a more sustainable income to cover medical expenses.
- Working through community-based associations and cooperatives in rural areas.

The importance of employment creation

"I learnt that you need money or a business to generate enough income to be able to travel to town for regular check-ups to collect antiretroviral drugs. We do not have these services in our village dispensary."

Faith, a woman living with HIV, Women's Dairy Cooperative, Tanzania

Business success for HIV positive women in Ethiopia

When 23 year old Alebech Chanie tested HIV positive in 2003, she was a widow with a sick child and no income. Life seemed impossible until she found out about the Mekdim Ethiopia National Association that aims to help Ethiopians living with HIV. In 2008 through the association's links with the ILO, Alebech accessed an ILO training course to build entrepreneurial skills, *The Start and Improve your Business Programme*.



As a result, she joined with 26 of her friends to raise a grant, secure a plot of land and learn how to run a 300-chicken poultry project. They now make a decent living selling their eggs to hotels and can send their children to school. "The training helped me to turn my hidden potential into reality," says Alebech.

Micro-credit boosts income and beats discrimination in Cameroon

HIV-positive women in Cameroon are running successful small businesses with the assistance of the ILO and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The ILO designed a revolving micro-credit scheme targeting this group, made available through six micro-finance (MFI) institutions from different parts of the country. A training package offered business development, management procedures, AIDS counselling and support, and awareness-raising to reduce stigma and discrimination.

The intervention helped to provide start-up loans to 88 women after an assessment of their business plans. Eleven months on, 86 women (97.7%) were successfully operating a small business, more than 86% had repaid part of their loan and 65% had opened a savings account. Almost all the women reported an increased income and a feeling of being valued.

Based on this good experience and in an effort to further reduce stigma and discrimination, the same micro-finance institutions agreed to register 460 members from 26 associations for people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Cameroon. After paying the initial fees they now have the same rights as other members and can benefit from the economic and social support services offered by their MFI.

The workplace as an entry point for combination prevention

The ILO uses the following combination of approaches to reach workers that might be at risk of HIV infection within key economic sectors:

- Work with the target group of workers to understand the drivers of the epidemic better;
- Follow a safety and welfare approach and promote respect for human rights;
- Create an enabling legal and policy environment to reduce stigma and discrimination;
- Increase knowledge and risk perception of STIs, HIV and TB among targeted workers;
- Support targeted workers to adopt preventive and safer behaviour, using behaviour change communication (BCC) strategies;
- Create a demand for STI treatment, condom use and counselling and testing services, and build partnerships to establish referral systems to reach vulnerable workers;
- Facilitate workers' access to welfare schemes;
- Build partnerships with health services to ensure workers' access to treatment, counselling and antiretroviral therapy.

ILO programmes address a number of key issues including where appropriate:

- HIV/TB co-infection
- alcohol consumption
- PMTCT
- gender based-violence
- male norms and behaviours
- male circumcision

For further information, please contact:

Dr Debru NEGASH
Senior HIV/AIDS Specialist for Africa
ILO Regional Office for Africa – Addis Ababa
negash@ilo.org

Ms Evelyn SERIMA
HIV/AIDS Technical Specialist
ILO Decent Work Team for Eastern and Southern Africa – Pretoria
serima@ilo.org

Mr Amadou CISSE
HIV/AIDS Technical Specialist
ILO Decent Work Team for West Africa – Dakar
cissea@ilo.org

Ms Farah RAZAFIARISOA
HIV/AIDS Technical Specialist
ILO Decent Work Team for Central Africa – Yaoundé
razafiarisoa@ilo.org

Mr Simphiwe MABHELE
HIV/AIDS Focal-Point for Southern Africa
ILO Decent Work Team for Eastern and Southern Africa – Pretoria
mabhele@ilo.org



PREVENT HIV PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS AT WORK IN AFRICA



Sub-Saharan Africa bears the heaviest HIV burden in the world with 22.5 million people on the continent living with HIV, representing 68% of the global total. The majority, aged between 15 and 49, are in their most productive years and still working, but ill health, stigma and discrimination force many out of employment.



The African epidemic is diverse with countries affected in different ways. Tailoring its response to country-specific needs, the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Africa aims to:

- Protect human rights at work by promoting the development of national tripartite policies and legal frameworks on HIV and AIDS and the world of work, using the first international labour standard on HIV and AIDS as a base.
- Strengthen HIV prevention, social protection programmes and employment opportunities, focusing on workers who are most at risk in key economic sectors in the formal as well as the informal economy.

Protecting human rights at work

“The new [ILO international labour] standard provides new opportunities to strengthen the legal and policy frameworks in the world of work, and by so doing addresses the human rights-related barriers to the HIV and AIDS epidemic.” - Report of the Director-General for the 12th African Regional Meeting, October 2011

Creating a supportive legal and policy environment for workplaces is key to mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS; by reducing stigma and discrimination in the formal and informal sector, livelihoods can be sustained and employment opportunities created for people living with HIV.

International labour standard on HIV and AIDS inspires action

The adoption of the first international labour standard on HIV and AIDS has strengthened the role of the world of work as an entry point for facilitating access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services, and for the development of new tripartite policies and programmes.

Recommendation No. 200 concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work was adopted by the 99th International Labour Conference in 2010. It calls for national laws and policies that protect the rights of workers, as well as promoting sector-wide interventions and income-generating strategies. All workers in all sectors are covered, including their families and dependants.

- More than 20 African countries have already developed new national tripartite workplace policies based on the Recommendation with ILO's technical assistance.
- Nine countries have also developed and implemented HIV workplace programmes in the formal and informal economic sectors with support from the ILO.

At a special event held during the Second African Decent Work Symposium in 2010 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, ILO constituents came up with over 200 creative ideas to move Recommendation No. 200 forward on the continent.

Strengthening legal frameworks on HIV and AIDS in the world of work

- In Africa, the ILO has trained over 170 labour judges and magistrates to build expertise in examining cases of HIV-related discrimination.
- The training has led to the implementation of the principles of Recommendation No. 200 in national jurisprudence, and to the revision of national laws to include real or perceived HIV-status as a prohibited ground of employment discrimination.
- Over 300 factory and labour inspectors were trained to integrate HIV and AIDS into their regulatory functions and advisory services.



“HIV crops up many times in cases I hear ... most involve unfair dismissal. Since the training, I write my judgements involving HIV and AIDS with confidence, knowing I am doing the right thing.”

Judge Rachel Zibel Banda, Malawi

“The workplace is an important arena for fighting HIV and AIDS. Integrating HIV and AIDS into occupational health and safety inspection systems can make a huge difference to the fight against this disease.”

Mr Abdul Karim Conteh, Focal Person, HIV/AIDS Workplace Programmes, Ministry of Labour & Social Security, Sierra Leone

Building on the ILO's unique tripartite structure

The ILO builds on partnerships between governments, employers and workers to facilitate universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support through targeted workplace actions. With technical assistance from the ILO, the tripartite constituents have put in place sustainable workplace programmes on HIV and AIDS, using existing world of work structures.

Over the last four years, the ILO has helped mobilize over US\$25 million for its constituents in more than ten African countries, through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

National stakeholders join forces to reduce mother-to-child transmission in Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, mining sites were given high priority in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) as this is a workforce that is vulnerable and easy to reach.

Training for health-care workers running workplace clinics was carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, which provided accreditation and logistic support to the five mining

companies involved. This training was extended to ten municipal health-care workers in the Bothe Region. Over 100 trained peer educators became involved in the project which reached 7,550 people. The workplace partnership approach proved a sustainable and cost-effective way to make PMTCT services available to many workers.

CEOs in Africa take the lead

Over 120 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) showed their commitment to leading the HIV response in eastern Africa, by taking part in the first ever HIV Regional Testing Day organized by the East African Business Council (EABC) and its partners in November 2010. Five countries were involved in the event and 1,333 employers and workers were tested. A special panel discussion was held on the new ILO Recommendation No. 200. Charles Washoma (pictured) is CEO of African Life Assurance and also Chair of the AIDS Business Coalition for Tanzania.



Protecting health workers with HealthWISE in Senegal

HealthWISE is a participatory methodology adapted by ILO and the World Health Organization (WHO), to assist health care organizations in improving working conditions and workplace safety. It encourages managers and staff to use pro-active and collaborative problem-solving techniques, ensuring safe, healthy workplaces and motivated employees, while reducing health workers' exposure to HIV and TB risks. In 2010, in Senegal, ILO and WHO identified four health facilities as pilot sites and provided training of trainers to support the implementation of the methodology.

“We appreciate the support we have received from the ILO. This enabled us to respond to HIV and AIDS and it enhanced our profile as a responsible employer's organization championing the private sector HIV response in Kenya.”

Ms Jacqueline Mugo, Executive Director, Federation of Kenyan Employers

Targeting sectors, reaching workers at risk

Some sectors of the workforce are more vulnerable than others to the risk of HIV infection because of the nature of their employment and living conditions. Among others, they include mobile and migrant workers who spend long periods of time away from their families and often have poor access to HIV information and health facilities.



Reaching mobile workers on Southern Africa's roads

Workers maintaining the roads in the Limpopo Province of South Africa spend most of their time away from home, visiting their families only on a monthly or quarterly basis. These long absences coupled with being constantly on the move, expose workers to risky sexual encounters. Their vulnerability to HIV infection prompted the ILO and the Employee Wellness Programme of the Limpopo Department of Road and Transport to build a team of 28 key trainers, who in turn trained 300 peer educators from all districts in the province. The peer educators provide information and counselling services on HIV and AIDS to workers involved in road maintenance and construction, and build partnerships with local facilities to improve access to health services.

In Mozambique, the ILO is working with truck drivers along three national routes in the south, centre and north of the country. Working through the truck driver's trade union, SINTRAT, the ILO has been facilitating HIV and AIDS awareness-raising campaigns with drivers on the roads as well as with border communities.

With so much traffic and trade moving between the different countries of Southern Africa, the ILO decided to collaborate with cross-border institutions, such as customs agencies and other regulatory bodies, and has trained 128 employees on how to implement HIV and AIDS programmes. At the Ressano Garcia border between South Africa and Mozambique, informal traders operating along the railway lines were included. The customs authorities signed an agreement with ASSOTSI, a Mozambican informal sector association, ensuring that informal workers can access HIV services at the border points.

“Stigma and discrimination were very high in some companies and at immigration checkpoints before we carried out advocacy [work], but now colleagues are open about their HIV status and seek support.”

Mr Naftal Simbine, General Secretary, National Road Transport and Technical Assistance Union, (SINTRAT), Mozambique

Protecting domestic workers in Burkina Faso

Young women domestic workers are often victims of sexual violence, so the ILO joined up with the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Gilda du Bois in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to provide technical support to ten trainers who delivered a special programme to the domestic workers. The goal was to improve their knowledge about the risks young women face in sexual relations and pregnancy, and to inform them about HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The programme was deliberately tailored to reach the 200 young women in their

lunch breaks and venues for the five training centres were chosen for their proximity to the workplaces. HIV volunteer testing facilities were made available to the women and those who tested positive were referred to a doctor and received medical treatment and care. The domestic workers benefit throughout the year from the presence of ten “listening mothers” who received training about HIV and AIDS, STIs, reproductive health and interaction with young people.