

Contributing to the global response

Over 40 million people around the world are infected with HIV.

The majority are aged 15 to 49
– in the prime of their working lives.

The effects are catastrophic
– not just on workers and their families, but on enterprises and national economies.

“Two out of three people living with HIV/AIDS go to work every day – it makes the workplace a vital entry point for tackling HIV/AIDS.”

Juan Somavia
Director-General of the ILO

“AIDS has a profound impact on workers and their families, enterprises and national economies. It is a workplace issue and a development challenge.”

Juan Somavia
Director-General of the ILO

**The ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS
and the World of Work**

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HIV/AIDS is a workplace issue

How the epidemic hits the world of work:

- Reduced labour supply
- Loss of skilled and experienced workers
- Absenteeism and early retirement
- Reduced productivity and increased labour costs
- Contracting tax base, weakened demand, falling investment and a negative impact on economic growth
- Reduced food security
- Discrimination against people with HIV threatening fundamental principles and rights at work, and undermining efforts for prevention and care
- Reduced family income and increases the burden of care, especially for women
- Children forced out of education and into labour

The epidemic strikes hard at the most vulnerable including women, children and the very poor – exacerbating existing problems of inadequate social protection, gender inequalities and child labour.

The ILO: making a difference

The ILO is the UN agency with special responsibility for the world of work. Its primary objective is to promote decent work and productive employment for all, based on principles of social justice and equality. It strengthens the global response to HIV/AIDS through

- mobilizing its tripartite constituents – governments, employers and workers
- giving access to the workplace
- setting standards to protect the rights of workers and improve working conditions
- drawing on its global network of field offices and experience in technical cooperation.

The ILO is a cosponsor of UNAIDS and works closely with other United Nations agencies and community-based organizations.

The ILO's response to HIV/AIDS

Recognizing the social, economic and labour impact of HIV/AIDS, the ILO decided in June 2000 to mainstream the issue in all its work and establish the **ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work**.

Objectives of the Programme

- to raise awareness of the economic and social impact of AIDS in the world of work
- to help its tripartite constituents support national efforts to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS
- to fight discrimination and stigma related to HIV status

Programme activities

- **Advisory services** for governments, employers' and workers' organizations on integrating workplace issues in national AIDS plans, on revising labour laws to address HIV/AIDS, and on the development of workplace policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS.
- **Development of education and training programmes** to support the implementation of the Code of Practice, exchange experience, and strengthen the capacity of governments and the social partners to respond to HIV/AIDS in the workplace.
- **Information resources and publications** - ILO/AIDS gathers examples of good practice in workplace action, national laws and workplace policies, as well sharing information through a regular newsletter, a website and publications.

Projects to implement workplace action are taking place in countries in all regions with funding from a number of donors.

The ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS

The ILO has adopted a **Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work**, which provides the framework for efforts against HIV/AIDS. This code, developed through tripartite consultations, received the support of the UN system at the General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, New York, June 2001. It has been translated into over 40 languages to date and is used as a benchmark for national policy and legislation in over 50 countries.

The ILO Code of Practice contains fundamental principles for policy development and practical guidelines to support the development of effective responses at the enterprise, community and national levels in the following key areas:

- prevention through gender-aware education and practical support for behaviour change;
- non-discrimination and protection of workers' rights, including employment security, entitlement to benefits, and gender equality;
- care and support, including confidential voluntary counselling and testing, as well as treatment in settings where local health systems are inadequate.

Key principles include:

- no discrimination related to HIV status
- continuation of employment regardless of HIV status
- confidentiality
- healthy and safe work environment
- gender equality
- voluntary testing and counselling, but no screening for employment or recruitment
- the need for social dialogue, prevention programmes, and care and support as the basis for addressing the epidemic in the workplace.

The Code of Practice is complemented by a comprehensive, modular education and training manual. It is an education and reference document as well as a tool for training, a framework for social dialogue and a guide for action.