

Youth Employment and HIV

- **In Sub-Saharan Africa, young people (15-24 years) are twice as likely to be unemployed as adults.** The estimated **youth unemployment rate in 2012 was 11.8 per cent** compared to the adult unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent. The ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth Report, 2013, revealed **high rates of precarious employment and working poverty** among young people. **This combination of unemployment and poverty makes young people particularly vulnerable to HIV.**
- **Young people living with HIV are finding it especially hard to access employment,** even though they have the necessary competencies and skills. They are often denied employment **if they are found to be HIV-positive.**
- In sub-Saharan Africa, young people aged 15-24 accounted for **39 per cent of the 2 million new HIV infections** registered in 2012. This high rate of new infections has serious implications for enterprise productivity today as well as for the workforce of tomorrow. **Knowledge about HIV prevention among young people remains low** (36 per cent for young men and 28 per cent for young women).
- **Young women and girls account for 68 per cent of all young people living with HIV.**
- Young people often have less access to high quality HIV prevention, treatment and care than their adult counterparts.

"HIV has not changed my determination or ability to work... Like all young people, I need a secure job, free from discrimination."

- Helena Nangombe, Namibia



The **ILO HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010 (No. 200)**:

- Promotes HIV prevention for young persons, and calls for the special needs of children and young persons to be included in national HIV and AIDS policies and programmes.
- Calls for measures to prevent and prohibit violence and harassment in the workplace.
- Calls for objective sexual and reproductive health education, and information on HIV and AIDS to be integrated in vocational training and youth employment programmes and services.
- Ensures gender equality and the empowerment of women.

What can leaders in Africa do?

► Governments can:

- Join efforts with National AIDS programmes to mainstream HIV into their structures and policies, to promote non-discrimination and equitable access to the labour market for young people, especially those living with HIV.
- Reach young people living with HIV through inclusive labour market policies, by ensuring their access to youth employment schemes that provide training, life skills and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Facilitate access to youth-friendly information and counselling on HIV and AIDS, through the creation of networks and centres where young people can receive support.

The Government's role in the HIV response among young people in Nigeria

- Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Youth Development has helped to establish the National Youth Network on HIV and AIDS. This Network supports the development of HIV workplace policies and promotes greater youth involvement in the management of HIV and AIDS programmes in Nigeria.
- Prior to the establishment of the National Youth Network, young people were not considered to be key players in the implementation of HIV and AIDS programmes. Now they are increasingly engaged in planning and implementing HIV- and AIDS-related programme activities.

► Employers can:

- Promote working environments that facilitate young workers' access to knowledge and information on HIV, empowering them to lead healthier lives. Through business development services, employers can provide support to young people living with HIV by establishing economic empowerment and vocational skills development initiatives tailored to the needs and concerns of young people.
- Improve access to health services for young people within their companies. Occupational health services can be adapted to provide youth-friendly HIV prevention and care services.

Employers respond to HIV through their young workers: Ford Motor Company

Peer educators are an integral part of Ford Motor Company's comprehensive HIV and AIDS workplace programmes in South Africa. Selected employees are trained to provide information to their colleagues about HIV and AIDS and to help break down stigma barriers that prevent them from accessing HIV-related services.

Ford Motor Company employs youth peer educators to address HIV and AIDS among younger employees through age-appropriate, innovative communication methods. This focus on youth is crucial given the high rates of HIV among youth in the region. These youth peer educators are also raising awareness in the wider community, especially in workforce feeder communities.

Source: GBC Health, Fighting HIV/AIDS in the workplace, a Company Management Guide (2009)

► Unions can:

- Promote and protect the rights of young women and men to facilitate their access to HIV and AIDS information and services.
- Empower young women by promoting greater awareness of their economic and social rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, thereby lowering their vulnerability to HIV.
- Build partnerships with relevant organizations and implement youth-focussed HIV and employment initiatives.