



**Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS  
(UNAIDS)**

**Contribution to the  
2015 United Nations Economic and Social Council  
(ECOSOC)  
Integration Segment**

## **ECOSOC 2015 integration segment: Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all**

### ***Inputs from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)***

#### **How UNAIDS is working to achieve decent work for all**

Issues linked to the agenda of 'achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all' contribute to the efforts of the Joint Programme (Cosponsors and Secretariat) towards the vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths and the goal of ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030.

Since its inception, UNAIDS has advocated that HIV has a potentially devastating impact on economic growth and social development through the significant loss of labour force and represents an enormous burden for working-age people, their families and communities in a number of ways. For example, HIV related stigma and discrimination threaten the fundamental rights of people living with HIV at work and undermine opportunities to obtain decent and sustainable employment and livelihoods. The workplace also offers a unique entry point to reach this large, vital and productive segment of the population, as well as providing an excellent platform for promoting access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services across the labour force. Equally, UNAIDS advocates social protection as a critical response to a range of challenges facing developing countries—including food insecurity, chronic poverty and the vulnerabilities and effects of HIV.

Based on the UNAIDS division of labour, which guides efforts of the 11 Cosponsors and Secretariat, the majority of programmatic work, technical support and activity implementation linked with the decent work agenda is carried out through the International Labour Organization (ILO) as lead agency on HIV workplace policies and programmes and private sector mobilization and the World Bank and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF ) as lead agencies for work to advance social protection Other Cosponsors also implement HIV in the workplace and social protection programmes and initiatives within their sectoral areas of focus (for example, the World Health Organization (WHO) within the health sector).

The UNAIDS Secretariat has strongly supported all efforts of Cosponsors in this area, since the time of its inception, through high-level advocacy, integration of the issue into policy and strategic planning, development of guidance, campaigns and partnerships at country, regional and global levels and ensures that in countries where Cosponsor lead agencies are not present, that the critical issues of the decent work agenda for HIV are nevertheless addressed. Fundamental to all UNAIDS' efforts is the GIPA Principle – the principle of the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS that aims to realize the rights and responsibilities of people living with HIV, including their right to self-determination and participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives and the promotion of their attainment of decent work.

Multiple examples across the policy, strategy, advocacy, partnerships spheres illustrate how the issues of employment and decent work have been mainstreamed into and advanced through the work of UNAIDS at country, regional and global levels, These examples include:

#### ***Policy, strategy and governance***

- Prioritization of decent work-related issues through HIV-related Political declarations, the UNAIDS strategy and ongoing strategic direction. Activities and programmes pertaining to the Decent Work agenda are included within the Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF) and annual operational workplans, with budget allocated to the relevant Cosponsors for their operationalization of the efforts.
- Governance-level focus has included designation of the 34<sup>th</sup> Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) thematic segment theme as 'Addressing social and economic drivers of HIV through social protection'. In 2015 ILO will take up the role as Chair of the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations to the Board

and the Joint Programme has worked to ensure that HIV is a robust component of the post-2015 decent work agenda of the ILO International Labour Council.

- Within UNAIDS' broad portfolio of work on human rights and gender equality, particular focus is given to the removal of laws, policies and programmes that hamper access to HIV services and access to social justice – including those related to employment, economic stability, and social protection—towards the goal of enabling 'Zero discrimination'. Focus on ensuring the decent work agenda is mainstreamed with HIV and humanitarian responses – including critical focus on working with police and armed forces—is also prioritized.
- A variety of policy guidance, policy briefs and advocacy documents have been developed on issues such as labour migration, restrictions on on entry and residence for people living with HIV, anti-discrimination laws, stigma and discrimination (including in the workplace), working with police and uniformed forces, HIV workplace programming etc.
- Technical support provision at the country level on these issues has been, in a number of countries, high – resulting in a large number of country-level National Strategic Plans on AIDS containing workplace, decent work and/or social protection elements as well as focus on reduction of discrimination, including in work settings. Similarly, global work with private and multilateral partners is mirrored at regional and country level, enabling the development of specific programmes and initiatives through key stakeholders (for example, AngloAmerica, GlaxoSmithKline, the Global Fund etc).

#### *High-level advocacy*

- High-level advocacy from UNAIDS leadership on decent work issues including promotion of the *Recommendation concerning HIV and AIDS and the world of work* (No. 200)—the first international labour standard focused on the protection of human rights at work for people living with and affected by HIV, public statements at the International Labour Conference, Global Workplace Partners Forum, *the Commission on the Status of Women* and *colaunching of the Getting to Zero at Work campaign*, including the *VCT@WORK initiative* to reach 5 million workers with voluntary and confidential HIV counselling and testing (VCT@WORK) by 2015.
- Initiation of the *International Day for Zero Discrimination (March 1, as of 2014)* as a call to people everywhere to promote and celebrate everyone's right to live a full life with dignity. Issues of eliminating stigma and discrimination in the workplace and advocating decent work and full and productive employment are highlighted through events and activities that take place around the world. At the 2014 launch event in Beijing UNAIDS and Hanergy Holding Group brought together 30 business leaders who signed a pledge to eliminate discrimination in the workplace.
- The UNAIDS Secretariat is an integral member of a number of interagency bodies focusing on advancing the decent work agenda – including the Working Group on HIV and Social Protection (convened by the World Bank and UNICEF) and the interagency taskforce on HIV in the workplace (convened by ILO). For both instruments UNAIDS Secretariat provides extensive support and input.
- UNAIDS is also committed and active in the promotion of the 'next generation' of the AIDS and social justice movement. Within advocacy and action on this issue, UNAIDS has given focus to the issue of youth employment and meaningful involvement in strategy, policy and programme development – the need to create space for younger people to come into the HIV, health and human rights workforce and efforts to support the new generation workforce.

#### *Data and strategic information*

- Through annual statistical reports and other research channels, the UNAIDS Secretariat has ensured available data that link to issues from the decent work agenda and HIV are profiled and promoted. A key instrument for the provision of workplace and employment-related data has been and continues to be the People Living with HIV Stigma Index, which collates country-based evidence on various types of stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV— including workplace and/or employment-related, collected collated and produced by teams of people living with HIV. UNAIDS provides support to the Index at the global, regional and country levels.

### *Partnerships*

- The UNAIDS Secretariat has engaged in a number of key partnerships with the private sector that have increased awareness on the decent work agenda and HIV including: *Strengthened partnership with the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (now called the Global Business Coalition on Health) and business sector* with one initiative bringing together some 30 prominent CEOs from the world's leading companies, including Levi Strauss & Co., The Coca-Cola Company, Johnson & Johnson, the National Basketball Association (NBA) and Virgin Unite, to call for the lifting of HIV-related restrictions on entry, stay and residence in countries where these are in place underlining that such laws and policies discriminatory, bad for business, and in opposition to the decent work agenda.
- UNAIDS has also built new partnerships across a variety of industry sectors such as the Sherpa pharmaceutical and diagnostic mechanism which fostered key commitments on the part of 17 companies (e.g. Abbott, Aspen, Gilead, GSK, Merck, Pfizer, Ranbaxy) to increase access to treatment, or the hotel Initiative in Mexico which brought over 40 hotels around an HIV prevention campaign and the implementation of long term HIV in the workplace policies.
- With ILO, the Universal Postal Union and the UNI Global Union collaborated on an HIV prevention awareness-raising campaign (initiated in 2008) targeting postal workers across the world, with particular focus on Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Estonia, Mali and Nigeria.
- In 2012, UNAIDS and ITUC signed a memorandum of understanding to eliminate stigma and discrimination, protect human rights and facilitate access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for workers.

### *UN-system workplace programmes*

- The UNAIDS Secretariat was the convening force for 'UN Cares' UN-system HIV workplace programme and continues to be the leading provider of financial support to the programme. The UN Cares programme includes regional workshops every two years for UN country offices, regular online and in-person trainings on HIV prevention and elimination of HIV-related discrimination, online tools, publications etc. UN Cares training is mandatory for all staff of the UN Secretariat, UNAIDS Secretariat, UNFPA, UNICEF and other agencies. Although essentially an internal programme to the UN, UN Cares is seen as a model for HIV workplace programming, with reach far beyond the UN system. In a number of countries, the UN Cares programme model has been adopted as the HIV workplace model for public and private settings – for example, the Mozambican Parliament used the UN Cares model to design their own HIV workplace programme for staff. The UN Cares programme, has now been mandated to focus on four additional elements beyond HIV where stigma and discrimination need to be addressed: mental health, sexual orientation and gender, disabilities, drug use. UNAIDS will provide support to the launch of modules and trainings on the expanded issues of focus.
- UN Plus is the UN system-wide advocacy group of staff living with HIV. It was established in March, 2005 and is a part of United Nations Reform in action in the sense that it brings together HIV positive staff working in the UN system from across the regions and agencies. Through UN Plus, UNAIDS is helping to build capacity and elevate profile for the Programme and for people living with HIV within the UN system, including facilitating the meeting of UN Plus with the UN Secretary General, which has vastly increased the profile and understanding on this interagency group.

### *Internal HR policy*

- Leading by example is critical. The UNAIDS Secretariat consistently implements in-house non-discriminatory and pro-staff relations HR policies, including the personal status policy, staff development, flexible working arrangements and implementation of mandatory HIV in the workplace training for staff (and offer of training to dependents). Though the UNAIDS Secretariat functional review and implementation, leadership was committed to implementing "change with a human face". The Secretariat encourages and promotes JPO and internship programmes.

## Decent work impact on key development outcomes through the HIV lens

Given the impact and links that ensuring decent work can have on improving the lives of people living with and affected by HIV, as well as in reducing new HIV infections, improving access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and in reducing HIV-related stigma and discrimination, the issue is a critical component for ongoing focus and action in all UNAIDS' efforts towards ending AIDS and achieving our vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

As the existing work in this area illustrates, encouraging 'Zero discrimination' of people living with HIV and marginalized populations is a critical enabler for attainment of human rights goals and enhanced equity for all.

A number of UNAIDS country-level examples highlight the important impact this can have on policy and social change in HIV, health and more broadly, to which the ECOSOC Segment may wish to refer and/or consider:

- **China's Guangdong province:** In early 2013, a bold HIV-related policy decision took place in Guangdong, China's most populous province and home to an estimated 50 000-80 000 people living with HIV. In the wake of concerted advocacy efforts — including by UNAIDS, UNESCO and ILO — the province announced the abolition of restrictions preventing people living with HIV from working as teachers. In early 2013, when the Guangdong education authorities were revising the policy, UNAIDS, UNESCO and ILO jointly advocated that teaching restrictions for people living with HIV be removed. Subsequently, the authorities responded in a letter that stated "after having fully considered feedback from all sectors of society ... we are minded to delete Article 1" (the Article that excluded those living with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections). The provisions pertaining to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections were removed from the final draft of the regulations, and the policy changes came into force in September 2013.
- **South Africa:** Through ILO and the South Africa UN Joint Team on AIDS (UNJT), HIV/AIDS has been mainstreamed into the South Africa Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), 2010-2014. Positive outcomes include the amendment of Employment and Labour legislation in South Africa to include HIV, particularly the Labour Relations Act, Employment Equity Act, and Basic Conditions of Employment Act; application of the ILO Recommendation No.200 to the Code of Good Practice on HIV and AIDS, which adopted by cabinet, parliament and published through a Government gazette in June 2012; establishment of a Legal HIV/TB Clinic to address issues related stigma and discrimination; employment and entrepreneurial activities created through an ILO Programme focusing on Economic Empowerment and HIV Vulnerability for members of the social economy organizations along Transport Corridors; development of guidelines focusing on Return to Risk Work of Mineworkers with TB and/or HIV; private sector companies in South Africa are now implementing wellness programmes using an SABS South African Bureau of Standards) referred to as Wellness and Disease Management (including HIV and TB) Systems; and legislation of Social Dialogues mechanisms linked to ILO convention 144 (ratified in South Africa) on Tripartite Consultation.
- **Latin America / Argentina:** Following publication of the Argentina PLHIV Stigma Index, which included findings that showed that an estimated 55% of people living with HIV did not have employment, in 2010-11, UNAIDS Argentina Country Office joined with ILO and organizations of people living with HIV (including the Buenos Aires Network of People living with HIV) to conduct further specific research into employment of people living with HIV and key populations. Confirming the Stigma Index findings, the research provided a vital tool for work with the Ministry of Labour into looking at ways to make training and subsidized work available for people living with HIV and people from key populations. In the development of such programmes, examples were taken from Uruguay where social employment schemes of this type had proved to be highly successful and highly sought after by people living with HIV and from key populations at highest risk. Focus of such efforts was not only to enable greater economic and social development for people living with HIV and key populations, but also served to provide greater

enabling environments towards avoidance of risk.

- **Fiji:** UN Cares Fiji has been able to implement successful HIV workplace programmes in the Pacific, notably a high-profile World AIDS Day launch, presided by the President of Fiji. Acting in response to the growing concern in the country about the rising rate of non-communicable diseases Fiji's UN Cares team more recently took on a new theme of overall health and wellness, increased focus on health and healthy living. As well as continuing elements on HIV and elimination of stigmatizing behaviour in the workplace, the team adapted the programme to include addressing NCDs, wellness, and healthy lifestyles. The adjusted programme has been well received by UN staff in the country, and has also been the focus of external interest from the public sector with regards to adaptation and expansion of workplace programming.