

HIVUpdate

access=life
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HIV in the workplace

HIV is a workplace issue. The global reach and nature of the epidemic necessitates that all workplaces – from those in small, independent organizations with few employees to multinational corporations – benefit from developing a workplace HIV policy and programme. And IPPF is no exception to this rule.

Across the world the rapid spread of HIV is having an increasingly adverse impact on the operations of many companies and employee households. In countries and communities where HIV is most concentrated, companies have experienced increased production costs, reduced profits

and greater difficulty delivering products and services. Employees experience long periods of absenteeism, extensive out-of-pocket expenses for medical care and the trauma of caring for family and friends who are ill with HIV. As an organization that prides itself on a commitment to sound human rights principles,

it is imperative that we become and remain a proactive employer with regard to HIV issues.

Having a workplace policy should be the starting point for all our regional offices and Member Associations. Over the last four years the number of Associations with a written HIV workplace policy has increased from 47.6 per cent in 2005 to 56.1 per cent by 2009. However, it is vital that the workplace response to HIV does not stop once a written policy is in place. Implementing a bespoke HIV workplace programme can create a safe, secure and stigma-free working environment if

it includes the following five elements:

- 1 workplace policy;
- 2 training for all staff and volunteers;
- 3 employee and family education;
- 4 community service; and
- 5 human resource principles that support people living with HIV.

In line with the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV and AIDS (GIPA) principle, IPPF actively encourages people living with HIV to work and volunteer in Member Associations and across the Secretariat. In order to support HIV positive people working in the Federation, IPPF+ – an exciting new initiative from the Director General's Office – was launched in May 2009 (see page 2). Dr Gill Greer (page 2) wants to ensure IPPF is recognized as an organization that not only responds to HIV issues in the communities in which we work, but also as an employer that has grappled with the workplace effects of this epidemic.

Love
Kevin
Senior HIV Advisor



Involving PLHIV in IPPF

IPPF Director-General, Dr Gill Greer, in conversation with Adam Garner shares some of her ideas about the important role that people living with HIV play in the Federation.



Q. What does the greater involvement of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) mean to you?

A. It means ensuring PLHIV are contributing actively through their involvement in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, strategies, and programmes. Involving PLHIV should not be tokenistic, but it should help create a stigma-free environment that promotes openness and understanding.

Q. Why do you think that GIPA is of particular importance to the work of IPPF?

A. IPPF must ensure it walks its own talk in improving sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, in particular the most vulnerable, marginalized and underserved people around the world – including PLHIV. Through the adoption and implementation of GIPA we can work confidently towards ensuring PLHIV realize their own sexual and reproductive health.

This work includes not only conventional HIV prevention and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, but also supporting PLHIV to exercise their own reproductive rights including the right to family planning and safe motherhood – one of the greatest denials of human rights. IPPF is also well placed to link its HIV-related advocacy to other aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights including maternal mortality and morbidity, where the impact of HIV is often not mentioned, and where the involvement of PLHIV is most crucial.

Q. How do you think that the formation of IPPF+ will contribute towards IPPF's HIV response?

A. I think the formation of IPPF+ will reinforce messages and expectations that are already clearly articulated through our Strategic Framework, our human resource principles, accreditation system, global indicator survey, policies and programmes, and internal and external advocacy; namely, that being a part of the Federation is to enter a working environment striving for equity and the elimination of stigma.

I believe it will support my calls for Regional Offices and volunteers to encourage much more rapid progress in ensuring all Member Associations have an HIV workplace policy and programme and an equitable working environment free of stigma and discrimination.

Q. Having an HIV workplace policy is one of the initial measures that any organization should have in place. 56.1 per cent of IPPF Member Associations have a workplace policy: what should we do to ensure these policies are both relevant and implemented?

A. We will need to recognize the diversity of Member Associations and country contexts, including the types of epidemic, and demonstrate the fit with IPPF's existing internal and external commitments. We should provide guidance and share experiences with those who still need to develop policies and support those who are looking to strengthen an existing programme. If possible we should allocate a specific project and budget to encourage and support this development.

Q. As Director-General of IPPF, how has IPPF's response to HIV changed over the last five years?

A. In 2004 I attended the International AIDS Conference (IAC) in Bangkok for FPA New Zealand and the Asia Pacific Alliance and I was asked, 'what are you doing here? You work in family planning!' Last year at the IAC in Mexico, where IPPF had over 80 representatives from around the world and participated in and led a number of events, no-one asked that question! To me, that demonstrates the distance we have come in five years. Through a variety of services, advocacy efforts and restricted-funded projects we are showing ourselves as having a real contribution to make to the HIV response. I think much of this comes from the tireless leadership of Kevin Osborne, his team at Central Office and the focal points and committed staff and volunteers across the Federation.

Of course there is still a huge amount to be done – and the challenges increase daily – but I believe these indicate a major transformation and show what we are capable of doing.

IPPF+

May 2009 saw the first management committee meeting of IPPF+, a new directive from the Director General's office to promote and provide a supportive working environment for people living with HIV in IPPF.

The meeting brought together IPPF staff and volunteers living with HIV from 10 countries across the Federation. The group were inspired by similar initiatives, one established by the UN family (UN+), and another set up by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC+). Both these initiatives have

provided internal workplace support for employees living with HIV.

The membership of IPPF+ will be made up exclusively of members of the Federation living with HIV. The group welcomes members who are full time, part time, project staff, board members, or volunteers from any of the Member Associations or any part of the Secretariat. Membership can remain anonymous, and confidentiality is an absolute priority for the group.

Throughout the two day meeting, the participants deliberated and explored the areas of focus and ongoing strategy for IPPF+. The mission, objectives and next steps forward were agreed upon and shared with the Director General and Governing Council. IPPF+ has already been mentioned in a UNAIDS press release.¹

IPPF+ Mission:

Fostering a culture of respect within IPPF that welcomes, supports and meaningfully involves staff and volunteers who are living with HIV in the workplace.

IPPF+ Objectives:

- 1 To contribute to the **strengthening and development of comprehensive HIV workplace policies and programmes** throughout the Federation.
- 2 To present the **unified and organized voice of people living with HIV** within IPPF to challenge stigma and promote their active participation in decision making.
- 3 To advocate for a **stigma-free workplace within IPPF** and ensure collaboration with similar initiatives at local, regional and international levels.

¹ UNAIDS (20 May 2009) 'UN Secretary-General meets HIV positive UN staff members', http://www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/Resources/FeatureStories/archive/2009/20090520_UNPlus.asp

Implementing an HIV workplace policy: responding to the challenges

The challenges faced by various kinds of organizations in implementing an HIV workplace policy are as diverse as the epidemic itself. Three organizations share their experiences.

Sensoa



Sensoa developed an inclusive workplace policy that applies not only to those living with HIV but one that offers the same benefits to all staff. These benefits include flexible working hours and the possibility to work at home one day a week. The benefit of such a policy is that it not only addresses the needs of PLHIV, but also does not require sero-status disclosure to receive the benefits of the policy. However, in practice we have found that the staff within Sensoa are quite open about their sero-status.

The greatest challenge Sensoa faced was to ensure that staff living with HIV could enjoy health insurance for themselves and their partners. Our strategy was to incorporate the health insurance for PLHIV in a package deal we negotiated with several insurance companies. As our global insurance budget was large we eventually managed to secure a deal and offer health insurance to all PLHIV working in Sensoa.

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United Nations UN+ PLUS

There is an overarching policy on HIV in the UN workplace which sets out the rights and entitlements of all UN staff, vis-à-vis the duty of the organization. However as the UN is a complex organization made up of various agencies, each with its own specific staff policies, implementation varies. Our greatest challenge is that staff have different information about and understanding of the HIV workplace policy. For example, some agencies provide orientation sessions on HIV related issues for three days, others just for three hours. For some, training on HIV in the workplace is mandatory, for others it is optional. There are also differences in health insurance coverage. The policy states

that all staff should be covered by a health insurance scheme but does not state the level of insurance. For example, some agencies provide coverage of up to 80 per cent of medical bills and others up to 90 per cent. Some staff have to pay upfront, while others have a direct-billing arrangement.

We are trying to address these differences and inconsistencies through the inter-agency group UN Cares – the group responsible for ensuring the implementation of the UN HIV workplace policy. UN+, a group of UN staff living with HIV, has also been working in collaboration with UN Cares to ensure the workplace policy is effectively and equally implemented across the organization.

[Bhatupe Mhango](#), UN+ Global Coordinator
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Southern African AIDS Trust

The Southern African AIDS Trust has an HIV workplace policy that is built on three basic pillars: non-discrimination, confidentiality and support.



Following wide consultations with staff, the board and other stakeholders, it was clear that the issue of confidentiality needed to be central through putting in place non-discriminatory policies, procedures and practices. For example, the Trust prohibits compulsory testing or screening for HIV, employees are under no obligation to inform the organization of their HIV status and information on the HIV status of an employee will not be shared without prior written consent. These measures are complemented by support services for all staff, to enable them and their close dependants to access medical treatment for HIV- and AIDS-related conditions.

In reality however, these measures have not worked well in all contexts. In countries with strong medical aid schemes, such as South Africa, it has proved relatively easy to adhere to the policy because staff can access HIV support services without necessarily divulging their status. However, in countries where medical aid schemes are not so advanced, staff must seek medical treatment before submitting expense claims. To date relatively few claims have been submitted, possibly because staff fear it will compromise their privacy. To deal with this challenge, the Trust is searching for more confidential medical aid schemes, while conducting education and awareness-raising sessions in collaboration with other organizations to reduce stigma and discrimination.

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Walk the HIV talk: implementing an HIV workplace policy

56.1 per cent of IPPF Member Associations now report that they have an HIV workplace policy. Whilst encouraging, how can we ensure that a workplace response to HIV goes further?

Three tips to ensure effective implementation include:

- 1 Increase staff competence.** Providing training for staff members on HIV is essential to enable meaningful discussion on HIV and AIDS issues and to reduce HIV stigma in the workplace. There are many simple ways to do this, for example:
 - A compulsory training session on HIV and the policy for every new joiner.

- Regular learning sessions for all the staff on the importance of an HIV workplace policy and what is contained within it.
- 2 Develop partnerships with HIV service providers.** Linking with HIV service organizations and government health services can improve the treatment, care and support for employees and volunteers living with HIV in the following ways:

- Allows for facilitated referrals for those living with HIV to meet their treatment, care and counselling needs.
 - Overcomes the financial restraints in implementing the treatment and care components of a workplace policy.
- 3 Create staff ownership.** Involving all staff during development and implementation helps 'embed' the policy by:
 - Increasing awareness of the policy by allowing staff to have their HIV prevention, treatment and care needs met.
 - Helping those not living with HIV to effectively support their colleagues who are.

For more information see www.stopaidsnow.org/our_work_article/workplace

The people at IPPF



Humberto Arango

Senior Governance Advisor, IPPF Western Hemisphere Regional Office (IPPF WHR)

I have been working for IPPF WHR for 32 years, during which time I have had a variety of roles including Programme Advisor and providing technical assistance to Member Associations on management and governance. I am currently responsible for two main areas of work: the development and implementation of the regional governance strategy; and the coordination of the accreditation process in WHR.

Growing up in a country with widespread inequality gave me

a sense of what injustice and unfairness means. This experience has made me a firm believer in the universality of human rights. Once I became HIV positive this understanding became a deeply felt and passionate commitment to help those living with HIV.

The areas of work I am particularly interested in include fighting stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and the integration of HIV services within existing SRH services. I have actively advocated

for people living with HIV in IPPF by facilitating training sessions for Regional Office staff on understanding our HIV workplace policy and by presenting my perspective as an HIV-positive person within a human rights framework at meetings of our Board of Directors and the Governing Council. I have also written guidelines for developing an HIV workplace policy for Member Associations to use.

I look forward to coming to work each day because I feel that, through IPPF, I am making an important contribution to the welfare and development of many individuals.

IPPF sign-ons

Ending torture and discrimination for injecting drug users

IPPF signed a petition calling on all UN agencies and bilateral donors working on drug issues to take action and fight the torture and discrimination faced by drug users in the name of 'drug treatment' which further marginalizes people who are already at high risk of contracting HIV.

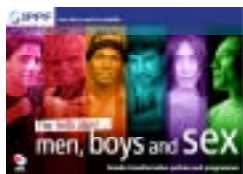
International Monetary Fund (IMF) – increase investments in health and education

At the G20 meeting in London on 2nd April leaders committed to increase resources to the IMF for low-income countries. IPPF recently signed a declaration calling on the IMF to develop 'concrete proposals' for the allocation of these additional resources, especially increased investments in health and education.

New publications

The truth about men, boys and sex

Involving men and boys in effective and innovative sexual and reproductive health and HIV programmes is critical. This booklet aims to inspire and assist programme developers, project managers and sexual and reproductive health service providers to address this gap. Case studies, drawing on projects funded by the IPPF Japan Trust Fund for HIV/AIDS, showcase good practice from around the world and serve as a reminder that much-needed progress on the rights of women and girls is intimately linked to ensuring that men and boys are equal partners in this dialogue. It is available at <http://www.ippf.org/en/Resources/Guides-toolkits/The+truth+about+men+boys+and+sex.htm> or email HIVinfo@ippf.org for a printed copy.



Internet resources

STOP AIDS NOW!

www.stopaidsnow.org/our_work_article/workplace

STOP AIDS NOW! is a partnership between the Dutch development organizations; Hivos, ICCO, Cordaid, Oxfam Novib and Aids Fonds. Since 2005 they have supported a number of organizations in responding to HIV in the workplace. Their website contains a wide range of downloadable resources, including information about how to develop an HIV workplace policy and implementation experiences from the field.

ILO/AIDS

www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/index.htm

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the UN agency responsible for the world of work. In 2000 it created the Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work (ILO/AIDS) to raise awareness of the social, economic and development impact of HIV through its effects on labour and employment. The website contains information on the legislation regarding HIV in the workplace and a code of practice to follow when developing and implementing an HIV workplace policy.

Events and key dates

Competencies Workshop for IPPF HIV focus countries and regional offices

7-10 July **Mumbai, India**

The 9th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP)

9-12 August **Bali, Indonesia**

<http://new.icaap9.org/>

Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health (APCRSH)

17-20 October **Beijing, China**

<http://www.5apcrshr.org/en/index.html>

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