



PRESS RELEASE

ILO launches new initiative to reach 5 million workers with voluntary HIV testing by 2015

ILO Director-General and UNAIDS Executive Director launch new programme on voluntary and confidential HIV counselling and testing to reach 5 million workers world-wide

GENEVA, 6 June 2013—The International Labour Organization (ILO), supported by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), has launched an initiative to reach 5 million workers with voluntary and confidential HIV counselling and testing (VCT@WORK) by 2015. The initiative will also ensure that people who test positive are referred to HIV services for care and support, and treatment if needed.

“We want to use the mobilizing power of the ILO to encourage 5 million working women and men to undertake voluntary HIV testing by 2015,” said ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder. He called upon all ministries of labour, employers’ and workers’ organizations to join forces and turn this target into reality. “The countdown to 2015 has begun – let us make each day count!” he added.

The rapid expansion of antiretroviral therapy in recent years has allowed 8 million people living with HIV to access treatment - enabling them to live longer, healthier and more productive lives and remain part of the workforce. However, according to UNAIDS, it is estimated that 7 million people currently eligible for treatment are not accessing it. Furthermore, it is estimated that around 40% of people living with HIV globally, do not know their status, thus preventing them from accessing treatment. In many countries, this figure is higher than 50%.

“If workplaces embrace this new initiative it could signify one of the most important advances we’ve seen in expanding access to HIV testing within a healthy, enabling environment and linking to on-going support including treatment,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS.

The VCT@WORK initiative, (voluntary counselling and testing) is part of the ILO’s efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goal 6 and the global target of reaching 15 million people living with HIV with lifesaving antiretroviral treatment by 2015, as set out in the 2011 United Nations General Assembly Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. “To reach this goal we need to work together to ensure that all workplaces are free of stigma and discrimination,” the ILO Director-General said.

The VCT@WORK initiative builds on the [ILO’s Recommendation on HIV and AIDS and the World of Work \(No.200\)](#), to ensure safe and healthy working environments free of stigma and discrimination.

The ILO’s tripartite constituents, (governments, employers and workers), will strengthen existing partnerships to ensure access to testing and treatment for workers, their families and communities. They will be supported by the International Labour Office, the UN family, development partners, national AIDS programmes and networks of people living with HIV. India

has already launched a national VCT@WORK programme, with South Africa and Tanzania expected to follow in the coming months.

The VCT@WORK initiative is a key element of the ILO's "[Getting to Zero at Work](#)" campaign, which was jointly launched with UNAIDS and WHO on World AIDS Day 2012. The campaign has enlisted the support of a number of leaders within the UN system, the world of work, networks of people living with HIV and other stakeholders.

The ILO Director-General and UNAIDS Executive Director were joined at the launch by Mr. Grégoire Owona, Minister of Labor and Social Security of Cameroon, Ms. Jacqueline Mugo, Executive Director of the Federation of Kenya Employers, Mr. Luc Cortebeeck, President of the Confédération des Syndicats Chrétien and Ms. Françoise Ndayishimiye, Senior Gender Advisor at UNAIDS, who spoke of the importance of confidential voluntary counselling and testing.

VCT@WORK was launched while about 5,000 delegates representing governments, employers and workers from the ILO's 185 member States are gathering in Geneva for the International Labour Conference to discuss various world of work issues including employment and social protection in an ageing world, sustainable development and social dialogue.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.

ILO

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights. Its tripartite structure of governments, workers and employers provides a unique platform for promoting decent work for all women and men. The ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the world of work (ILO/AIDS) plays a key role in the HIV/AIDS global response through workplaces. Learn more at www.ilo.org and connect with us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ILO.ORG?fref=ts>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/ILONEWS>)