

HIV, a workplace issue everywhere

Two out of three people living with HIV go to work each day. The workplace is one of the most effective settings for responding to the epidemic:

- Communications systems are already in place for disseminating information.
- Existing structures and facilities can be used for prevention, care and support services.
- The workplace allows itself to reaching millions of people, who might otherwise be out of reach.
- Workplace programmes also allow the proper follow of beneficiaries.
- Workplaces are communities where people come together and discuss, debate, and learn from one another.

Employers and trade unions are leaders in their communities and countries. Leadership is crucial to the fight against AIDS.

Low prevalence countries

Business involvement in the AIDS response is not limited to high-prevalence countries. The northern African country of Algeria, for example, has a relatively low adult HIV prevalence rate of 0.1%. Yet the Algerian Business Coalition has taken an active role in supporting the development of that country's National Strategic Plan on AIDS. Coalition members are participating in local and national efforts to share information on the epidemic, raise awareness of the importance of business in the AIDS response, and identify HIV prevention activities that coalition members can support.

The countries that are most severely affected by HIV today were each "low-prevalence" countries not long ago. Today's low prevalence rates, left unchecked, can rapidly become high infection rates with consequent social and economic costs. World Bank data shows that, once HIV prevalence exceeds 4-5 percent, it escalates rapidly.

Early investments in the AIDS response have long-term benefits. Early HIV education and prevention investments in Senegal have resulted in one of the lowest infection rates in sub-Saharan Africa.

Business has a vital role to play in supporting the AIDS response even in countries in which HIV is a relatively low-level concern today...because, without the support of all sectors of society, the epidemic may not be such a "small" problem tomorrow.

ILO Code of conduct

<http://www.ilo.org/aids/lang--en/index.htm>

