



## **ILO/SIDA – COOPAfrica Project on HIV/AIDS Launched**

A project on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Impact Mitigation the in the World of Work in Tanzania was launched at the ILO Office in Dar es Salaam on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008.

This ILO/SIDA – COOPAfrica Project is part of a regional programme currently being implemented in four other African countries, namely Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Mozambique. The eighteen-month Project funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) is designed to contribute to the ILO efforts of integrating HIV/AIDS in its broader decent work agenda, addressing employment creation and promoting informal economy.

Implemented by the ILO under the Cooperative Facility for Africa (COOPAfrica) based at the ILO Office in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the project aims at mobilizing cooperatives, community-based organizations (CBOs) and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in responding to HIV/AIDS epidemic. The project focuses on building capacities and facilitating national and sub-national cooperative organizations as centres of competence on issues related to HIV/AIDS. The centres of competencies will generate and disseminate relevant required information and knowledge and assist primary cooperative societies in rural and urban areas to actively engage in managing HIV/AIDS epidemic. The project is targeting members of cooperatives and their families.

The project objective is “improved conditions and status of affected women and men working in targeted informal settings”. The project will more specifically, increase the number of cooperatives developing and implementing programmes on HIV/AIDS in rural and urban areas; and improved support services and people’s health care access through cooperatives apex and community-based organizations and through micro and small business and informal sector associations.

The official launching was performed by Dr. Subilaga K. Kaganda on behalf of the Executive Chairman of the Tanzania Commission on AIDS (TACAIDS) at a ceremony also attended by ILO and UN officials, ILO social partners and members of the Steering Committee of the Project. In her launching remarks Dr. Kaganda commended the ILO for its contribution to the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic particularly in the workplace. Giving a resume of the status of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania she said that the Tanzania HIV/AIDS and Malaria Indicator Survey of 2007-2008 shows that the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate has decreased from 7% as of 2004-05 to 4.7%, 2007-08 survey. However the trends have steadily decreased in some regions while increasing in others. She urged on the approach of this project as very useful tool of reaching the majority of people residing in rural areas and working in the informal sectors. She added that in Tanzania cooperative are institutions which serve the rural populations where most of the NGOs working on HIV/AIDS do not.

Speaking at the opening Mr Jurgen Schwettmann, Director of the ILO Office for Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda, traced cooperatives involvement in the fight against HIV/AIDS to a regional seminar for African cooperative leaders organised in Swaziland jointly by the ILO and the Canadian Cooperative Association in 2001. Opened by His Majesty King Mswati III of Swaziland, the seminar had inspired interest by cooperators and



donors alike, resulting in the cooperative programmes on HIV/AIDS being implemented today. With regard to HIV/AIDS at the work place he said it was not proper for employers to require HIV testing as a precondition for employment. He deplored stigmatization of persons living with the virus. This project, he pointed out, would educate workers to prevent and combat the pandemic and to live and work with those infected.

The launching was also addressed by Dr Ladislaus Komba, Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Development who said the rights of workers living with the disease were violated when stigmatized by fellow workers or employers and that his Ministry would ensure that such workers' rights were protected and medical care extended to them. Dr. Kashuliza, the Director of Cooperatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives and Ms. Agnes Namuhisa representing the Executive Secretary of the Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives confirmed that cooperative movements in Tanzania have not been actively involved in addressing HIV/AIDS epidemic. They are very inspired that the project will facilitate and support cooperatives to incorporate HIV/AIDS plans as core activity within their operations.

The launching was followed by the first meeting of the Project's Steering Committee which is composed of representatives of stakeholder institutions – including Ministry of Labour Employment and Youth Development, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives, Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives, Tanzania Commission for AIDS, Trade Union Congress of Tanzania, Association of Employers, National Council of People Living with HIV/AIDS, Moshi University College of Cooperatives and Business Studies, and Representative of SME, (VIBINDO), and ILO CoopAfrica representative. The steering committee reviewed and endorsed its terms of reference and membership, progress report and workplan for the period between June-December 2008.