

# INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Remarks by Mr Gerry Finnegan, ILO Director, at Launch of the  
York Farm Workplace Policy on HIV & AIDS  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2008.

Guest of Honour, Minister of Labour & Social Security, Hon. Ronald Mukuma, MP  
Board Chairperson of NAC, Bishop Joshua Banda  
Mr Nigel Pollard, MD, York Farm  
Executive Director, NAC, Dr Ben Chirwa  
UNAIDS Country Director  
Representatives of workers  
Representatives of management  
Distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you on this important occasion, which marks the launch of the HIV & AIDS Workplace Policy for York and Kashima Farms, where there is a labour force of 1,800 throughout the year, rising to 3,500 during the peak season. Indeed, it also marks the culmination of joint efforts between the ILO and the Farms over the past couple of years. It's always good to see tangible outputs from our efforts – whether it is from a business enterprise such as York Farm, or from a developmental organization of the UN system, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The United Nations system in Zambia, through the coordination of UNAIDS, pulls together the efforts of the individual UN agencies in the field of HIV & AIDS in order to contribute to the implementation of the policies, strategies and work plans of the National AIDS Council.

The ILO is the UN's specialized agency dealing with employment and labour issues. The ILO views HIV & AIDS as a "workplace issue", and has developed its global "Code of Practice" on HIV and AIDS in the world of work.

The ILO and York Farm have been working together on HIV and AIDS for a couple of years now; first with funding from the Italian Government and then subsequently, so as to finish something important that had been started with support from the Italian-funded project, with funding from ILO-AIDS in Geneva. The ILO is grateful to the Government of Italy for this support.

Within this ILO-Italy project, a Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions (KAP) survey was carried out at York Farm to help identify the key issues to be covered during follow-up training.

- **104 peer educators** were trained for both York and Kashima Farms;
- A peer educators' committee was formed after the training sessions in order to monitor implementation of the programme;
- **Ten (10)** trainers of peer educators were also trained.
- In addition, **Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials** such as diagrams, posters, teaching display stands and flip

charts, and so on, were produced, sourced and distributed to peer educators.

- York Farm was introduced to other important partners in this field (e.g. Afya Mzuri) where they were able to source more IEC materials, and to Ministry of Health for access to male and female condoms.
- Hundreds of workers have been reached with the HIV and AIDS messages through awareness sessions held by the peer educators who have been trained under the programme.

A special word of thanks is due to my colleagues, Olive Munjanja, Mpala Nkonkomalimba and our consultant Vivian Mtetwa, for all of the work carried out in support of this initiative.

In the middle of 2007, an assessment of the programme was carried out jointly by ILO and York Farm which prioritized the development of an HIV and AIDS workplace policy. Work on the policy started last year.

The early part of 2008 saw our combined efforts going into the finalization of the Workplace policy that is being launched here today.

This was a commendable effort to which many of you at York and Kashima Farms have contributed and actively participated.

I would like to commend Mr Nigel Pollard, Managing Director of York Farm, and the management and workers for doing such a commendable job.

The ILO's role was in guiding the process of developing the Workplace Policy and ensuring its consistency with the ILO's global Code of Practice. I must say we are very pleased with the partnership that has evolved with York Farm.

York Farm is a successful agro-based enterprise that has effectively penetrated lucrative export markets. As a private sector enterprise fully engaged in global markets, York Farm will be well aware of the importance of not only DOING the right thing – such as developing and implementing an HIV&AIDS policy – but also BEING SEEN TO BE DOING the right thing by customers in the global markets. This HIV&AIDS policy will not only assist the workers and management in York Farm, it will impress its global customers.

The Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Zambia was launched last December (2007). This Programme has 3 priority areas:

- 1) Job creation for women, young people and people with disabilities;
- 2) Prevention and mitigation of HIV & AIDS in the workplace;
- 3) Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

I mention the DWCP because with implementation of an HIV and AIDS workplace policy such as the one being launched today, this directly addresses and contributes to the second priority of the DWCP.

I wish you all well as you implement the policy and step forward in the fight against HIV and AIDS at the personal level, at the family level, at the community level, and at the level of a prestigious employer and farming enterprise – that of York Farm.

I thank you for your attention.