



NACO guidelines on

Strengthening HIV/AIDS interventions in the world of work in India

To:

All Project Directors, State/District AIDS Control Societies
Health Secretaries, State Governments and Union Territories

The AIDS Policy of the Government of India stresses that *the organized and unorganized sector of industry needs to be mobilized for taking care of the health of the productive sections of their workforce.*

Nearly 90% of the HIV infections have been reported from the most productive 15-49 years age group in India. If urgent efforts are not taken, this will adversely affect workers, their families, enterprise performance and the national economy. India has a working population of around 400 million, 93% of whom are in the informal economy, who are more difficult to reach. These workers are especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Generally, they have low access to health care facilities and low health seeking behaviour. They have either no or low social protection benefits. It is, therefore, necessary to strengthen HIV/AIDS programmes in the world of work in India on an urgent basis

No organization can do it alone. This can happen if HIV/AIDS response becomes truly multi-sectoral and HIV/AIDS is mainstreamed in the existing programmes of ministries, government departments, private sector, employers' organizations and trade unions/ civil society organizations. To give highest priority to the mainstreaming process, a National Council on AIDS (NCA) has been set up in India, which is chaired by the Prime Minister. The objectives of NCA are:

- To mainstream HIV/AIDS in all ministries and departments by treating it as a development challenge, and not merely a public health problem;
- To provide leadership to mount a multi-sectoral response to combat HIV/AIDS in the country with special reference to youth, women and **the workforce.**

These guidelines are issued with a view help State AIDS Control Societies and other relevant stakeholders in strengthening HIV/AIDS response in the world of work at the national/state levels.

HIV/AIDS workplace policy:

SACS can assist government departments, private sector, employers' and workers' organizations to develop workplace policy, based on the national policy framework and the guidelines of the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. Key principles of the ILO Code around which policy can be developed are:

Recognition of HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue, non discrimination due to HIV status, gender equality, creation of healthy work environment, social dialogue, no HIV screening for the purpose of employment, respecting confidentiality regarding HIV status, continuation of employment relationship as long as a person is fit to work, provision for HIV prevention efforts through education and training of employees and their families, and care and support, including counseling of individuals/families and treatment.

Operational/programmatic issues:

- State/District AIDS Control Societies should designate a staff to coordinate workplace interventions at the SACS level. If it is not possible to dedicate a staff from the existing personnel, a request may be made to NACO for seeking approval of a dedicated person to be appointed on contractual basis at the level of the NGO adviser.
- SACS should develop a clear work plan, with timeline and budget, which could be presently supported from the inter-sectoral component under the SACS budget. If allocation is not available, SACS should seek funds from NACO by sending a work plan along these guidelines. SACS should include this component under the State PIP being prepared for NACPIII. SACS work plan for this component should cover the following areas:
 - a. Sensitization/capacity building programmes for key departments, employers' organizations/chambers, trade unions, starting with main sectors in the states.
 - b. Assisting partners in developing their work plans, and supporting them in terms of training/materials/condoms. **Enterprises** should be encouraged to implement their work plans at their own cost. The support from SACS should be technical in nature related to policy development, training of peer educators, provision of communication materials, condoms and facilitating linkages with the voluntary counseling and testing centers/STI clinics/ART centers. Enterprises should be encouraged to support the cost of treatment, including treatment with Anti Retroviral drugs, for their employees/families as part of their policy. For contractual employees, they can set up linkages with government hospitals / ART Centers or Employee State Insurance Corporation (ESIC scheme, wherever applicable).

- c. SACS can offer technical as well as financial support for projects of small and micro enterprises and trade unions in the formal and informal sectors. It would be critical to identify entry points through industry associations, unions and other bodies' while developing these interventions. SACS can engage their partner NGOs to help in this process.
- d. SACS should support setting up Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centers in enterprises, who have their own clinical set up. This will enhance the coverage of VCTCs in the state.
- e. SACS should also collaborate with the state labour departments, Central Board For Workers Education and Employees State Insurance Corporation, two key institutions of the Ministry of Labour and Employment GOI, who are engaged in the HIV/AIDS programme. ESIC scheme also covers for ART drugs. However, SACS may like to collaborate with them for training of doctors, so that treatment protocols are correctly followed.
- f. Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) is an effective strategy in the advocacy/training programmes, which should be implemented, in collaboration with the state level PLHA networks. This is also a good strategy for fighting HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination.
- g. For covering workers in the **informal economy**, SACS are already supporting mobile and migrant workers through NGOs in their targeted interventions projects. This coverage can be enhanced by carefully mapping the state specific vulnerable groups and developing composite projects through NGOs. In addition, some more approaches can be attempted for enhancing coverage. First, mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in the programmes of various government departments/schemes. Second, engaging civil society organizations - NGOs working in areas like the adult education, health, Income generation, etc.- to mainstream HIV/AIDS within their activities. Third, engaging trade unions in their areas where they have their sectoral unions like the agriculture workers unions, postal workers unions, plantation workers unions, transport workers union, construction workers union etc. Fourth, encouraging corporate sector to cover their contractual workers as well as workers in their supply chains.

Technical support /materials for the world of work programme:

SACS can utilize the following set of materials that have been developed by ILO India to support HIV/AIDS interventions in the world of work:

- The ILO Code Of Practice, available in English and Hindi, for policy and programmatic guidelines.
- An Indian Employers Statement of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, signed by Seven key employers organizations/chambers in India: All India

Organization of Employers (AIOE), Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Employers' Federation of India (EFI), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) and Laghu Udyog Bharati (LUB). This statement is published along with a working paper on "Enhancing Business response to HIV/AIDS in India- Operational Guidelines with estimated Cost Analysis".

- A Compendium of Workplace HIV/AIDS policies.
- A Training manual for Master Trainers/Peer Educators of enterprises (includes the enterprise-based strategy as well).
- A CD containing an advocacy film for enterprise, training manual, key presentations and collocation of audio-visual spots for enterprise based programmes.
- A bilingual (English and Hindi) card game for workplace peer educators.
- A training manual for trade unions in English and Hindi, a handbook and a film on role of trade unions on HIV/AIDS in English and Hindi.
- A set of six posters on HIV/AIDS and the world of work.
- A flip book for unorganized sector workers, produced by ILO and CBWE.
- A handbook for labour administrators in English, produced by ILO and V.V. Giri National Labour Institute.

The ILO materials are available at www.ilo.org/hivaidsindia. ILO will be sending a complete set of materials to SACS. The ILO is also willing to share the text/art work of posters/materials with SACS, which could be adapted/ translated into regional languages and replicated by SACS.