



International
Labour
Organization

VOLUNTARY HIV COUNSELLING AND TESTING (VCT) AT WORK IN MOZAMBIQUE

According to a UNAIDS report of 2013, the HIV prevalence in Mozambique stands at 10.8 per cent among individuals aged between 15 and 49 years. Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) is a key component in HIV prevention, as it is a gateway to treatment, care, and psychosocial support, as well as behaviour change aiming to reduce risk behaviour. The National Strategy Plan on HIV/AIDS (2015/2019) considers HIV testing and treatment as priorities and to ensure funding and promotion of these activities in both the public and private sectors.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Partners:

Business Coalition and AIDS (ECoSIDA), Mozambique Railways Company (CFM), and multiple small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and Swedish Development Cooperation (Sida)

Beneficiary country:

Mozambique

Time-frame:

March 2014 - December 2015

Budget:

USD 170,000 from the ILO, in-kind contributions from partners

VCT@WORK

Partnerships and Field Support Department (PARDEV)

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THE RESPONSE

Since 2006 the International Labour Organization (ILO) has been supporting stakeholders in the world of work to better respond to HIV and AIDS in Mozambique. Actions encompass scaling up access to HIV prevention and care through the workplace, increasing the demand for VCT, taking into account the gender-specific needs of women and men, as well as economically empowering groups such as women, young people and people working in the informal economy that are particularly vulnerable to HIV.

In order to ensure that more people take tests, the ILO has embarked on the VCT@WORK Initiative, collaborating with partners from both the public and private sector, including the Business Coalition on HIV and AIDS (ECoSIDA), Mozambique Railways Company (CFM), the sugar industries, Mozambique Airlines, the Ministry of Health through its Provincial Directorates, the National AIDS Council (NAC), the Ministry of Transport, and the Ministry of Labour. ECoSIDA, CFM and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in partnership with the ILO, have been working together to strengthen the capacity of their members to respond to HIV and to mitigate the impact of the epidemic in workplaces. The vision is to offer voluntary and confidential HIV counselling and testing to a significant number of employees

in the private sector as a way of promoting individual responsibility towards HIV prevention, and helping raise demand for anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment that promotes effective prevention.

Initiatives include –

- The formulation of a sectorial policy responses to HIV and AIDS, to provide each concerned sector a framework for action,
- Training peer educators, and through the pool of trained peer educators, conducting prevention campaigns, and
- The organization of voluntary testing campaigns for workers in companies and local communities along the rail lines.

These initiatives contribute significantly to the response to HIV and AIDS at national level. In addition, the initiative helped the networks of People Living with HIV to address human rights and gender equality issues and participation in the development of HIV and AIDS programmes within small and medium enterprises and their members. Furthermore, the ILO supported economic empowerment of people living with HIV, through business management training, support in business planning and linking groups of PLHIV to micro finance institutions. This has enabled them to access funds and markets and increase their resilience to HIV.



RESULTS

The VCT@WORK public-private partnership in Mozambique has been an essential element mobilizing communities and providing VCT for women and men workers and community members. Under the global initiative, the ILO conducted VCT sessions in informal settings in the workplace with its constituents and partners, including small and medium enterprises, and at community level with seasonal and farm workers.

In 2014 some 30,000 women and men workers and community members (10,987 women and 18,454 men) were tested for HIV thanks to this public-private partnership approach. Persons found to be HIV-positive have been referred to health centres for advice, support and treatment if needed.

Technical capacity has been created through the training of 120 male and female peer educators and VCT counsellors in Maputo, Gaza, Sofala, Tete and Nampula provinces, which has enabled these professionals to conduct counselling and voluntary testing in and through the workplaces among the implementing partners and beneficiary enterprises. The linkages created between the ILO's implementing partners, the local health authorities and health centres

have facilitated the provision of VCT sessions using the structures and laboratory tests provided by the Government.

From 2013 to 2014, the ILO supported the design and implementation of 85 workplace programmes for SMEs. Technical assistance has been provided to employers' and workers' organizations in developing and implementing comprehensive HIV and AIDS workplace policies and programmes that address gender equality concerns and TB issues.

In this partnership, ECoSIDA played an important role in mobilizing the employers to adopt gender-responsive HIV and AIDS workplace programmes in their enterprises, and provided technical assistance to workers' committees in the development of the programmes and policies.

As a result the National AIDS Council is integrating the VCT@WORK component in its annual workplan as a priority, while coordinating with ECoSIDA and the Ministry of Health the promotion of VCT among workers and their integration in the data collection system.



"Health testing is very important for people as it allows us to know our HIV status timely and counsellors play an important role to give us information and messages about how to live positively."

– Rabia Lucas, a worker benefiting from the VCT mobile units



BENEFITS OF PARTNERING

During the launch and implementation of the VCT campaign, the ILO supported the implementation of the partnership by mobilizing the employers' and workers' organizations to run VCT in their workplace, and provided technical assistance to train peer educators and counsellors from small and medium enterprises, farms, and companies, and with others in the informal economy. With the ILO's assistance, partners including employers' and workers' organizations and public sector institutions have gained increased awareness of the VCT approach and have identified the workplace as a platform for increasing the uptake of HIV treatment and providing prevention opportunities and reducing the impact of HIV and AIDS. They also benefited from knowledge and equipment such as testing tents to continue to develop VCT sessions in new companies and to organize other health events.

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