ILO highlights the importance of workplace actions at the 19th International AIDS Conference

Washington (ILO News) - The International Labour Organization (ILO) is organizing and participating in a series of events to highlight the importance of workplace actions in prevention and of policies to reduce stigma and discrimination at work at the occasion of the 19th International AIDS Conference, which opens Sunday, 22 July, in Washington D.C, United States, under the theme “Turning the tide together”.

There are over 30 million people of working age living with HIV. Most are able and willing to work. “Today early diagnosis and the increased access and availability of treatment allow people living with HIV to live long, healthy and productive lives. But many are still forced out of employment because of stigma and discrimination,” explains Mrs. Alice Ouédraogo, Director of the ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work (ILO/AIDS). “The workplace acts as a key entry point for the promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms and gender equality for workers, their families and dependents. It is an essential part of all national HIV and AIDS programmes,” she adds.

The Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) will launch at the occasion of the conference its evidence brief Stigma and Discrimination at work, developed with support of the ILO. This evidence brief provides a snapshot of the extent and impact of HIV-related stigma and discrimination in the workplace, based on findings from a PLHIV Stigma Index in nine countries across the globe. The PLHIV Stigma Index was undertaken by GNP+ in collaboration with the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The Stigma Index questionnaire included more than 100 questions about experiences and understanding of stigma and discrimination. This evidence brief was developed based on responses to 11 questions relevant to workplace-related discrimination.

In Nigeria up to 45% of the respondents to the survey had lost their jobs or their source of income during the previous 12 months as a result of their HIV status. Up to 27% were refused the opportunity to work. Up to 28% of the respondents in Kenya stated that the nature of their work had been changed or that they had been refused promotion due to their HIV status. Wide ranging discriminatory attitudes from employers and co-workers were reported. Up to 54% in Malaysia reported discriminatory reactions from employers once they became aware of the respondents’ HIV status up to 54% Malaysia reported discriminatory reactions from co-workers once they learned of their colleagues’ HIV status. There will be a poster presentation by GNP+ on the evidence brief during the Washington conference (AIDS, 2012), and the brief will be discussed in key events organized by GNP+ and the ILO during the conference.

The International AIDS conference will feature sessions and events on the importance of the workplace actions and the establishment of public-private partnerships to address HIV and AIDS prevention, stigma and discrimination.

Before the official start of the conference, the ILO is hosting a pre-conference affiliated event, in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) to scale up workplace policies and programmes and mobilize the private sector, called “Actions against HIV and AIDS at workplace and the role of Public Private Partnerships (PPP)”, on Saturday 21 July from 15:00 at the AFL-CIO (815, 16th street, N.W. Washington D.C. 20006), UNAIDS, the American Federation of Labor and congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the United States Council for International Business (USCIB), the U.S. Department of Labor, the National Empowerment Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya, the South African Business Coalition on HIV and AIDS (SABCOHA), Levi-Strauss, GBCH, PEPFAR, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the National AIDS Control Council (NACC), the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) will be joining the event.

Monday 23 July: The ILO will present its Global Village Session “A Labour Rights Approach to HIV and Sex Work: Working with Sex Workers to Protect Human Rights and Eliminate Violence and Sexual Harassment and Promote Equal Access to Protection Schemes” (MOGS01) at 11:00 in GV Session Room 2. This panel discussion will explore ways of developing meaningful and durable partnerships with sex workers organizations and to improve sex workers’ access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services. The presentation will be followed by a question and answer session.

Thursday 26 July: Mrs. Ouédraogo will be speaking at a special session entitled “Public Private Partnerships: More Complexity, or More Innovation in the Global Response?” (THSS03) from 13:00 at
The ILO is also involved in the following events, in partnership with the IATT to scale up HIV workplace policies and programmes and mobilize the private sector

Saturday 21 July:

A Pre-conference affiliated event “Trade Union-Parallel Forum: Social Protection, access to employment, reaching young workers-social dialogue for a responsible AIDS actions in the world of work” organized by International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC) in collaboration with the American Federation of Labor and congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), from 9:00 at ALF-CIO (815, 16th street, N.W. Washington D.C. 20006);

Monday 23 July:

An Oral Poster Discussion (MOPDE0106) “A comparative Analysis of two high volume Male Medical Circumcision (MMC) operational models with similar service delivery outcomes in different settings within Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces in South Africa: Urban Center for HIV/AIDS Preventions Studies (CHAPS) vs Rural-SACTWU Worker Health Program (SWHP)” from 13:00 at Session Room 2;

A Symposia Session (MOSY03) “Social Protection: Promoting a More Effective Response” from 14:30 at Session Room 2;

Tuesday 24 July:

A Networking Zone Session “Including LGBTI in the world of work” from 10:30 at LGBTI Networking Zone Booth 812;

A Leadership & Accountability Skills Development Session (TUWS06) “What Is the Current Role of the Business Sector in the Response to AIDS and How Can the AIDS Accountability Workplace Scorecard Be Used to Promote Best Practice AIDS Strategies and Programmes in the Workplace?” from 11:00 at Mini Room 6;

A Networking Zone Session “Stigma and discrimination reduction through workplace policies” from 16:00 at Networking Zone STOP AIDS NOW! Booth 821;

Wednesday 25 July:

Mrs. Ouédraogo will address the 19th International AIDS Conference participants at 18:30 – 20:00 in the Satellite Session entitled “Turning the Tide? Not without prisons! ” (WESA24). In her intervention she will address the importance of implementing occupational safety and health measures for prison personnel.

Poster exhibitions will also take place at different times and dates during the Conference

Monday 23 July, Exhibition Hall Level 2, 12:30 – 14:30:

The first evidence-informed policy on HIV and AIDS and world of work in the Middle East: Jordan takes the lead toward the workplace rights of PLHIV (MOPE588)

Bangkok Gay Saunas - a high HIV prevalence setting needing urgent workplace Interventions (MOPE544)

Successful advocacy for the revision of discriminatory employment policies for civil servants and teachers in China (MOPE593)

Implementation of HIV and AIDS Policies can bring a difference in the workplace (MOPE615)

Wednesday 25 July, Exhibition Hall Level 2, 12:30 – 14:30:

Stigma and discrimination at work. Findings from the People Living with HIV Stigma Index (WEPE454)

Chief Executive Officers play leading role in voluntary testing in Kenya (WEPE574)

Responding to HIV vulnerability of informal sex workers in Cambodia: Improving workplace conditions is the key to prevention (WEPE312)
The ILO is a UNAIDS co-sponsor and the lead UN agency for HIV/AIDS policies and programmes in the world of work and private sector mobilization. Addressing HIV/AIDS is an integral part of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. The ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work (ILO/AIDS) was established in 2001 and contributes to the UN Millennium Development Goals by achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support through workplaces.

For more information, during the 19th International AIDS conference in Washington, please contact: Josée Laporte, Technical Specialist, ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the world of work, +41 78 882 6118 Adam Bowers, Communications Officer, ILO Geneva, +41 22 799 6126