

## HIV/AIDS and the World of Work

**This brief describes projects that are implemented in the CIS region and are aimed at HIV/AIDS prevention at the workplace.**

### Background:

The estimated number of people living with HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia has risen to 1.5 million. The HIV epidemic in the Russian Federation (already the largest in this region) continues to grow. The annual numbers of newly reported HIV diagnoses are also rising in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (which now has the largest epidemic in Central Asia).<sup>1</sup>



Among major factors contributing to the spread of the epidemic are poor economic conditions in most of the countries in the region, lack of HIV awareness and knowledge among health and educational workers, high level of about migration, the region's territory being a route for human and drugs trafficking, and risky sexual behaviours.

The ILO contribution to the HIV/AIDS response is based on the concept that the workplace is a platform to fight against discrimination related to HIV status, ensure HIV education and prevention, and to contribute to universal access to care, support and treatment. Our main partners are the ILO constituents - governments, employers and worker organizations, as well as other stakeholders.

According to the ILO estimates, 80 per cent of HIV-positive individuals in the CIS countries are economically active and 75 % are under 30 years old, as compared to 33 % in Western Europe. The major means of HIV transmission is injecting drugs. This is due in large part to the drug trafficking routes going through the countries of Central Asia.

At the same time, the HIV epidemic is maturing and its patterns are changing, with sexually transmitted HIV cases comprising a growing share of new diagnoses. This corresponds to the spread of the epidemic from high-risk groups (injecting drug users, commercial sex workers, etc.) to the general population. As the epidemics in this region evolve, the proportion of women infected with HIV is growing. About 40% of newly registered HIV cases in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2006 were women.



Photo: ILO

<sup>1</sup> UNAIDS 2008 report on the global AIDS epidemic

## ILO strategy to combat HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia:

- mainstream principles of the ILO Code of practice on HIV/AIDS and world of work in the countries' Decent Work agendas;
- incorporate HIV/AIDS issues into Occupational Safety and Health and Corporate Social Responsibility agenda;
- build up ILO constituents' capacities to respond to HIV/AIDS through information sharing and training;
- support ILO partners' initiatives to identify their roles in the HIV/AIDS prevention at workplace;
- assist the constituents in incorporating the world of work component into national action plans, labour policy and legislation;
- conduct research work to assess the socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS epidemic.



Photo: ILO



In Russia the ILO Subregional Office has implemented a number of projects including HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Programme, HIV/AIDS in the Road Transport Sector; Development of Territorial Strategies for Programmes to address HIV/AIDS in the Workplace; HIV/STI Prevention among Young People.

The ILO Office has set up a network of focal points on HIV/AIDS and the world of work representing the tripartite partners in the countries of the Subregion. These officials, nominated by their respective organizations, serve as resource persons and provide support in formulating national responses to the epidemic.

### Key documents on HIV/AIDS prevention at workplaces

- ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and World of Work (translated into six

In Kazakhstan the trade unions have extended their HIV prevention campaign to university students. "In the city of Almaty our federation of education workers decided to focus on the most vulnerable group, the first-year students, many of whom have just come from rural areas and are not used to life in a big city with all its potential risks," says Laura Kezheneva of the Trade Union Federation of Kazakhstan. "At the ILO training where I took part we learned that every social group, the youth in particular, requires a group-specific approach. We thought the best way to talk to them about such serious topic as HIV/AIDS would be theatre performances, contests, music and humour - yes, humour. For the university campaign we brought in a winning KVN team (*Club of the Jolly and Sharp-Witted, a popular contest in the CIS region*), and the results were just excellent."

languages of the countries of the Subregion)

- Implementing the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work: an Education and Training Manual
- Workplace Action on HIV/AIDS: a set of six factsheets
- Joint ILO/WHO Guidelines for Health Services and HIV/AIDS
- A Handbook on HIV/AIDS for Labour and Factory Inspectors
- Using the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work: Guidelines for Transport Sector on HIV/AIDS



- Employers' organizations and HIV/AIDS (CD-ROM)
- Driving for change: A training toolkit on HIV/AIDS for the road transport sector



*The ILO modular training course for young people called "Your Health" addresses young people on HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and other issues.*

*In 2008 the Russian Government named it the best educational material for youth.*





The ILO is in the process of formulating a new international standard on HIV/AIDS and the world of work which will have the form of a Recommendation. Dr. Sophia Kisting, Director of the ILO Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work, explains how this new standard would help address the challenges posed by the epidemic: "To date, HIV/AIDS has been covered implicitly by international ILO labour standards, such as Convention No. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation). If adopted in 2010, this standard will be the first international standard to focus explicitly on HIV/AIDS, human rights and the workplace. The instrument would give fresh impetus to anti-discrimination policies at national and workplace levels. Through its emphasis on rights and specific guidance on the components of a workplace package on HIV/AIDS, it would strengthen the contribution of the world of work to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, care and support. It would also provide a framework for coordinating workplace responses at country level and promote information-gathering and reporting."

The ILO Conventions relevant to HIV/AIDS prevention at workplace:

- 1. Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment, 1981 (No. 155)**
- 2. Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)**
- 3. Termination of Employment at the Initiative of the Employer Convention, 1982 (No. 158)**
- 4. Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159)**
- 5. Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)**
- 6. Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)**
- 7. Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)**

## Partners

Collaboration with the Governments and the organizations of employers and workers is the focus of the workplace interventions on national and territorial level. ILO also maintains close cooperation with national AIDS centers, national state and public organizations and the mass media. Within the UN system the ILO Office works actively

with the UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO and other offices at the sub-regional and country level.

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