



- Ensuring that business practices do not encourage or condone risk-taking behaviour: it is relatively common practice to entertain clients by paying for sex services as part of business entertainment expenses.
- Zero tolerance for violence and harassment against women at work: trade unions should stress this as a trade union issue, and employers should explicitly state that violence or harassment is a disciplinary offence.
- Encouraging workplace medical facilities to diagnose and treat STIs, which increase vulnerability to HIV.

Sector-specific measures

Some industries have taken very practical measures. The World Tourism Organisation, for example, has promoted a multi-stakeholder initiative against child prostitution and exploitation in the tourism industry.

Action against sex tourism

Based on a model agreement developed by the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF), the Philippines National Union of Workers in the Hotel, Restaurant and Allied Industries (NUWHRAIN) has included a clause about sex tourism in its collective agreements with hotels, including:

1. Hotels, restaurants, bars, etc. shall inform customers that they fight against sex tourism.
2. Employees have the right and should make it their duty to:
 - Report any customer request having to do with child prostitution. Unions inform management about those matters and examine ways to discourage this type of request.
 - Refuse to respond to any request having to do with child prostitution. Management supports employees in any dispute with customers.

Relevant ILO international labour standards

- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and Equal Remuneration Recommendation, 1951 (No. 90)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)
- Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No.183)

Resources and References

www.ilo.org/aids

www.ilo.org/gender

ILO/AIDS (2001). "The ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work". www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/code/codemain.htm

ILO/AIDS (2002). "Implementing the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work: an education and training manual". www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/code/manualen/index.htm

ILO (2002). "Managing emerging health-related problems at work - SOLVE: stress, tobacco, alcohol and drugs, HIV/AIDS, violence". ILO InFocus Programme on Safe Work. ILO/ACTRAV (1997). "Promoting gender equality: a resource kit for trade unions".

HIV/AIDS, Gender and the World of Work



HIV/AIDS is a major threat to the world of work. It affects the most productive segment of the labour force, reduces earnings, and imposes huge costs on enterprises in all sectors through declining productivity, increasing labour costs and loss of skills and experience. It also threatens fundamental rights at work, particularly with respect to discrimination and stigmatisation aimed at workers and people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. The epidemic and its impact strike hardest at vulnerable groups including women and children, thereby increasing existing gender inequalities and exacerbating the problem of child labour. The epidemic changes the age and sex distribution of the labour force as it hits hardest the population aged 15-49, decimating economically active age groups and increasing the number of widows, orphans and elderly facing economic uncertainty and devastation.

The *ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work* (2001) includes the principle of gender equality, stressing that successful prevention and impact mitigation will depend on "more equal gender relations and the empowerment of women". It provides practical guidance for formulating and implementing appropriate workplace policies and programmes for prevention and care in the formal and informal sectors. It covers key principles, such as the recognition of HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue, non-discrimination in employment, gender equality, screening and confidentiality, social dialogue, prevention and care, and support, as the basis for addressing the epidemic in the workplace. To guide implementation of the Code, an education and training Manual has been produced, including case studies, learning activities, and examples of laws and gender sensitive policies.

Key Issues

Inequality and vulnerability

Gender affects the world of work because people take their gender identities to work, while the workplace mirrors and sometimes exacerbates the gender inequalities and discrimination present in wider society.

Women constitute a substantial part of the global workforce and their contribution to the care economy, the informal sector as well as within formal, paid work is recognised but poorly quantified in both economic and numerical terms. Women's savings and investment groups provide substantial capital into the informal credit and business sectors. HIV is having a direct and multiple impact upon women and consequently upon the work that they are able to do. This in turn has a noticeable impact upon the economy and the economic development of any nation with high HIV prevalence, where large sectors of the workforce are being lost to HIV/AIDS.

Women are more easily infected than men for biological reasons and are more often adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic for socio-cultural and economic reasons. Sex discrimination limits the position of women, rendering them poorer and less powerful. Poverty has a direct impact upon HIV risk and its repercussions. As a result of family responsibilities based on the gender division of labour, the burden of caring for the sick falls more often on women and girls, thus increasing their workload and diminishing income-generating and schooling possibilities.

In general, women's access to income-generating possibilities is – compared to men's – already limited. Women are more likely to be engaged as traders in the highly competitive urban informal sector; in agriculture where marketing of cash crops is often dominated by men; or in the lower paid jobs in the formal sector, which provide little social and economic security in terms of income, savings, insurance or social security. HIV within a family places an immediate drain both on the family economy for cash for drugs and treatment, and on the time available for productive work. Women's income, already insecure, becomes crucial when the family is affected by HIV.



Sexual harassment at work

Research by the International Labour Rights Fund in 2002 in Kenya's export-oriented sectors - coffee, tea, and light manufacturing industries - found that women experienced violence and harassment as a normal part of their working lives:

- Over 90 percent of the women interviewed had experienced or observed sexual abuse within their workplace.
- 95 percent of all women who had suffered workplace sexual abuse were afraid to report the problem, for fear of losing their jobs.
- 70 percent of the men interviewed viewed sexual harassment of women workers as normal and natural behaviour.

Women are exposed to the risk of sexual harassment or abuse in the workplace. Their economic fragility may make them more vulnerable to sexual coercion within the context of work, thereby increasing their risk of exposure to HIV.

Where men are expected to be the chief providers of income through work this can be a source of pride, but also of stress. As a result of economic pressure, both men and women may accept work that is dangerous, dirty or unpleasant and involve their children in productive activity rather than education.

Certain types of work or work situations may carry inherently high risks of HIV infection

- Migration for work (such as for those who leave family units to work in factories, mines, or domestic service) or the obligation to travel regularly with long periods away from spouses and partners (such as for transport workers, armed forces, or market traders who travel to obtain goods) exposes both men and women to HIV risk if other sexual partners are taken and sexual networks extended.
- Long periods away from the family in all-male working and living arrangements can expose spouses to HIV risk on return. These conditions may lead to unprotected casual sex with various partners and favours an increase in men who have sex with men.
- Working in geographically isolated environments with limited social interaction and limited access to health facilities such as on plantations and commercial farms may carry higher risks.
- Domestic workers are frequently at risk from sexual coercion from employers or other household members, and isolated from support and information networks. Sex workers are also at greater risk from STIs and HIV.
- Workers within medical services may face occupational risks (needle-stick injury, exposure to infected blood) where Universal Precautions are not followed and/or equipment is inadequate.

Truck drivers

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in a study in East Africa (World Bank 2003) found that truck drivers separated from their families for a long time, waiting for days at border crossing points, and using routes well supplied with bars, frequently engage in unprotected sex with sex workers and are at a high risk for STIs including HIV. The ITF study concluded that: "Without observance of the rights of truckers, starting with a redress of their working and living conditions, no meaningful response to the control of HIV transmission...is possible."



Many workers who are used to experiencing poor working and living conditions will include risk-taking and exploitative activities within their behaviour patterns outside the work place. This includes unprotected sex, use of alcohol and drugs and the violence that these may fuel.

Migrant workers

Trade unions in the Wazirpur area of New Delhi say that workers there carry out heavy and dangerous work for twelve hours a day. They are young male migrants from other parts of the country, who send money back to their families. They feel at risk of serious injury or death. In this situation, they have developed a 'macho' sense of themselves: "Being a man means facing hardships, providing for the family and chasing women". They are frequent users of commercial sex workers and generally have unprotected sex (ILO/AIDS 2002).

Groups at particular risk of HIV infection and its impacts

- Unemployed workers are exposed to pressures to engage in transactional sex for income or the potential of employment.
- Informal sector workers (mostly women) are especially exposed to the consequences of HIV/AIDS since they lack health facilities and social protection arrangements at work; their activities depend heavily on their own labour and rarely lead to financial security; they can easily lose their precarious livelihoods when they are sick or forced to withdraw from work to care for family members.
- Girls and boys orphaned by AIDS are often denied educational opportunities and may be drawn into the worst forms of child labour, with young girls being especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation.
- Migrants who arrive in search of work lack social networks and the security these provide. Living in precarious conditions, they are prey to sexual aggression or may be forced into survival sex.

Key Actions Required

Key actors in the world of work (governments and labour ministries, employers, trade unions and worker associations) have an important leadership role to play in modifying attitudes and practice within the world of work and beyond. Backed up by government messages and action and through changes to the laws, statutory benefits, taxation, child-care provision, and equal opportunities initiatives, attitudes and structures that disadvantage women must be challenged and changed. By providing a greater range of economic alternatives, more financially independent women will be under less pressure to resort to using sex for survival or to continue in unequal relationships with men who refuse to practise safe sex.

Employment policies and structures should be reviewed to address gender inequality in the context of HIV/AIDS through:

- Opposing discrimination at work.
- Providing workplace education for men and women (including sex education/information, psychosocial health, violence at work, reproductive health, men's and women's social and economic roles and family responsibilities).
- Avoiding work patterns which separate workers from their families for prolonged periods or providing facilities for rest and recreation, or family accommodation.