

**PLATFORM FOR ACTION ON
HIV/AIDS AND THE WORLD OF WORK
IN THE CARIBBEAN SUB-REGION
17 May 2002**

Adopted by Participants to the
ILO Caribbean Meeting on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work:
Mobilizing for Action
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Barbados

HIV/AIDS IN THE CARIBBEAN

HIV/AIDS is a universal pandemic which threatens every man, woman and child in the Caribbean today. It is of major concern to us that 95% of the approximately 34 million persons worldwide currently living with HIV/AIDS are in the developing countries. HIV infection is increasing rapidly in the Caribbean, ranking second only to sub-Saharan Africa with respect to the prevalence rate. The countries in the region are confronted with the frightening reality that HIV/AIDS is threatening their political, economic, and social sustainability.

HIV/AIDS is not merely a growing health problem but also represents a social and labour issue, which impacts on workers and their families, enterprises and national economies. It is, without a doubt, a workplace issue and a development challenge as much as it is a biomedical problem. It constitutes a serious barrier to social and economic progress worldwide and threatens to reverse developmental gains. Its impact can be particularly devastating to the economies of Caribbean countries.

This impact is aggravated by our weak economic base, high unemployment and poverty levels and the negative consequences of structural adjustments. Moreover, persons of working age comprise the majority of those infected by the virus. The detrimental effects of this will be manifested in areas such as: the supply of labour, the quality of human capital due to the loss of experienced workers, the greater social security demands placed on the State, an increase in child labour and increased poverty in households and among women. Unless Caribbean countries mobilize into action, the labour market and employment effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic will erode the productivity gains and international competitiveness of member States in the region. In the absence of a cure, we would need to administer a 'social vaccine'. The workplace presents a critical platform for administering this social vaccine.

To combat the epidemic, Governments, employers and workers and their organisations, NGO's and other stakeholders in the region have institutionalized workplace policies and ongoing programmes of information, education and communication on the various

aspects of HIV/AIDS. These interventions have been aimed at increasing awareness, establishing prevention measures, eradicating stigmatization and discrimination, reducing risks of infection and, ultimately, lowering the incidence of HIV/AIDS and securing productive lives of the population.

However, the culture of silence, fear, denial and stigmatization that persists in the region, continues to inhibit effective action.

Conscious of the urgency of action to mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS in the workplace, participants from 13 countries and 1 territory of the Caribbean representing Ministries of Labour, Ministries of Health, employers' and workers' organizations who met at Sam Lord's Castle Resort, St. Philip, Barbados, 15 – 17 May, 2002 in tripartite delegations adopted by consensus the following Platform for Action to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis at the workplace, community, national and regional levels.

COMMON VALUES

- Tripartism
- Social dialogue
- Shared responsibility
- Partnerships
- Involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS
- Good governance

FRAMEWORK

International Guidelines

In developing national and other workplace policies and programmes, parties are strongly urged to take cognizance of the comprehensive guidelines in the *ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work* (hereinafter called the ILO Code of Practice), particularly in the following key areas of action:

- Recognition of HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue
- Non-discrimination
- Gender equality
- Healthy work environment
- Social dialogue
- No screening for purposes of exclusion from employment or work processes

- Confidentiality
- Continuation of employment relationship
- Prevention
- Care and support

Additionally, due regard should be given to the provisions contained in the *ILO Resolution concerning HIV/AIDS and the World of Work*, which calls on governments of member States and employers' and workers' organizations to take the following actions as appropriate for their role:

- Raise national awareness, particularly of the world of work, involving other appropriate and concerned groups, to eliminate stigma and discrimination attached to HIV/AIDS, to fight the culture of denial and thereby prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS
- Strengthen the capacity of the social partners to address the pandemic
- Strengthen occupational safety and health systems to protect groups at risk
- Formulate and implement social and labour policies and programmes that mitigate the effects of AIDS
- Effectively mobilize resources

Parties should also be guided by the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the relevant ILO Instruments as specified in the ILO Code of Practice.

United Nations Human Rights Instruments and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the United Nations Special Session on HIV/AIDS, should also be taken into account.

Caribbean Guidelines

Stakeholders are encouraged to take into consideration the following key initiatives developed within the Caribbean region:

- Caribbean Regional Strategic Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS
- Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS
- Nassau Declaration on Health 2001 – *The Health of the Region is the Wealth of the Region*, proclamation by Heads of State of CARICOM governments.

RESPONSIBILITY

Action against HIV/AIDS is primarily a national responsibility. Action is required on an urgent, immediate and continuous basis.

Governments, employers' organizations and trade unions are called upon at the highest level to declare that HIV/AIDS requires urgent attention and mobilisation of resources.

Information on the impact on the world of work should be widely disseminated.

TIME-BOUND COMMITMENTS¹

Persons Living with HIV/AIDS

Persons living with HIV/AIDS are to be actively involved in every part of the implementation of this Platform for Action.

Tripartite Commitments

Regional Level

- Advocate and liaise with CARICOM for the establishment of a regional tripartite committee on HIV/AIDS and the Workplace (by end of 2002) to contribute to the development and implementation of the Caribbean Regional Strategic Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS.
- Request CARICOM to ensure that all Heads of Government receive a copy of the ILO Code of Practice.
- Lobby respective governments and employers' and workers' organizations at regional level - Caribbean Employers' Confederation (CEC), Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL) and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to ensure support for this Platform for Action and to meet to plan action.
- Exchange best practices and relevant information among countries.
- Caribbean Regional Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS is to facilitate, with the support of the ILO, the distribution of the ILO Code of Practice to the Network and to include HIV/AIDS in the Workplace on the Agenda at the next regional capacity building workshop in October 2002.
- Conduct studies on models of behaviour change taking into account both intellectual and emotional responses.

¹ Where no specific time-frame is given, it is understood that the target dates are to be set at national level.

Tripartite Commitments

National level

- Establish/strengthen national tripartite committees for HIV/AIDS and the Workplace (government, employers, workers) with designated focal points by end-June 2002.
- Integrate national tripartite committees into existing/new Multi-Sectoral Task Forces on HIV/AIDS (National AIDS Commission, National AIDS Committees, UNAIDS Theme Group etc.) by end-September 2002.
- Seek commitment at the highest national level among all partners by familiarising them with the ILO Code of Practice and this Platform for Action (by end-March 2004).
- Develop and implement national policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work by end-March 2004 as part of the National Strategic Plans on HIV/AIDS (utilising structured, coordinated approach).
- Integrate the ILO Code of Practice into existing and new implementation plans.
- Develop/revise individual stakeholder guidelines on HIV/AIDS and the Workplace to reflect the principles of the ILO Code of Practice (by end-March 2004).
- Review existing legislation relevant to HIV/AIDS and the workplace; lobby for amendments or new enactments to ensure compliance (target dates to be set at the national level).
- Propose and lobby for new legislation (if necessary) relevant to HIV/AIDS and the workplace (target dates to be set at the national level).
- Sensitise/educate government, employers and workers on HIV/AIDS to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS and the workplace leading to change in behaviour (ongoing, with annual reviews).
- Improve research and surveillance systems on risky behaviour to improve prevention measures.
- Develop and implement programmes to reduce/eliminate stigma and discrimination in the workplace against persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) consistent with the ILO Code of Practice (ongoing, with annual reviews).

- Develop cadre of trainers on HIV/AIDS and workplace issues in every employment sector, including the informal sector, media and church.
- Plan and hold information and education sessions with medical doctors and other health care professionals on HIV/AIDS and workplace issues.

Commitments of Governments

- Develop workplace policies/programmes on HIV/AIDS consistent with the ILO Code of Practice in all branches of government on a phased basis by end-March 2004.
- Provide/lobby for Governments to include funding for work-related programmes on HIV/AIDS in their annual budgets.
- Form a national tripartite committee on HIV/AIDS and the workplace.
- Co-ordinate the development and implementation of prevention, treatment and care and support programmes.
- Draft and promote enactment of appropriate legislation on HIV/AIDS and the workplace and create a legal frame work on HIV/AIDS and human rights issues.
- Mobilize and sensitize the general public on the issues of HIV/AIDS and the Workplace.

Commitments of Employers' organizations

- Educate/sensitize member companies on the need for integration of the ILO Code of Practice into workplace policies and programmes by end-December 2003.
- Educate employers on HIV/AIDS and the workplace issues.
- Establish HIV/AIDS Workplace Policies. Set targets at national level.
- Work collaboratively with trade unions to provide consultations with and training for employees.
- Form/strengthen joint health & safety committees within workplaces.
- Include provisions in collective agreements on HIV/AIDS based on the ILO Code of Practice.

Commitments of Workers' organizations

- Educate/sensitise member unions on the need for integration of the ILO Code of Practice into labour guidelines and collective bargaining agreements by end-December 2003.
- Work collaboratively with employers to provide consultations with and training for employees.
- Work collectively with employers in the development and implementation of HIV/AIDS workplace policies. Set targets at national level.
- Build capacities within trade unions to provide counselling services.
- Network with relevant stakeholders.
- Include provisions in collective agreements on HIV/AIDS based on the ILO Code of Practice.
- Create awareness of workers rights' and responsibilities.
- Lobby government for the development of national workplace policies and supportive legislation.
- Form part of the national tripartite committee.

Workplace Level

Employers and workers undertake to develop and implement policies and programmes for workplaces in the public and private sectors and the formal and informal economies. Targets to be determined at the national level.

MEDIA STRATEGY

- Disseminate information about this Platform for Action to all media by Friday June 7, 2002.
- Develop and disseminate in conjunction with media group or association – guidelines for media policy on HIV/AIDS utilizing the ILO Code of Practice.
- Conduct seminars through media associations or National AIDS Committees to sensitise the media to issues in the ILO Code of Practice.

- Treat media as a worksite and involve media companies in workplace policy and programme initiatives using existing networks – Journalists Against HIV/AIDS, Media Managers Alliance, Press Associations.
- Invite Media Associations to be part of National AIDS Committees.
- Invite media managers to commit to cost-sharing for advertisement placements on HIV/AIDS and the workplace.
- Increase awareness about HIV/AIDS and the workplace through public information campaigns (mass media, billboards, flyers, brochures, low-literacy booklets and comic books).

MONITORING/FOLLOW-UP

The parties are committed to monitoring and following-up this Platform for Action.

THE ROLE OF THE ILO

- The ILO is requested to assist in the implementation of the ILO Code of Practice and this Platform for Action.
- The ILO is requested to assist in the formulation of procedures to follow up on the commitments made in this Platform for Action.
- The ILO is requested to provide assistance to regional and national tripartite committees designated or set up under this Platform for Action.
- The ILO is requested to make the ILO code of Practice accessible to all Caribbean countries.