

Upscaling HIV through Wellness

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Realising social protection and decent work for all is COTU (K)'s goal. This will ultimately contribute towards the eradication of poverty by ensuring the provision of social protection for all, as elaborated by the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

To address social justice for a fair globalization and the ILO global jobs pact and decent work agenda, COTU (K) has undertaken among others to ensure the fight against HIV/AIDS at the work place as prescribed by ILO Convention 200.

In fighting HIV/AIDS, COTU (K) has strived to increase access to social protection for the workers including those in the informal economy. Sector policies and legislations that address HIV/AIDS at the work place in accordance with the ILO code of practice and international labour standards have been adopted. Moreover, COTU (K) was actively involved in the drafting process of The Kenya National HIV Policy at the Workplace which is in its final validation process.

In the period 2012-2013, COTU (K) has collaborated with various social partners in its workplace HIV & AIDS Programme especially ILO, ITUC, OATUU and SWHAP. These partners has shown commitment in accelerating COTU (K)'s adopted goal of getting to 'Zero new infection', 'Zero HIV related deaths' and 'Zero Discrimination'.

Through the current HIV & AIDS programme at COTU (K), training workshops have been held in 8 regions in Kenya during the mentioned period. A minimum of 150 workplaces have been impacted. This will consequently result to effective HIV policies established at the workplaces and ultimately curb HIV pandemic.

Through collaborative effort between the tripartite partners in Kenya and external partners, HIV prevalence rate decreased nationally from 7.2%, as measured in KAIS 2007 to 5.6% in 2012.

Many organizations are progressively broadening their HIV programs into wellness. Apart from advocating for better salaries and terms of employment, trade unions have an opportunity to ensure Psycho-social wellness of its members. A shift from a HIV specific to a wellness programme will address issues such as screening for non-communicable diseases. This would be a timely intervention at a time when Kenya is losing thousands of workers to non-communicable diseases especially cancer, diabetes and hypertension.

Other elements of a wellness programme would include training on basic financial management skills and stress management skills, sexual reproductive health, physical exercise and good nutrition.

Ownership of a wellness programme is win-win opportunity for both employees and employers because it has a direct bearing on productivity. Therefore, COTU (K) strongly advocates for an integration of wellness programmes into existing OSHE/HIV & AIDS workplace programmes.