SMARTWORK
THE WORKPLACE RESPONSE TO AIDS

PROVEN RESULTS

A TESTED APPROACH
If government does not have the support of other sectors, they are doomed to fail on AIDS. AIDS is a crisis and it needs a crisis response. It is pure bottom-line responsibility for business and unions to support workplace responses to AIDS.

—Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director, UNAIDS

The United States will work with national and international business coalitions and labor organizations to facilitate their efforts to improve and expand programs in the workplace, particularly at companies in heavily impacted countries. In close collaboration with business and labor, the U.S. Government will serve as a catalyst for developing and implementing prevention, treatment, and care programs for employees and immediate communities.

—President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
U.S. Five-Year Global HIV/AIDS Strategy
FOR MORE INFORMATION:

To find out how you can use SMARTWork to address HIV/AIDS in the workforce or for assistance in developing a customized program, contact us at:

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End Notes

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Many of the 11,000 employees of the Haiphong Leather Shoe Company are young people who moved to the city to earn a living wage and a better life. Tran Thi Dan, vice chair of the company’s labor union, knew that HIV/AIDS was a threat to many of her colleagues and to her company. She believed it was her responsibility to act.

Dan joined a new internal committee—one that was designing an HIV prevention program for the whole company. One that was training peers to teach colleagues about the disease. One that was creating antidiscrimination policies, implementing an education program to reduce stigma, encouraging voluntary HIV testing, and providing access to care. It was the first time her company had responded so comprehensively to a devastating problem.

And it happened because of SMARTWork.
RESPONDING TO HIV/AIDS IN THE WORKFORCE

HIV/AIDS is a major threat to the world of work. It is affecting the most productive segment of the labour force and reducing earnings, and it is imposing huge costs on enterprises in all sectors.

—International Labour Organization
Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work

SMARTWork supports the business sector in creating capacity to respond effectively to HIV/AIDS in the workforce. But it also reflects the idea that the business sector should not have to address HIV/AIDS on its own. More to the point, it cannot.

- Only government—not business—can implement policies to reduce stigma and discrimination and improve services on a national basis.

- Labor—not business—can most readily implement policies and programs that reach beyond company boundaries. And labor’s unique influence among the workforce generates opportunities for addressing HIV/AIDS that are not available to government and business.

SMARTWork unites business, labor, and government in a collaborative response to HIV/AIDS. It is an approach that reflects something we all know about HIV/AIDS:

"Protecting the health of people in the workforce, dealing with threats to productivity and the economy, and ending discrimination are not mutually exclusive. They are interdependent."
BECAUSE OF SMARTWORK . . .

More than 6,600 people from business, labor, and government have learned how to implement HIV/AIDS interventions in the workforce that will ultimately affect the lives of millions of people. Many more have been reached indirectly: SMARTWork training participants have received information about HIV risk factors, transmission, and means of prevention to correct misconceptions and fill information gaps. They also have learned about the epidemic’s impact on the individual, business, and society.

Where other educational courses for HIV/AIDS end, SMARTWork is just getting started. It:

- teaches how appropriate organizational policies can have a positive impact and gives labor and business leaders the skills to create them,
- fosters teamwork by showing that people at all organizational levels have a role to play,
- teaches participants how to involve their colleagues in building organizational responses to HIV/AIDS,
- provides skills to organize and mobilize people to act on a large scale, and
- offers train-the-trainer programs to create a cadre of experts who will support the development of workplace interventions well into the future.

More than 1 million workers have seen improvements in HIV/AIDS policies and programs because of SMARTWork.

In multinational companies, such as Adidas-Salomon, Cadbury, Timberland, Colgate-Palmolive, and Sheraton Hotels—and in smaller and medium-sized enterprises as well—SMARTWork has helped create dramatic improvements in access to HIV/AIDS-related services.

- Through SMARTWork training, technical assistance, and capacity-building, organizations have built comprehensive programs for prevention, counseling and testing, and care.
- These programs promote abstinence, faithfulness, appropriate use of condoms, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.
- They also establish mechanisms to make voluntary counseling and testing available and build access to treatment and referral networks.

SMARTWork is helping national governments, labor unions, and businesses develop policies to create a more favorable environment for addressing the epidemic and protect the dignity of those living with HIV/AIDS.

- A small staff in Ukraine brokered the introduction of nondiscriminatory language into union contracts governing over 1 million seafaring, railroad, and hospital workers.
- In the Dominican Republic, several prominent employers put an end to pre-employment testing once they learned, through SMARTWork training and advocacy, that the practices were both unsound and illegal.
- In Vietnam, where HIV/AIDS was codified in laws and policies as a “social evil,” SMARTWork helped strengthen provisions of the new National Ordinance on HIV/AIDS, which reduces the environment of blame and refers to AIDS for what it is: a disease.
FOUR KEY COMPONENTS

SMARTWork reflects that different countries have different needs and that opportunities for action are not the same from place to place. But the program is not an ad hoc array of interventions. It comprises fundamental components and a systematic process that guides implementation in every environment.

1. Building relationships, planning a response

When SMARTWork begins working in a new country, we study existing information on the local epidemic and related programs and policies. Then we conduct our own research, which helps us learn more about the local environment. In Zimbabwe, results from our survey of 2,300 companies revealed that few offered HIV/AIDS prevention, care, or support services. The results also told us why: the financial barriers were perceived to be too substantial.

Simultaneously, SMARTWork staff build relationships with leaders from business, labor, and government that foster a collaborative response to HIV/AIDS. Through this process of team building, we learn things about the local environment that cannot be learned any other way. In Ukraine we learned that executives accustomed to the Soviet era, when “social issues” were handled by a centralized government, sometimes did not think of workplace interventions as being in their purview.

2. Increasing knowledge, fostering action

In a two-day training course, SMARTWork educates decisionmakers from business, labor, and government about HIV/AIDS. Participants learn about HIV transmission, surveillance, and disease progression. Our course also provides them with an understanding of the effects of HIV/AIDS on individuals, on business, and on their nation.

Upon completion of the course, participants are asked to return to their organizations and take action against HIV/AIDS. For example, a government official may be asked to spearhead development of labor code regulations that protect workers living with HIV/AIDS. Participants from business and labor may be asked to create internal committees to plan and implement their organization’s response to the disease.
3. Implementing workplace-based interventions, developing capacity

SMARTWork technical assistance helps businesses and labor unions develop in-company committees that drive the implementation of workplace-based HIV/AIDS initiatives. Committees include employees from every level of the organization. And although SMARTWork provides technical support along the way, the committees develop their own programs.

These programs give companies what they need: sustainable and ongoing responses to the epidemic. SMARTWork programs reflect the most recent research on HIV prevention and care, and because they are implemented by a cross-section of people who work in the company, they reflect the culture, beliefs, and attitudes of people they are designed to reach.

4. Creating policies, protecting workers

Stigma and discrimination make disclosure of HIV status difficult and pose barriers to HIV counseling and testing and care services. SMARTWork supports development of policies that can help reduce these effects—and protect the HIV-positive employee from losing a job or home.

This is Why

. . . in Vietnam we did critical work to reframe HIV/AIDS as a public health issue affecting the entire country.

. . . in Ukraine we created an advisory board with strong representation from people living with HIV/AIDS to support workplace policies that consider the caregiving responsibilities borne by the families and friends of people with the disease.

. . . in Nigeria we have become part of the national dialogue on the epidemic, helping author the national policy on HIV/AIDS in the workplace.
In the past, many HIV/AIDS workforce interventions have expected business or labor or government to do the heavy lifting. SMARTWork takes a different view. It recognizes that each sector has unique contributions to make—contributions the other sectors cannot offer. It also demonstrates that only when business, labor, and government work together does HIV/AIDS in the workforce receive the comprehensive response it merits.

Because of SMARTWork, conversations about HIV/AIDS are occurring in places where the very mention of the disease was once taboo. Employees and labor representatives are crafting programs for the workplace, and skilled peer educators are bringing messages of prevention and human dignity to their communities.

SMARTWork staff work with in-country leaders to identify opportunities for real change. Understanding these opportunities allows SMARTWork to set priorities on the basis of where we can do the most good. In one country, a priority might be to promote policies and laws that foster protection. In another, the focus might be to consolidate diverse interventions into a cohesive approach to HIV/AIDS in the workplace. This was the case in Nigeria.

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**BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMS THROUGH SMARTWORK**

Because of SMARTWork, employers of 1.15 million people have implemented proactive, worker-friendly HIV/AIDS programs.

SMARTWork staff have trained more than 6,600 managers, labor leaders, workers, and trainers. They are now teaching others about HIV/AIDS and helping create effective HIV/AIDS programs.

Some 93 percent of the companies targeted through SMARTWork have established internal committees to plan and implement the organizations’ response to HIV/AIDS.

Over 75 percent of targeted enterprises have already established HIV/AIDS programs and policies.

Trade unions, with more than 5 million members, have created worker-friendly HIV/AIDS policies and programs through SMARTWork.
NIGERIA

SMARTWork Nigeria is the story of how a country can turn a series of ad hoc, in-company activities into sustained comprehensive HIV/AIDS programs.

Approximately 3.6 million people in Africa’s most populous nation are living with HIV/AIDS, posing a serious threat to an economy already troubled by high inflation, falling exchange rates and a decline in foreign investment. When SMARTWork began in January 2002, many organizations were already addressing the epidemic in some way. But their efforts often lacked continuity. Companies tended to respond to some needs related to HIV/AIDS—the need for information, perhaps—but few had comprehensive ongoing programs.

SMARTWork changed all that. For example, program staff helped implement a comprehensive response to the epidemic in such large companies as Cadbury, whose program includes a SMARTWork-trained corps of peer workers, an HIV/AIDS information hotline, and an HIV/AIDS budget for the company doctor. We support development of HIV/AIDS policies in companies like Hilton Hotels and Statoil—which is using the drafts we helped create in Nigeria as a template for its offices all over the world.

SMARTWork activities in Nigeria have not been limited to in-company HIV/AIDS programs. SMARTWork was asked to review the Nigerian national HIV response plan and the Ministry of Labor’s national policy on HIV/AIDS in the workplace. Currently, our staff are participating in the government’s project to create an HIV/AIDS national strategic framework for 2005–2009. These opportunities to address the epidemic on a broad scale are a direct result of bringing knowledge and respect to the process of relationship building. They are a hallmark of SMARTWork.
UKRAINE

At approximately one percent of the population, Ukraine’s HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is the second highest of all the Commonwealth of Independent States and Europe. Left unchecked, AIDS could become the second-highest cause of death among adults by 2007.

About half of those infected with HIV are under 25 years old and, historically, injection drug use has been the most common HIV exposure category. But the number of new infections related to sexual transmission is on the increase. Real incomes are still valued at only 25 to 50 percent of pre-independence levels, and unemployment is high. These circumstances force some people into the shadow economy and high-risk survival sex.

Protecting the workforce from HIV/AIDS protects business investment. For example, the impact of SMARTWork’s introduction of nondiscriminatory language into union contracts—affecting 1 million seafaring, railroad, and hospital workers—will help mitigate the effects of stigma and create an environment in which HIV/AIDS can be discussed, addressed, and prevented.

But despite these successes, much remains to be done. Ukraine has laws that guarantee access to prevention and medical services and protect the rights of people with HIV/AIDS, but as in so many SMARTWork countries, the awareness level is low. More generally, the Ukrainian public is poorly informed about the disease, and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS remains strong. However, SMARTWork has found that both employers and labor representatives are willing to make disease prevention a vital part of their agenda. And local government authorities, especially in areas with high infection rates, have been supportive of workplace programs. If authorities receive the help they need, there is hope that the epidemic in Ukraine can be curbed and, with it, the damage that HIV/AIDS could inflict on this young democracy.
ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe has the third-highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the world, and one-third of its workforce is HIV positive.

When SMARTWork began in Zimbabwe in 2002, the government had already enacted legislation to protect the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. Likewise, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and most individual unions had established favorable policies. Many also had HIV/AIDS programs.

So why did Zimbabwe need SMARTWork? Most workers were unaware of the HIV/AIDS services and protections offered through their employers, labor unions, and the government. Workplace prejudice was so prevalent that employees with HIV/AIDS often feared losing their jobs if their HIV serostatus were discovered by their employers. Clearly, policies and programs were not having their full impact.

SMARTWork establishes an advisory board comprising business, labor, governmental and NGO leaders in each country in which it operates. The boards serve as troubleshooters, sounding boards, and influential advocates for HIV/AIDS in workplace programs and policies. In Zimbabwe, the board united organizations that had not been working together previously—major players like the Associated Mine Workers Union of Zimbabwe, the Employers’ Confederation of Zimbabwe, and Hippo Valley Estates (an Anglo American subsidiary). These organizations and their members are now working jointly to forge nationwide strategic plans for addressing HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

We’ve helped the country stop viewing HIV/AIDS as a “social evil” and begin to approach it as a health and economic problem.

— Patrick Burke, SMARTWork Vietnam

People are poisoned by misconceptions. Some believe that they can become infected with HIV by sitting next to someone.

— Juan Llado, SMARTWork Dominican Republic

The people we’re training are happy with SMARTWork. Before, they didn’t know anything about HIV/AIDS. Now, they have the confidence to talk openly about the issue.

— Olusina Falana, SMARTWork Nigeria
In Zimbabwe, policies were in place but were not having their intended effect. In Vietnam, policies still needed to be developed—and there were other problems. Many businesspeople saw little reason to implement HIV/AIDS programs in the workplace. The concept of HIV/AIDS as a “social evil” was entrenched in society. Government officials were eager to address HIV/AIDS but reluctant to admit that stigma might be an issue. If the challenge in Zimbabwe was to work with government to ensure that policies were working, the challenge in Vietnam was to illustrate that policies were needed.

So in April 2002, SMARTWork submitted a plan to the Ministry of Labor illustrating the impact of stigma and discrimination, along with the potential value of the SMARTWork program. Just one year later, the plan was approved, and SMARTWork moved into action.

Change is occurring nationwide. The Ministry of Labor has asked SMARTWork to help increase its capacity to address HIV/AIDS, and companies like the Haiphong Leather Shoe Company and Colgate-Palmolive are implementing comprehensive HIV/AIDS programs. The government is no longer using the phrase “social evil” to refer to HIV/AIDS and is drafting legislation to address discrimination. If passed, the law will prevent mandatory testing, protect the confidentiality of medical records, and create tax breaks for companies that initiate HIV/AIDS programs.
HAITI

The tragic circumstances endured by the people of Haiti are known to anyone who watches the evening news. Political instability, extreme poverty, and near economic collapse have made it almost impossible for the nation to address a problem that is less known to the outside world: Haiti has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate outside Africa. In some cities, as many as nine percent of adults are HIV positive.

In Haiti, SmartWork encountered a general public with a low level of awareness of HIV/AIDS. One reason is that even though prevalence is high, it is much lower than in countries like Zimbabwe, where almost every household has been touched by the epidemic. Another issue is, of course, Haiti’s social unrest, which affects every aspect of daily life.

The situation has been so violent at times that leaving one’s home has been tantamount to risking one’s life. Labor leaders have been particularly vulnerable to violence, and business after business has closed, exacerbating the already serious impediments to HIV/AIDS interventions for Haiti’s working people. Yet the Haitian people are creative, resilient—and brave: facing threats head-on, 40 members of three union confederations participated in SMARTWork train-the-trainer programs. Through May 2005, those trainers have taught 3,000 individuals how to implement HIV/AIDS programs in their workplaces.

There are emerging signs of progress in Haiti, but a much more stable environment is critical if the Haitian people are to have true access to HIV/AIDS prevention and care—and all the other services essential to a functioning society. Perhaps Haiti, as much as any other country, illustrates what individuals working in HIV/AIDS have known for a long time: the AIDS epidemic doesn’t exist in isolation. Stability, opportunity, and hope are essential to stop it.

WHY SMARTWORK IS NEEDED

The economic cost of HIV/AIDS is now measured in the billions of dollars.

The United Nations has warned that Russia’s GDP losses could exceed 10 percent by the year 2020 because of HIV/AIDS:

In countries where the national HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 20 percent or higher, the GDP drops an average of 2.6 percentage points each year.

The full impact of AIDS has not even been predicted in countries like Vietnam and the Ukraine, where the epidemic is new or emerging.
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Like so many countries threatened by HIV/AIDS, the Dominican Republic is a nation of contradictions. On the one hand, a national strategic plan for AIDS and a law guaranteeing access to employment and confidential medical records for people living with HIV/AIDS are in place. On the other hand, both the public and employers are unfamiliar with the law. Although the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is still low enough that many people are unaffected by the epidemic, some business owners subject employees to unlawful mandatory HIV testing and dismiss people whose test results are positive. SMARTWork identified other disturbing circumstances:

- Despite the Dominican Republic having the third-highest prevalence rate in the Caribbean, some workers lacked key information about how the virus is transmitted.
- Some people feared that HIV could be transmitted at the doctor’s office or through saliva.
- More surprisingly, many believed that mandatory testing is beneficial.

Such misconceptions are a breeding ground for continued stigma and discrimination and for growth in HIV/AIDS prevalence. Through a steady process of relationship building and education, SMARTWork brokered signing of the nation's Multi-sectoral Collaborative Agreement for HIV/AIDS Workplace Prevention in 2002. The media coverage the agreement received has drawn unprecedented attention to HIV/AIDS by the workforce, employers, and labor unions.

Simultaneously, SMARTWork collaborated with labor to involve CoopSeguros, a group of 30 insurance cooperatives with over 450,000 members and employees who negotiate collectively for health-care services. In addition, 21 companies have created HIV/AIDS committees to develop in-company prevention and care services. Eleven have drafted policies protecting their workers from mandatory testing and discrimination, and five of these policies have been approved. Of those organizations, one is a major mining firm and another is a Unilever subsidiary. The proactive response to HIV/AIDS by these high-profile organizations is drawing new attention to the epidemic—and to the willingness of companies to act.