



International
Labour
Organization

Health and Wellness at Work:

Guidelines for an integrated health testing approach under

VCT@WORK

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Health and Wellness at Work: Guidelines for an integrated health testing approach under VCT@WORK

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► PREFACE

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Goal 3, aims at ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being, with ending AIDS by 2030 as a key component. The 2030 Agenda envisions an all-inclusive integrated approach to health.

Early diagnosis of any health condition is essential to ensuring timely and effective treatment; the present guidelines have been produced to contribute to this important objective.

Voluntary and Confidential Counselling and HIV Testing for Workers (VCT@WORK) is a global initiative that the ILO implementing since 2013. The Initiative has shown that workplaces can be instrumental in addressing gaps in HIV testing which continue to exist.

VCT@WORK is going from strength to strength, ensuring more people know their HIV status, and if needed, are able to access life-saving treatment in a timely manner. In 2018, we added HIV self-testing to our approach, and along with WHO, developed a policy brief on HIV self-testing at the workplace. Taking this a step further, we have now added integrated health testing to the VCT@WORK approach.

These guidelines will support the adoption of a more integrated approach to health as advocated by the SDGs. They will also contribute to reducing stigma associated with HIV testing, and will enable workplaces to implement an overall health and wellness approach. This approach will help in prevention, early diagnosis and treatment, and will help to avert premature deaths from HIV, tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases. It will contribute to having a healthy and productive workforce, benefitting workers, enterprises, communities, and local and national economies.

These guidelines are practical, grounded in the positive experience of integrated health testing piloted in selected countries in the context of VCT@WORK. They contain policy principles for implementing this approach within a human rights framework, and outline key steps for action. The guidelines can, and indeed should, be adapted to national contexts and existing policy frameworks, in consultation with national stakeholders.

These guidelines were first developed in 2019, and were further revised in 2020 particularly to include examples of workplace action on health and wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has further accentuated the need for a holistic response to health.

I hope stakeholders in the world of work will find these guidelines useful.

Shauna Olney
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▶ BACKGROUND

The potential of workplaces to expand HIV testing is demonstrated by the ILO's Voluntary Counselling and HIV Testing for Workers – VCT@WORK Initiative. By focussing on selected economic sectors such as mining, transport, construction, health and tourism, as well as informal economy workplaces and hot spots of migrant and mobile workers in priority countries, the VCT@WORK Initiative reached over 6 million workers with HIV information, tested over 5 million workers and referred over 110,000 workers living with HIV to antiretroviral treatment between July 2013 and December 2019.

The VCT@WORK Initiative is being implemented within the context of human rights in accordance with the provisions of ILO's Recommendation concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work, 2010, (No. 200). Specific operational guidelines to respect human rights in the implementation of VCT@WORK have also been developed.

HIV self-testing at workplaces offers workers another choice, convenience and ensures greater confidentiality. Therefore, in 2018, the ILO and WHO launched a policy brief on HIV self-testing at the workplace.

In order to promote the overall health and wellness approach at work and reduce stigma associated with HIV testing, the ILO piloted integrated health testing in some countries under its VCT@WORK Initiative, which yielded good results.

These guidelines have been developed based on the lessons and practices emerging from different countries. The guidelines aim to provide practical guidance to the world of work actors on how to implement integrated health testing under the VCT@WORK Initiative.

► RATIONALE FOR AN INTEGRATED HEALTH TESTING APPROACH

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 aims to achieve healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. It targets to end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), malaria and tropical diseases by 2030 and reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs)¹ by one third. Integration of health services for multiple health issues can optimize operations and contribute towards the realization of this SDG goal.

Early diagnosis of NCDs, TB and HIV, and the early detection of risk factors linked to NCDs, through testing and effective linkage to prevention, treatment and care can contribute to promoting health and wellness, improving the quality of life and averting deaths.

An integrated health testing approach reduces stigma associated with specific disease programmes such as the one linked with HIV and leads to increased uptake of services. The WHO mentions the integration of different services as a good practice as it facilitates access and increases HIV testing uptake.²

A study in Kenya and Uganda highlighted the costs and efficiencies of an integrated health testing approach adopted under HIV testing. The mean cost per adult tested for HIV was USD 20.50. The marginal costs of integrated health testing were low, only USD 1.16 per person for hypertension and diabetes and USD 0.90 for malaria, when leveraging upon the HIV testing programme.³

The International AIDS Society and Lancet Commission on the Future of Global Health undertook a multi-country modelling exercise in 2018 and analysed the impact and cost-effectiveness of integrated health testing. Modelling for Kenya predicted the treatment rate to improve from 10 per cent to 47 per cent for diabetes; and from 8 per cent to 27 per cent for hypertension during 2018–2028 with only marginal increase in cost if NCD testing is synergized with community based HIV testing.⁴

Implementation experience and cost-effectiveness analysis show that community outreach based integrated health testing is feasible and effective, also when focused on key populations⁵ and in informal settings.⁶

¹Non communicable diseases include heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease. The rise of NCDs has been driven by primarily four major risk factors: tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets. (Source [WHO](#))

²WHO, [Consolidated Guidelines on HIV Testing Services](#), 5Cs: Consent, Confidentiality, Counselling, Correct Results and Connection, 2015

³Chang, W., Chamie, G., Mwai, D, et al. [Cost and efficiency of a hybrid mobile multi-disease testing approach with high HIV testing coverage in East Africa](#). *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr* 2016 73(3): e39-45, 2016

⁴Bekker, LG, Alleyne, G. Baral, et al. [Advancing global health and strengthening the HIV response in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals](#): the International AIDS Society—Lancet Commission. *Lancet*, 2018, 392:312-58, 2018

⁵WHO, UNAIDS and other UN agencies have long recognised the need to focus on five defined key populations (men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, people in prisons and other closed settings, sex workers and transgender people) who are particularly at risk of acquiring HIV infection, who are underserved and who play a critical role in directing an effective response.

⁶Chamie G, Kwarisiima D, Clark TD, et al. [Uptake of community-based HIV testing during a multi-disease healthcampaign in rural Uganda](#). *PLoS ONE*. 2014;9(1):e84317

► Did you know?

- In 2019, out of 38 million people living with HIV, 8.1 million (21%) did not know their HIV status.
- Every year, 10 million people fall ill with TB. Despite being a preventable and curable disease, 1.5 million people die from TB each year.
- Malaria can be life threatening. In 2018, there were approximately 228 million cases of malaria with an estimated number of 405,000 deaths.
- NCD are collectively responsible for almost 70% of all deaths worldwide and are now killing more people than infectious diseases.
- Almost three quarters of all NCD deaths, and 82% of the 16 million people who died prematurely, or before reaching 70 years of age, occur in low- and middle-income countries.
- An estimated 1.13 billion people worldwide have hypertension, most (two-thirds) living in low- and middle-income countries.
- Half of the hypertension and diabetes patients remain undiagnosed due to long asymptomatic periods resulting in complications, delayed treatment and premature death.
- Some 500,000 AIDS-related labour force deaths among persons aged 15 years and over are projected for 2020, with the highest incidence of mortality being among workers in their late thirties, at the peak of their productive lives.

Sources: UNAIDS, WHO, ILO



► WHY DO INTEGRATED HEALTH TESTING IN THE WORLD OF WORK?

- Early diagnosis saves lives. An integrated health testing approach under VCT@WORK can allow for early detection and timely treatment to keep workers healthy and productive. This will enable workplaces to implement a health and wellness approach at work that will benefit workers, enterprises as well as national economies.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes inter-sectoral collaboration. With half of the global population in employment, the world of work is a key entry point to reach people with information and services.
- With the availability of antiretroviral treatment, people living with HIV can live healthy and productive lives. TB and malaria can be fully cured and non-communicable diseases, if diagnosed early, can be effectively managed.
- Integrated health testing at workplaces results in cost saving for workers in terms of lost wages (particularly for workers in the informal economy) and out-of-pocket expenses for transportation.
- A key benefit that the multi-disease testing approach offers is convenience. Workers don't have to run to different service providers as they get different services in one place. It saves time and it saves cost to workers.
- Integrated health testing, coupled with accurate, relevant and timely information provided during workers' education and counselling sessions and through information and education materials, will help in prevention of HIV, TB as well as non-communicable diseases.
- Existing structures in workplaces such as the occupational safety and health, wellness programmes, HIV and TB workplace programmes provide opportunities to implement this approach.

IMPLEMENTING AN INTEGRATED HEALTH TESTING APPROACH AT WORK: KEY ELEMENTS

Policy

5 Cs of WHO

- Consent
- Confidentiality
- Counselling
- Correct test results
- Connection to prevention, treatment and care

Principles of the ILO Recommendation No. 200

Health and Wellness

VCT@WORK

Governance

(Partners and their role)

Sustainability

Monitoring and Evaluation

1. POLICY

Opportunities for integrated health testing approaches can be found within the existing policies at the national, sectoral and enterprise levels. Therefore, national health policies and strategic disease plans need to be reviewed. Stakeholder consultations involving ministries of labour and of health, employers' and workers' organizations and civil society organizations must be organized to plan an effective and sustainable approach.

Reference to national commitments to the SDGs, international guidelines from the WHO and the ILO Recommendation on HIV and AIDS and the World of Work (No. 200) should be made to advocate for the initiation and implementation of an integrated health testing approach.

Enterprise commitments and policies on health and wellness provide yet another opening for this approach.

► Integrated health testing at work in Tanzania



The National Accelerated Action Plan on HIV Testing Services of 2018 and the Health Sector HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan 2017–2022 stress the need for integration of HIV testing with sexually transmitted infections, TB, family planning and non-communicable disease (NCD) screening.

The strategic plan for prevention and control of NCDs in the public sector also calls for integration of healthcare services of HIV with NCDs.

In Tanzania, the ILO has integrated HIV testing with screening for NCDs under the VCT@WORK Initiative. The programme is implemented through public-private partnerships, involving the Association of Tanzania Employers and the Trade Union Congress of Tanzania, under the leadership of the President's Office. The Tanzania Commission for AIDS provides overall technical support.

The Government has announced every second Saturday as the national day of health. This enables efforts to ensure integration of NCDs and HIV testing at work.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

An integrated health testing approach under the VCT@WORK Initiative should be implemented following the human rights-based approach, based on the principles outlined in the [ILO Recommendation](#) concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work, 2010 (No. 200) and in compliance with the 5 Cs – Consent, Confidentiality, Counselling, Correct test results and Connection (linkage to prevention, treatment and care services) recommended by [WHO for HIV testing](#).

- **Protection of workers' rights:** A workplace policy with clearly defined principles to protect the rights of workers is essential for the implementation and success of the integrated health testing approach under the VCT@WORK Initiative.
- **Non-discrimination:** Every worker has a right to access healthcare without facing discrimination based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, religion, origin, socio-economic status, physical or mental disability.
- **Voluntary:** All health tests must be voluntary and free of any coercion, including social pressure.
- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality about all health conditions must be respected. This also refers to privacy of all medical information, including medical records and information discussed or identified during encounters of workers with health care personnel.
- **Gender Equality:** The gender dimensions of health must be recognized. Gender discrimination in societies and the lack of economic empowerment of women, impacts on women's access to quality health care, making them more vulnerable to HIV and TB. Integrated health testing should be accessible and available to all, and should be gender-responsive. Special attention needs to be given to addressing violence and harassment in line with the ILO Convention on Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206.
- **Inclusiveness:** Integrated health testing at work should be designed in such a way that it is inclusive of all workers, independent of personal characteristics, including age, sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as intersecting identities. Needs of persons with disabilities to access health services or the integrated health testing venue, must also be ascertained in advance and the programme should be made accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities.
- **Connection to treatment, care and support:** Everyone identified with a condition or illness during the integrated health testing events must have access to the available treatment, care and support, including support that should be offered by the employer. Routes to treatment and care should be established before starting the initiative, including how it will be covered through the national programmes, private insurance companies or employer's health insurance etc. Workplaces should establish partnerships with different service providers and national programmes for HIV, TB, malaria, non-communicable diseases, and other conditions for which integrated health testing is offered.
- **Collaboration:** The success of the initiative depends upon collaboration across different health services and work-related sectors, such as employers' and workers' organizations and civil society organizations, both during the organization of integrated health testing events and for follow up on treatment, care and support.
- **Prevention:** Access to all means of prevention through health education and training, including on healthy diets and life styles, as well as the availability of necessary supplies such as condoms, must be ensured. Occupational safety and health measures must also be strengthened at workplaces.
- **Community engagement:** The active engagement of communities and organizations of people living with HIV has contributed in an important way to the success of the HIV response. Community organizations, including organizations of people living with HIV and other disease-specific organizations, can contribute to enhancing the uptake of testing and successful linkage to treatment care, and reduction of risk factors.

► Integrated health testing at work in Nigeria

The National HIV Prevention Plan in Nigeria follows an integrated approach: HIV testing services with testing for non-communicable diseases.

The ILO, through the VCT@WORK Initiative, is following this approach at workplaces in partnership with the National Agency for the Control of AIDS, Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association, Nigeria Labour Congress, Federation of Informal Workers, National Union of Road Transport Workers, National Health Insurance Scheme and networks of people living with HIV.

The focus of communication is on benefits of early diagnosis. Advocacy with management has resulted in creating an enabling environment of trust and confidence amongst workers. Key principles - consent, non-discrimination, continuity of employment and linkages to treatment and care - are being closely monitored.

Between 2018 and 2019, over 200,000 workers accessed integrated health testing including blood sugar test, blood pressure checks, malaria and body mass index checks. Thanks to this approach, the uptake of HIV testing through the initiative increased in eight states.

All workers who tested positive for HIV were linked to treatment. Health education for making life style changes for non-communicable diseases, including treatment wherever necessary, was initiated. Condoms were also distributed.

Demonstrating clear and strong linkages between workers' health and productivity has proven effective in attracting the attention of workers as well as management.



► Integrated health testing at work in Mozambique

As part of the VCT@WORK Initiative, the ILO is implementing integrated health testing in Mozambique in collaboration with a wide range of partners: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, employers' organization, workers' organizations, Business Coalition against AIDS, and informal worker associations. Networks of civil society organizations are also involved: Associação Avante Mulher (Association of women living with HIV), Centro de Desenvolvimento Comunitario (the Community Development Centre), Associação Cooperativa Wassala and Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Família (Association for Family Development).



The Ministry of Health, through the district health units, provides test kits and other laboratory equipment to medical staff to attend the health events and ensures that the protocols for testing of HIV, TB and non-communicable diseases are followed.

Between April 2017 and June 2019, 25 health events and 25 mobile testing clinics were organized at workplaces in Gaza, Maputo, Sofala and Tete provinces as well as in the transport corridors and informal markets.

A total of 96,400 people (45,123 men and 51,277 women) were reached and offered testing for HIV, diabetes, blood pressure, TB and malaria. Among men, almost half (20,010) took the HIV test and 1,902 were found to be HIV positive (9.5%). 38,753 women also tested for HIV and 3,782 tested positive (9.7%). Those who tested positive were referred to the health facilities for treatment and assistance. Over 300,000 condoms were also distributed.

Effective coordination with different health service providers has been key to the success of this approach.

3. PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

Multi-sectoral collaboration is the key to success of an integrated health testing approach. Efforts for screening and early diagnosis of HIV and other major infections like TB and malaria and of leading non-communicable diseases under different national programmes need to be integrated into a unified health event for the beneficiaries.

Government

Ministries of health have a leading role in the successful implementation of an integrated health approach. This includes providing policy and programmatic guidelines, standard operating procedures, testing algorithms and training materials towards an integrated approach and engagement of multi stakeholders, including non-health ministries, workers' and employers' organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations.

The other critical role of the ministries of health and health departments is to allocate funds, medical supplies and health staff for the integrated health testing events and facilitate linkages to necessary treatment and care services.

Ministries responsible for labour, in consultation with the most representative employers' and workers' organizations, have a leading role in the implementation of an integrated health testing approach in the world of work. Ongoing initiatives such as VCT@WORK, occupational safety and health, and employee wellness programmes, provide a great opportunity to cover other illnesses such as TB, malaria and non-communicable diseases.

Health emergencies such as COVID-19 should not be allowed to slow down other critical health services. The ILO policy brief [COVID-19 and the world of work: A focus on people living with HIV](#), makes recommendations for a COVID-19 response in the world of work that is inclusive of people living with HIV. The brief includes a number of initiatives from the world of work that have been initiated to ensure that HIV services do not slow down due to COVID-19.

ILO Kenya integrates HIV self-testing and COVID-19 prevention in VCT@WORK

In Kenya, the Central Organization of Trade Unions in Kenya, the Kenya Long Distance Truck Drivers Union and its health arm the Highway Community Health Resource Centre, the Kenya Pipeline Company and the ILO are implementing an integrated COVID-19 and HIV programme focused on truck drivers and sex workers. The programme is creating awareness on COVID-19 and HIV prevention, distributing masks, sanitizers and HIV self-test kits. Awareness sessions are conducted at truckers' halt points and hot spots of sex work by counsellors of the Highway Community Health Resource Centre, in partnership with the National AIDS and STIs Control Programme.



Between June and August 2020, awareness of COVID-19 and HIV prevention and HIV testing, including HIV self-testing, was provided to 1,743 truckers and sex workers (1,019 men and 724 women); close to 2,000 masks and hand sanitizers provided by the Kenya Pipeline Company and 30,000 condoms were also distributed. The Ministry of Health provided a total of 345 HIV self-test kits; 293 were distributed to truckers and 52 to sex workers.

Employers' Organizations

Employers' organizations are playing a key role in the VCT@WORK Initiative. Their leadership, emphasizing the link between employees' health and right to well-being and productivity, has resulted in a number of enterprises taking up the VCT@WORK Initiative.

Building on the success of their work on VCT@WORK and other health and wellness programmes, employers' organizations can liaise with the government and relevant technical organizations and guide their member companies for adoption of an integrated health testing approach.



“Significant progress has been made in promoting HIV testing amongst employees through VCT@WORK Initiative by employers with strong leadership from many CEOs who continue to lead from the front. **We must not lose the momentum but continue efforts to facilitate achieving the 'test and treat' goal for employees at all levels.**”



Jacqueline Mugo,
Executive Director/CEO
Federation of Kenya Employers
Kenya



VCT@WORK

Workers' Organizations

Workers' organizations are playing a pivotal role in mobilizing workers under the VCT@WORK Initiative, working closely with employers and governments, as well as with organizations of people living with HIV. They have also played a key role in integrated health testing approaches undertaken under the VCT@WORK Initiative, and ensuring linkages to prevention, treatment and care wherever necessary.



“We can defeat HIV by testing early. Even if one tests positive, there is treatment which allows us to live long and productive life. **I have taken my HIV test, I encourage you to take yours.**”



Ayuba P Wabba,
President
International Trade Union
Confederation /
Nigeria Labour Congress



VCT@WORK

✔ Non-governmental organizations

NGOs working on health around workplaces can play a very important role in health education as well as generating linkages with health facilities for ensuring treatment care and support. NGOs working on disease-specific programmes, such as HIV, TB and malaria, have an interest in reaching out to workplaces and contributing through provision of technical support for testing (for example, supply of HIV self-test kits), reporting and follow up. Organizations of people living with HIV and groups living with other diseases can be very important partners for the implementation of workplace integrated health testing to reduce stigma and discrimination and ensure effective linkages to treatment and care. Peer support groups in the community for different health issues should also be involved, to get their inputs and for expanding the outreach amongst workers and their families.

✔ Public and private health insurance providers

Nearly 40% of the world's population has no health insurance or access to national health services.¹ This means that many simply lack the means to seek treatment when they are sick. The health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has particularly highlighted the need to expand health insurance for all.

Expanding health insurance, through a combination of public, private and community schemes needs to be pursued vigorously. Public and private insurance policies and programmes need to be reviewed and exclusions removed. National policy plays a crucial role in motivating insurance companies to expand coverage for HIV and AIDS. For example, in Kenya, the National HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act stipulates that every health institution, whether public or private, and every health management organization or medical insurance provider shall facilitate access to healthcare services to persons with HIV without discrimination on the basis of HIV status.²

The Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Indonesia includes personal health care covering preventive, curative and rehabilitative services. It also covers both medical and non-medical expenses, such as hospital accommodation and ambulance costs.

✔ Donors

Demonstrating their commitment to the SDGs, and to the goal of Universal Health Coverage, donor communities can be instrumental in promoting integrated health testing. Donors can review their policies and projects and find openings for supporting integrated health testing approaches. Benefits of working together for HIV and TB are already visible; and could be expanded to cover other illnesses and the tackling of risk factors under a broader health and wellness approach.

¹ ILO, [Addressing the Global Health Crisis, Universal Health Protection Policies](#), 2014

² National Council for Law Reporting with the Authority of the Attorney-General, [HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act](#), 2006

4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is important to develop a monitoring and evaluation system, following the frameworks being used at the national or enterprise level.

- * Reporting formats should be developed in consultation with the health departments so that data related to workers' testing can flow into the national system managed by national AIDS, TB and other health programmes.
- * It is essential to monitor and track the referral processes to ensure that those who are referred actually start the treatment.
- * Feedback should be regularly obtained from workers as well as health staff to improve the system, and data collected should be reviewed to make policy and programmatic decisions.
- * Key indicators around which the information should be regularly collected, reviewed, and reported are as follows:
 - Number of workers (male, female, others) reached with health education programmes.
 - Number of workers (male, female, others) tested for different illnesses.
 - Number of workers (male, female, others) who tested positive for illnesses (HIV, TB, COVID-19) and/or who have risk factors for non-communicable diseases, or any other health issue.
 - Number of workers (male, female, others) referred to treatment for identified illnesses and/or who have risk factors for non-communicable diseases, or any other health issue.
 - Number of workers (male, female, others) who actually started treatment for identified illnesses, risk factors or health issues.

A suggested format for the report (Please finalize based on national/organizational context and according to the selected health issues):

Name of enterprise/workplace:
Name of organization:
Name of coordinator:
Date of integrated health testing event:

	Male			Female			Others			Total
Age groups	15-24	25-44	>45	15-24	25-44	>45	15-24	25-44	>45	
Number of workers reached with health education/awareness prior to the event										
Number of workers who attended the event										
HIV										
Number of workers who tested										
Number of workers who tested for the first time										
Number of workers who had tested earlier										
a) More than a year ago										
b) Between six months and 1 year ago										
c) Less than six month ago										
Number of workers who tested positive										
Number of workers referred for treatment										
TB										
Number of workers who tested										
Number of workers who tested positive										
Number of workers referred for confirmatory testing of latent TB infection										
Number of workers that have latent TB infection										
Number of workers referred for TB treatment										
Blood pressure / hypertension										
Number of workers who had their blood pressure measured										
Number of workers with high blood pressure										
Number of workers with high blood pressure referred to a health centre for follow up analysis										
Body mass index (BMI)										
Number of workers who had their BMI measured										
Number of workers who had a BMI below 18,5										
Number of workers who had a BMI between 25 and 29,9										
Number of workers who had a BMI above 30										
Number of workers referred to a health centre										
Blood sugar levels										
Number of workers who had their blood sugar levels tested										
Number of workers with high blood sugar levels										
Number of workers referred to a health centre										

5. SUSTAINABILITY

Key elements necessary for ensuring sustainability are governance, partnerships and financing. Adopting a policy, setting up a multi-sectoral coordination mechanism with active involvement of all stakeholders with well-defined roles and responsibilities, and exploring options of funding are critical.

Integrated health testing in the world of work can be sustainable if it is included in the overall policy framework, backed by management commitment and builds upon existing initiatives such as VCT@WORK, health and wellness, occupational safety and health.

► Health and Wellness approach of BEST, Mumbai, India helped it deal with COVID-19



The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST), a public sector company in India, has over 40,000 employees. BEST has a robust health and welfare programme for its employees, driven by the company policy. Integrated health testing has been offered since 2018 in order to reduce stigma associated with HIV testing and to follow an overall health and wellness approach.

BEST focuses on creating a stigma-free environment and has developed employee-centric

policies assuring job security and reasonable accommodation to employees living with HIV. This encourages workers to seek timely testing, counselling and treatment.

Health education is provided through trained peer educators, counsellors and medical staff. Several health campaigns on HIV, TB, tobacco cessation, diabetes, stress management and eye care have been implemented. The BEST Arts and Sports Club regularly organizes recreational activities. Furthermore, yoga and stress management camps are organized. A high-protein diet is offered at concessional rates at depots, workshops and mobile canteens. The company has also set up an in-house drug rehabilitation centre.

This approach and preparedness helped BEST in responding to the pandemic of COVID-19 as well. BEST has set up a COVID-19 response team and started antigen tests for all employees at 27 bus stops. Health education is provided to all employees to prevent COVID-19 infection and personal protective equipment kits are distributed. A Tele Monitoring Severity Score System has been developed under which BEST's medical doctors monitor the health of COVID-19 patients through five minutes calls periodically. This has made a positive impact on recovery amongst the COVID-19 patients.

As a result of these measures, between April and September 2020, out of 2,340 COVID-19 positive employees, 2,125 employees were fully cured.

► ORGANIZATION OF INTEGRATED HEALTH TESTING EVENTS

► Step by step guidelines

• Finalize the package of tests

Based on the national policy/programmatic guidance and the organizational policy, the first point is to decide on the package of tests.

The package of testing should be finalized through the following process:

- » Needs expressed by employees, both men and women.
- » It is recommended to start small with a few tests (HIV, TB and non-communicable diseases) and expand with the experience gained in the first few events.
- » Discussion with local health providers on what is feasible, following the nationally adopted testing algorithms.
- » Define with health care providers the tests that should be offered to all participants and what tests would be reserved for people with higher risk factors.
- » Availability of diagnostic tools and different service providers at the time of testing.
- » An estimation of the number of workers who would attend the event.
- » Consultation with the employers' and workers organizations.

Example of some health issues and their test options:

Health issue	Test options
HIV	Rapid HIV tests, Laboratory based antigen/antibody test
TB	Sputum examination, CBNAAT, X-Ray
Malaria	Rapid diagnostic test, blood smear examination under microscopy
Hepatitis (HBV & HCV)	Rapid diagnostic test, laboratory-based immunoassay
Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, and trichomoniasis	Rapid diagnostic tests available for syphilis, dual HIV/Syphilis are also available, blood test for syphilis in laboratory. For other STIs, laboratory examination of the swab of genital area or urine sample will be needed as appropriate.
Hypertension	Blood pressure measurement using blood pressure monitor
COVID-19	COVID-19 test
Diabetes	Random blood sugar, fasting blood sugar, oral glucose tolerance test, Hb1AC
Obesity / Overweight	Measurement of height & weight for finding body mass index (BMI)
Cancer	Screen for signs and symptoms for common cancers. For example: Oral lesions for oral cancer; clinical examination for lump and mammogram for breast cancer; pap smear for cervical cancer

- **Select the venue for the event**

The venue selection of the integrated health testing event makes a big difference to its outcomes. For both formal and informal workplaces, the following points need to be kept in mind:

- » The venue should have sufficient space to accommodate the different testing services and provide for private spaces for the sessions between health professionals and persons attending and the delivery of results and medicine, including counselling in a private location/setting. It should also have space for workers to sit while they wait for their turn.
- » The venue should be convenient for workers to access, also for people with disabilities.
- » Basic services like electricity, water, toilet facilities should be available at the venue.
- » Security and hygiene measures should be taken into account, for example during COVID-19 periods.
- » If the focus is on workers in the informal economy, events could be organized close to the work sites (for example construction, manufacturing, mining, markets, transport corridors, trade fairs etc.).

- **Prepare an estimated budget and organize logistics**

Organization of integrated health testing events would need planning for finances and logistics. Having taken the earlier steps – finalization of package of services and venue for the event - it will be possible to prepare an estimated budget and make logistical arrangements.

- » **Arrange the diagnostic tools and services:** In most cases, it will be possible to arrange the diagnostic tools and services as well as service providers through the local health departments/NGOs or the enterprise-run clinic (if they exist). In some cases however, it may be necessary to allocate some funds for the purchase of diagnostic tools, such as HIV self-test kits, condoms for distribution, masques/hand sanitizers etc.
- » **Take into account other related costs linked to health tests:** It is also important to take into account other costs related to the post-test phase, for example confirmatory testing, and plan how the treatment cost will be covered. Cost of HIV-related treatment (antiretroviral treatment) and TB treatment and some others are usually covered by the government but there are related out-of-pocket expenses and costs for non-communicable diseases that need to be considered, and addressed. A review of national social health insurance, health insurance arranged by employers and other private insurance needs to be made.
- » **Estimate any costs likely to be incurred:** Take into account transport, setting up the event, communication, training, refreshments, personal protection equipment/kits, etc.
- » **Create your supporting team:** Set up the team that will work on the organization of the integrated health testing initiative with clear roles and responsibility.
- » **Get your proposal cleared:** Draft the proposal with an estimated budget and seek the approval of the competent authority in the workplace.

- **Create demand**

Creating demand through different channels, including through peer educators, is an important component of the programme.

- » **Enhance health seeking behaviour:** The focus should be on enhancing health seeking behaviour of workers by communicating benefits of testing early. The ILO has successfully used this approach in its VCT@WORK Initiative. Messages of workers who tested early for HIV and reassuring messages from government, employers and union leaders - provided under the [VCT@WORK campaign](#) - were instrumental in getting workers to test early for HIV. This approach holds promise for creating demand for integrated health testing as well.
- » **Highlight convenience of integrated health testing:** A key benefit that the integrated health testing approach offers is convenience. Workers don't have to run to different service providers as they get different services in one place. It saves time and it saves cost to workers. Demand creation could use "convenience" as another hook to attract workers to testing events.
- » **Celebrate health awareness session prior to the event:** Peer education sessions, health talks by human resource managers and doctors would be useful to attract workers to the event.
- » **Communicate the key principles clearly:** It is important to communicate that all tests are voluntary, test results will be kept confidential and treatment will be arranged for various illnesses. This will reassure workers to come forward and take the tests. Information of linkage to treatment will be provided. .
- » **Brand your event:** The title of the event matters. It is important to give a positive name to the initiative/event. For example, Health and Wellness@Work or a name that fits well within the organizational policy should be chosen.
- » **Reach your audience:** Promotion of the event should be done through simple, catchy posters, and other channels including social media.

- **Link with treatment and care**

Integrated health testing requires partnerships with different service providers, both for testing as well as for treatment for HIV, TB, non-communicable diseases, other diseases, and risk factors linked to non-communicable diseases.

- » **Provide accurate information about service providers:** It is essential to ensure that workers are given full information about service providers where they can conveniently access free or affordable treatment and care services for the diseases being tested. This should include both public health care as well as private facilities or NGOs.
- » **Identify treatment options:** An enterprise initiating integrated health testing can also identify treatment options that it provides to its employees, and inform workers accordingly. For example the prescription of glasses or a health and wellness programme to reduce weight and promote healthier lifestyles and diets.
- » **Prepare referral forms:** Referral forms to ensure treatment for various illnesses must be prepared with the address, phone number of service providers and should be provided to workers attending the events, in addition to the personal interface that they will have with the health providers.

» **Provide information on insurance and support options:** In addition to treatment, workers should be informed about available health insurance options, whether they are public, private or employer led, as well as support services such as counselling, availability of support groups and support available from employers in case of sickness.

- **Community engagement**

Meaningful engagement of civil society, community organizations, patient groups and organizations of people living with HIV in all stage of the event should be promoted, this includes planning, promoting, linkage to care and monitoring and evaluation.



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