



PREVENTING HIV IN ETHIOPIA: THE MULU WORKSITES PROJECT

With nearly 90 million people, Ethiopia is the second most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa and one of the most affected by the HIV epidemic in the region. With an estimated adult prevalence rate of 1.5 per cent (1.9 per cent for women and 1.0 per cent for men), it has a large number of people living with HIV (approximately 793,700), and some 898,400 AIDS orphans. It should be noted that

some areas are more affected than others, with a peak of 6.5 per cent in the Gambella region. Large-scale workplaces in Ethiopia face many challenges in trying to maintain a healthy and productive workforce. Workers often spend weeks away from their families. Many are not familiar with sexually transmitted infection prevention methods.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Partners:
World Learning
Ethiopia

Beneficiary country:
Ethiopia

Timeframe:
2013 – 2015

Budget:
In-kind support and
USD 17,624
(for the joint
VCT@WORK
initiative)

THE RESPONSE

The MULU Worksites project is a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) / President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funded project managed by World Learning Ethiopia in partnership with FHI 360, the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI), and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The project seeks to implement gender-responsive workplace HIV combination prevention programmes that will strengthen the HIV response in large-scale workplaces employing over 500 persons. Construction, agriculture, leather, cement, mining and manufacturing sectors are a vital entry point for combination prevention, as they employ women and men engaged in high-risk behaviours such as commercial and transactional sex, and multiple concurrent partnerships.

The MULU HIV Prevention project has been targeting 100 selected large-scale workplaces in different parts of the country through a three-pillar coordinated HIV prevention programme consisting of biomedical, structural and behavioural HIV and AIDS components. World Learning Ethiopia established a partnership agreement under the project with the ILO in 2013 to implement measures aimed at tackling the underlying social, organizational and policy factors driving the epidemic.

The ILO has accordingly helped employers and workers to develop effective, gender-responsive workplace HIV and AIDS policies, and has built their capacity to implement them through comprehensive programmes encompassing access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. In particular:

- Workplace HIV committees have been established in 87 worksites, in line with the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work, and the ILO Recommendation concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work, 2010 (No. 200);
- A standard training manual has been developed for HIV focal persons and task-force members at the target worksites;
- More than 150,000 leaflets have been disseminated on various aspects of HIV and AIDS, and 15,000 copies of the Amharic version of Recommendation No. 200 have been produced with support from previous ILO projects;
- 50 worksites have been supported to develop gender-responsive workplace policies and establish HIV programmes.



"The project is a great combination of prevention, peer education and awareness raising that reached thousands of farm workers through the joint VCT initiatives. The project work excels all the HIV- prevention programmes of the Zone."

Mr. Hassen Hussien Sulleman, Head of Labour and Social Affairs Office of Illibabur Zone



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RESULTS

Of the 50 worksites to which technical and material support was provided, 20 enterprises developed a workplace HIV and AIDS policy in 2013 and 2014. The other enterprises are in the process of developing a policy.

The partnership helped increase HIV-preventive behaviour, including health-seeking behaviour within and around the targeted large-scale workplaces. The increasing number of male and female condoms distributed (1 million condoms in 2014) and the large number of workers tested for HIV attested to this.

The partnership has increased workers' access to reproductive health and HIV prevention services and materials within and around the workplaces (some 250,000 people).

Some 18,206 (12,229 men and 6,557 women) farm workers were reached and made aware of basic facts concerning HIV and AIDS, HIV prevention including key gender-related aspects, and the benefits of knowing their HIV status.

As a result, 10,867 workers (5,623 men and 5,204 women) were tested for HIV. A total of 33 people (9 men and 24 women) were found to be HIV-positive and were referred to nearby health facilities for support and follow-up.

BENEFITS OF PARTNERING

World Learning and the ILO have joined forces and used their skills and resources to create sustainable and gender-responsive HIV and AIDS programmes in 100 workplaces in the country, using both public and private structures to ensure increased workers' access to HIV services.

ILO has used this partnership to promote the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work (2001); the ILO Recommendation concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work, 2010 (No. 2010); and other international labour standards – when considering workplace HIV and AIDS response policies and programmes.

This partnership has allowed workers and employers, as well as the Ministry of Labour, to link with health facilities at state and regional level to ensure that their members and affiliates can benefit from HIV prevention and care services.