



VOLUNTARY HIV COUNSELLING AND TESTING (VCT) AT WORK IN MOZAMBIQUE

According to a 2013 UNAIDS report, the HIV prevalence rate in Mozambique stands at 10.8 per cent among individuals aged between 15 and 49 years. Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) is a key component in HIV prevention, as it is a gateway to treatment, care, and psychosocial sup-

port, as well as to behaviour change that has the potential to reduce risks. The National Strategy Plan on HIV/AIDS (2015-19) considers HIV testing and treatment as priorities, and its aim is to ensure funding and the promotion of these activities in both the public and private sectors.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Partners:

Business Coalition on HIV and AIDS (ECoSIDA), Mozambique Railways Company (CFM), multiple small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and the Swedish Development Cooperation (Sida)

Beneficiary country:
Mozambique

Timeframe:
March 2014 –
December 2015

Budget:
USD 170,000
from the ILO;
in-kind contributions
from partners

THE RESPONSE

Since 2006 the International Labour Organization (ILO) has been supporting stakeholders in the world of work to better respond to HIV and AIDS in Mozambique. Actions encompass scaling up access to HIV prevention and care through the workplace, increasing the demand for VCT, taking into account the gender-specific needs of women and men, as well as economically empowering groups such as women, young people and people working in the informal economy, who are particularly vulnerable to HIV.

In order to ensure that more people take HIV tests, the ILO has embarked on the **VCT@WORK** initiative, collaborating with partners from both the public and private sector, including the Business Coalition on HIV and AIDS (ECoSIDA), Mozambique Railways Company (CFM), the sugar industries, Mozambique Airlines, the Ministry of Health through its Provincial Directorates, the National AIDS Council (NAC), the Ministry of Transport, and the Ministry of Labour.

ECoSIDA, CFM and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in partnership with the ILO, have been working together to strengthen the capacity of their members to respond to HIV and to mitigate the impact of the epidemic in workplaces. The vision is to offer voluntary and confidential HIV counselling and testing to a significant number of employees in the private sector as a way of promoting individual

responsibility towards HIV prevention, and helping raise demand for anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment that promotes effective prevention.

Initiatives include:

- The formulation of sectoral policy responses to HIV and AIDS, in order to provide each concerned sector with a framework for action;
- The training of peer educators, and through the pool of trained peer educators, the conducting of prevention campaigns; and
- The organization of voluntary testing campaigns for workers in companies and local communities along the railway lines.

These initiatives contribute significantly to the response to HIV and AIDS at national level. In addition, the initiative has helped the networks of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) to address human rights and gender equality issues and to participate in the development of HIV and AIDS programmes within small and medium enterprises. Furthermore, the ILO has supported the economic empowerment of people living with HIV through business management training and assistance in business planning. It has also linked groups of PLHIV to microfinance institutions, thereby enabling them to access funds and markets and increase their resilience to HIV.



RESULTS

The VCT@WORK public-private partnership in Mozambique has played a vital role in mobilizing communities and providing VCT for women and men workers and community members. Under the global initiative, the ILO conducted VCT sessions in informal settings in the workplace with its constituents and partners, including small and medium enterprises, and at community level with seasonal and farm workers.

In 2014 some 30,000 women and men workers and community members (10,987 women and 18,454 men) were tested for HIV thanks to this public-private partnership approach. Persons found to be HIV-positive were referred to health centres for advice, support and treatment if needed.

Technical capacity has been created through the training of 120 male and female peer educators and VCT counsellors in Maputo, Gaza, Sofala, Tete and Nampula provinces, which has enabled these professionals to conduct counselling and voluntary testing in and through the workplaces among the implementing partners and beneficiary enterprises. The linkages created between the ILO's implementing partners, the local health

authorities and health centres have facilitated the provision of VCT sessions – using the structures and laboratory tests provided by the Government.

From 2013 to 2014, the ILO supported the design and implementation of 85 workplace programmes for SMEs. Technical assistance was provided to employers' and workers' organizations to help them develop and implement comprehensive HIV and AIDS workplace policies and programmes addressing gender equality concerns and TB issues.

In this partnership, ECoSIDA played an important role in mobilizing the employers to adopt gender-responsive HIV and AIDS workplace programmes in their enterprises, and provided technical assistance to workers' committees in the development of their programmes and policies.

As a result the National AIDS Council is integrating the VCT@WORK component in its annual workplan as a priority, while coordinating with ECoSIDA and the Ministry of Health on the promotion of VCT among workers and their integration in the data collection system.



“Health testing is very important for people as it allows us to know our HIV status timely and counsellors play an important role to give us information and messages about how to live positively.”

Rabia Lucas,
a worker benefiting
from the VCT mobile
units



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BENEFITS OF PARTNERING

During the launch and implementation of the VCT campaign, the ILO supported the implementation of the partnership by mobilizing the employers' and workers' organizations to run VCT sessions at their workplace. It also provided technical assistance to train peer educators and counsellors from small and medium enterprises, farms, and companies, alongside others in the informal economy. With this help from the ILO, the partners – including employers' and workers' organizations and public sector institutions – have gained increased awareness of the VCT approach and identified the workplace as a platform for increasing the uptake of HIV treatment and providing prevention opportunities, with a view to reducing the impact of HIV and AIDS. They also benefited from knowledge and equipment, such as testing tents to continue developing VCT sessions in new companies and organizing other health events.