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ITF Global Transport Workers and HIV/AIDS Project



Fortnightly

HIV/AIDS update

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This issue...

At a time when HIV is still spreading steadily across the globe, we are also witnessing progress in controlling this deadly disease. Responses to the AIDS epidemic have grown and improved considerably over the last few years. The objective of this E-bulletin is to circulate AIDS-related news, publications, literature and research to affiliated unions and others working in this field. It is a part of our new Global HIV/AIDS project, which is targeting ITF affiliates all over the globe. Get involved! For further information and queries please contact Dr. Syed Asif Altaf, Global HIV/AIDS Project Coordinator, Altaf_Asif@itf.org.uk or the Regional Education Coordinator in your ITF region, ITF Education Department: education@itf.org.uk.

This issue of the E-bulletin has a report on the recently concluded HIV/AIDS workshop for ITF Central American affiliates. The issue will also focus on the new initiative from UNAIDS to help tackle gender inequalities and human rights violations.

HIV workshop in Central America develops long-term plan for HIV/AIDS campaign

The first ITF HIV workshop in Central America was held in Guatemala city, Guatemala from 23-25 February 2010. There were 35 participants from 19 different unions from 6 countries, which included union leaders, members of the women's network and union educators. Over half of the participants were women leaders, which is vital to addressing the gender dimension in ITF's HIV/AIDS programming.

The main objective of the workshop was to help ITF's affiliates in the region to develop a workplace policy on HIV/AIDS and for inclusion of HIV/AIDS related clauses in CBAs.

Although incomplete, available HIV surveillance data show that Central America's HIV/AIDS epidemic is concentrated in large urban areas, with high prevalence rates in some Caribbean coastal areas as well. The epidemic appears to be growing, with HIV prevalence in some countries among the highest in Latin America. Although specific vulnerable groups are still major drivers of the epidemic, both Belize (with an adult prevalence rate of 2.5 percent) and Honduras (1.5 percent) have generalized epidemics, according to UNAIDS. Approximately 380,000 people in Central America are HIV-positive, with Honduras and Guatemala accounting for nearly one-third of the region's total. In many Central American countries, there is little HIV surveillance data collected from indigenous populations or areas outside the capital.

During the workshop the affiliates shared their best practices on HIV/AIDS activities. They have also developed plans for long term work on HIV. One of the unions from Honduras already has an HIV clause in their CBA but hopes to improve the entitlements for workers with HIV; other unions will work on negotiating for an HIV clause in their current CBAs over the next year. Some of their planned activities include activity on HIV for international women's day organized by the women network from Guatemala, the El Salvador union will develop educational materials on HIV and run a course on HIV awareness and the Guatemala unions will negotiate medical insurance for the workers.

The ILO sub-regional office for Central America provided technical assistance during the workshop and showed great interest to engage with our affiliates and help them to develop their HIV policy and negotiate CBAs with HIV related clauses.

The Coordinator of a 3F project working in the sub-region also participated in the workshop as a resource person to explore the possibility of linking HIV/AIDS with their ongoing project activities specially in Honduras and Guatemala.

UNAIDS launched a five-year initiative to help tackle gender inequalities and human rights violations that increase the vulnerability of women worldwide to HIV/AIDS

UNAIDS together with celebrated artist and activist for women and HIV, Annie Lennox recently launched an [*Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV \(2010–2014\)*](#), which has been developed to address gender inequalities and human rights violations that continue to put women and girls at risk of HIV infection.

The five-year action plan was launched at a high-level panel during the 54th meeting on the Commission on the Status of Women, being held in New York until 12 March. It calls on the UN system to support governments, civil society and development partners in reinforcing country actions to put women and girls at the centre of the AIDS response, ensuring that their rights are protected. Violence against women is unacceptable and must not be tolerated," said Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director. "By robbing them of their dignity, we are losing the opportunity to tap half the potential of mankind to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Women and girls are not victims, they are the driving force that brings about social transformation."

HIV is the leading cause of death and disease among women of reproductive age (15-49 years) worldwide. As of December 2008, 33.4 million people were living with HIV worldwide, of which 15.7 million almost half were women. The proportion of women infected with HIV has risen in many regions over of the world over the past 10 years. In sub-Saharan Africa, 60% of people living with HIV are women. In Southern Africa, HIV prevalence among young women aged 15–24 years is on average about three times higher than among men of the same age. Up to 70 percent of women worldwide encounter violence. Experiencing violence hampers women's ability to negotiate safe sex. Nearly 30 years into the HIV epidemic, HIV services do not sufficiently address the specific realities and needs of women and girls.

The Agenda for Action provides clear action points on how the UN can work together with governments, civil society and development partners to:

- Produce better information on the specific needs of women and girls in the context of HIV
- Turn political commitments into increased resources and actions so HIV programmes can better respond to the needs of women and girls
- Support leaders to build safer environments in which women's and girl's human rights are protected

The actions include:

- Improving data collection and analysis to better understand how the epidemic affects women and girls
- Reinforcing the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign through the AIDS response.
- Ensuring that violence against women is integrated into HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programmes.
- Analyzing the impact of socio-cultural and economic factors that prevent women and girls from protecting themselves against HIV.
- Supporting women's groups and networks of women living with HIV to map commitments made by governments on women and HIV.
- Scaling up engagement of men's and boys' organizations to support the rights of women and girls.