



International
Labour
Office
Geneva

Providing more sick leave in Swaziland

Swaziland's Dalcrue Agricultural Enterprises has made radical changes to its sick leave policy to accommodate workers with HIV. Working with the International Labour Organization's SHARE (Strategic HIV/AIDS Responses in Enterprises) project, the company is now offering 90 days full paid sick leave and a further 90 days at half pay, for staff who have been employed by the company for a minimum of three years. The statutory amount payable in the country is 14 days on full pay and a further 14 days at half pay.

"This is a remarkable achievement and came about after a training session on the ILO's key principles on HIV/AIDS and the world of work," says SHARE National Project Coordinator in Swaziland, Khombi Nkonde. "Fourteen days is often not enough time for workers suffering from HIV-related illnesses to recover, so they end up sick with no pay. This policy gives them a vital income at a time when they really need it."

The Superspar chain is also working with SHARE in Swaziland and has developed an HIV/AIDS policy and programme for its staff that ensures confidentiality, creates an enabling environment for disclosure of HIV status and provides reasonable accommodation for workers living with HIV.

As proof of its commitment to this policy and its employees, Superspar management gave a final written warning to a supervisor who disclosed the HIV status of two workers. "The message was clear that the company has zero tolerance for bridging confidentiality and that the policy is not just a piece of paper. Employees are now open about their status because they feel supported", says Carl Litchfield the store manager.

The company has an active HIV workplace committee with participation from workers and managers up to the highest level. A behaviour change communication programme has been developed and staff can go for medical appointments during working time. Peer educators visit sick workers with food parcels during official working time.

Superspar and Dalcrue are among 12 pilot enterprises in

Swaziland that linked up with the ILO in 2004 to set up workplace HIV programmes. Eleven of these enterprises now have an active joint HIV/AIDS committee and an agreed HIV/AIDS workplace policy, they have also established a condom distribution service and made information available on sexually transmitted infections and voluntary, counselling and testing facilities.

With the financial support of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) mobilized through the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) the ILO project has now expanded to reach a total of 24 workplaces from the agriculture, communication, manufacturing, retail and textile sectors. In total these workplaces reach over 20,500 workers throughout Swaziland through a network of close to 200 peer educators.

The role of peer educators has gone beyond educating and supporting workers on HIV/AIDS issues to include TB/HIV co-infection and mobilizing men for male circumcision. The ILO/WHO TB/HIV guidelines have been adopted by national partners at a workshop in September 2008. The SHARE project played a major role in the adaptation of the manual on TB/HIV in the workplace.



Khombi Nkonde, the ILO National Project Coordinator, presenting the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work to workers and managers at the Peak Timbers, an ILO partner enterprise

Swaziland has adopted a national tripartite declaration on HIV and the world of work. To support the implementation of the declaration, a total of 37 officials from the Ministry of Labour, 70 members from the Swaziland Federation of Employers and the Federation of Swaziland Business Community and 35 representatives of trade unions were trained in close collaboration with the National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS.

The tripartite declaration to combat HIV/AIDS was adopted and launched in May 2006 in a colourful event attended by the Minister of Enterprise and Employment, the Minister for Public Works and Transport, senior government officials, workers' and employers' representatives. Non-governmental organization representatives and other stakeholders from the various civic formations also added their support.

The SHARE project influenced the inclusion of HIV/AIDS provisions in the draft employment bill that is awaiting parliamentary approval. These accomplishments have provided an environment where workers living with HIV feel more able to be open about their status. SHARE staff report an increase in the number of people prepared to come forward to declare their status in various partner enterprises.

**For further information please contact the
ILO National Project Coordinator
in Swaziland:**

Mrs. Khombi KHONDE
nkonde@realnet.co.sz
Telephone: +268 404 3556

