

EMPLOYERS AND AIDS / A SPECIAL REPORT

Workplace Aids code launched

By MIKE MWANIKI

The Federation of Kenya Employers yesterday launched a code of conduct on HIV/Aids in the workplace.

The FKE national chairman, Mr Wilfred Kiboro, said the new initiative was aimed at encouraging employers in fighting the culture of silence and denial as well as discrimination and social exclusion of workers living with HIV/Aids.

Mr Kiboro, who is also the Chief Executive of the Nation Media Group, said the highlights of the programme's objectives include:

□ Encouraging enterprises to strengthen their occupational safety and health systems so as to protect workers at greater risk of being infected by their sero-positive colleagues.

□ Effective representation of employers' viewpoints at both the National Aids Council and Committee.

□ Engaging in advocacy aimed at sensitisation of employers about their responsibilities, rights and obligations on Aids-related issues affecting their employees.

□ Creating a proper industrial climate for HIV-positive employees by encouraging employers to adopt non-discriminatory practices towards them and to discourage their stigmatisation in accordance with the provisions of International Labour Organisation Convention Number 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), 1958, and any national standards and guidelines.

□ Providing legal guidelines to employers in dealing with HIV/Aids-related cases in the industrial setting.

□ Mobilising donor resources to support the FKE programme on Aids education at the workplace.

□ Developing a common approach in the fight against Aids in the workplace within a tripartite framework together with the government and Central Organisation of Trade Unions.

□ Providing up-to-date information to FKE members on best-practices programmes of action against Aids in the workplace, either within the country or from other parts of the world.

□ Acting as a focal point of the private sector Aids initiative and;

□ Monitoring the economic and social costs of HIV/Aids.

The code of conduct was officially launched by the acting United Nations Development Programme resident representative, Mr Macleod Nyirongo, during a ceremony at Waajiri House, Nairobi.

The function was attended by, among others, FKE Executive Director Tom Owuor, Kenya Medical Association Secretary-General Kavoo Kilonzo, National Aids Control Council official Micah Kisoo and Cotu Secretary-General Joseph Mugalla.

Mr Nyirongo said the UNDP welcomed the initiative, adding that Africa needed more such initiatives.

He added: "Private corporations and businesses can play a critical role in the battle against HIV/Aids — for instance, by providing premises for education, by giving protection and support to their employees."

At the same time, the UNDP boss said there was need to secure the future through public-private sector partnership in the face of the crisis the disease was causing.

"The crisis also calls for a comprehensive and coordinated strategy with clear policy guidelines and codes of conduct. This is why the UNDP welcomes this initiative."



Federation of Kenya Employers National Chairman Wilfred Kiboro (right) in talks with the federation's Executive Director, Mr Tom Owuor, during the launch of the FKE Code of Conduct on HIV/Aids in the work-place at Waajiri House, Nairobi, yesterday. In the centre is the United Nations Development Programme's Acting Country Director, Mr Macleod Nyirongo. (Picture by PETER KARURI)

Guidelines on rights of infected workers, others

The HIV-related issues deliberated upon by the ILO/WHO consultation on Aids in the workplace held in Geneva from June 26 to 29, 1988, were based on two principles — the protection of human rights and dignity of HIV-infected persons, including persons with Aids, and avoidance of discrimination in relation to HIV-infected people and people with Aids.

These are considered essential to policy development for Aids education and prevention programmes in the workplace.

In recognition of these principles, the member-states were urged to:

□ Foster a spirit of understanding and compassion for HIV-infected people and people with Aids.

□ Protect the human rights and dignity of HIV-infected people and people with Aids so as to avoid discriminatory action against and stigmatisation of them in the provision of services, employment and travel.

□ Ensure the confidentiality of HIV testing and promote the availability of confidential counselling and other support services to HIV-positive victims.

The following policy components were recommended as guidelines on Aids-related issues at the work place:

□ Pre-employment HIV/Aids screening as part of the

assessment of fitness to work is unnecessary and should not be required. Such screening may be direct (HIV testing) or indirect (assessment of risk behaviours) or by questions about HIV tests already taken.

□ HIV/Aids screening, with the consent of the applicant, for insurance or other purposes needs close scrutiny to dispel fears of discrimination.

□ For those in employment, HIV/Aids screening whether direct, indirect or through questions should not be required, except where it may be appropriate to assist in determining the nature of treatment required.

□ All medical information, including HIV/Aids status, must be maintained under strict confidentiality.

□ There should be no obligation of the employee to inform the employer about his/her HIV/Aids status.

□ Persons in the workplace affected by, or perceived to be affected by HIV/Aids, must be protected from stigmatisation and discrimination by co-workers, unions, employers or clients. To ensure this, information and education are essential to maintain the climate of mutual understanding.

□ The employer should do everything possible to eliminate any possibility of blood or body fluid exposure of workers to their

sero-positive colleagues in the course of their work.

□ Employees and their families should have access to information and education programmes on HIV/Aids, as well as to relevant counselling and appropriate referrals.

□ HIV-infected employees should not be discriminated against in terms of benefits, including access to and receipt of standard pension, medical insurance or provident fund benefits and occupationally-related benefits, like Workman's Compensation.

□ HIV infection is by itself not associated with any limitation in fitness to work. If fitness to work is impaired by HIV-related illness, reasonable alternative working arrangements should be made.

□ HIV infection is not a cause for termination of employment. As with many other illnesses, persons with HIV-related illness should be able to work as long as medically fit for available, appropriate work or until declared unfit to work by a registered medical practitioner.

□ In any situation requiring first aid in the work place, precautions should be taken to reduce the risk of transmitting blood-borne infections, including serum hepatitis B, as these precautions will be equally effective against HIV transmission.

Testing for HIV opposed

FROM PAGE 1

information on Aids education programmes and counselling.

The employers organisation wants affected workers to get access to all benefits like pension, medical insurance, provident fund benefits and occupationally-related benefits like the Workmen's Compensation on an equal footing with their Aids-free colleagues.

HIV infection does not necessarily affect ability to work, the FKE says, but advises that where an employee's efficiency suffers, "reasonable working arrangements should be made."

"HIV infection is not a cause for termination of employment. As with many other illnesses, persons with HIV-related illness should be able to work or until declared unfit to work by a registered medical practitioner," said the document.

Employers were also urged to reduce the risk of transmitting blood-borne infections, including serum Hepatitis B during First Aid.

Employers stand to gain from these guidelines through reduced disruption in the workplace, avoiding costly litigation over dismissal of HIV-positive employees, reduced healthcare costs and a responsible public image.

Other benefits include the establishment of standard company guidelines on HIV, high productivity and protection of employee welfare.

Federation pledges help for firms

By NATION Correspondent

The FKE will assist employers to educate their workers on HIV/Aids.

The federation will periodically supply its members with information on HIV/Aids in the form of pamphlets, video films and training materials.

Other strategies include mobilising donor-funding to fight the disease and designing coping mechanism models for those infected.

At the same time, the federation will undertake to collaborate with the government and non-governmental organisations running HIV/Aids programmes.

Also, there will be an Aids education programme for managers, whose responsibility will be to coordinate and propagate Aids education in member-organisations.

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NATION WEATHER GUIDE VALID 06th September 2000

AFRICA	Max °C	Min. °C	Weather
Algiers	27	17	Partly cloudy
Cairo	33	22	Sunny
Addis Ababa	17	15	Rains
Abidjan	31	23	Cloudy
Tripoli	35	23	Sunny
Rabat	26	17	Partly cloudy
Harare	29	13	Sunny
Tananarive	23	12	Cloudy
Dakar	30	27	Partly cloudy
Khartoum	40	23	Cloudy
Tunis	31	23	Partly cloudy
Cape Town	16	10	Partly cloudy
Niamey	37	27	Cloudy
Dar es salaam	30	18	Sunny
Kampala	26	16	Sunny

EUROPE	Max °C	Min. °C	Weather
Vienna	21	11	Partly cloudy
London	19	07	Sunny
Paris	17	07	Sunny
Frankfurt	14	12	Rains
Athens	32	24	Sunny
Rome	27	14	Sunny
Oslo	14	03	Sunny
Moscow	19	14	Partly cloudy
Madrid	28	13	Partly cloudy
Geneva	19	08	Sunny
Istanbul	33	21	Sunny

Courtesy of Kenya Meteorological Department

Kenya	Max °C	Min. °C	Morning	Afternoon
Lodwar	36	25	Sunny intervals	Thunderstorms
Moyale	27	18	Sunny intervals	Showers
Wajir	32	22	Sunny intervals	Showers
Mandera	36	25	Sunny intervals	Showers
Eldoret	23	10	Sunny intervals	Thunderstorms
Kitale	27	13	Sunny intervals	Thunderstorms
Kisumu	33	18	Sunny intervals	Thunderstorms
Nakuru	27	11	Sunny intervals	Thunderstorms
Nyeri	23	10	Sunny intervals	Showers
Nairobi	25	12	Sunny intervals	Showers
Makindu	26	18	Sunny intervals	Sunny intervals
Voi	29	19	Sunny intervals	Sunny intervals
Lamu	30	23	Showers	Sunny intervals
Mombasa	29	19	Showers	Sunny intervals

FURTHER OUTLOOK
Low key weather activities are expected to continue over most parts of the country.

COASTAL WINDS	Mombasa	Nairobi	Kisumu
South-easterly at 5-10 knots			
Sunrise (a.m.)	6.26	6.33	6.46
Sunset (p.m.)	6.31	6.35	6.51

AMERICAS	Max °C	Min. °C	Weather
Mexico City	22	13	Foggy
Miami	29	26	Partly cloudy
Washington	24	20	Cloudy
Los Angeles	22	16	Sunny
Dallas	42	27	Sunny
Vancouver	19	12	Sunny
MIDDLE EAST			
Tel Aviv	31	23	Sunny
Riyadh	40	26	Sunny
Kuwait	41	28	Sunny
Dubai	38	29	Partly cloudy
ASIA			
Tokyo	27	25	Rains
Mumbai	27	23	Rains
Singapore	31	24	Partly cloudy
Bangkok	32	23	Rains
Beijing	27	17	Partly cloudy