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Aids fear amounts In places of work

By PETER WARUTERE

Increasing fear about Aids infection in places where workers are in regular contact with one another is threatening organizational efficiency and productivity. According to the Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE), the stigma surrounding Aids infection does not auger well for industrial relations because it has led to souring inter-personal relations. The federation has circulated a paper to employers on the killer disease, in which it says there were 8,000 reported cases in Kenya by April this year. The aim of the paper is to synthesize available information to form some guidelines for Aids related programmes in organizations. The paper is based on the report of a consultative meeting organized by the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization in Geneva in June 1988 Lo discuss Aids and the workplace.The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the unprecedented Global increase in the number of Aids-infected people and patients, particularly between the ages of 20 and 29 years. The meeting observed that about 90 per cent of the five to 10 million people reported HIV positive by then were within the economically productive group, “thus making the implications of this for the workplace a critical issue.”

The paper dispatched to employer’s attaches a lot of importance on the need for all worker to have access to information pertaining to Aids, including its causes, symptoms, preventive measures and testing. “It is even more important that managers be made aware of facts which will enable them handle problems arising from cases of HIV infections in workplaces effectively,” stresses the paper. The paper emphasizes that there is no medical evidence to suggest that Aids can be transmitted by casual person-to-person contact like bodily searches, hugs or embraces or through insect bites, foods and use of shared facilities. The only established ways through which Aids can be transmitted, says the paper, are sexual intercourse, blood transfusion, non-sterile injection, tissue transplant and pre-natal transmission, while the prevention and control of Aids infection will depend largely on individual efforts, the paper advises employers to disseminate relevant information to their workers. The paper, stresses that workers infected with Aids should not be discriminated against, sacked or denied standard work benefits like pension, medical insurance, provident fund benefits and workmen’s compensation. The paper emphasizes that Aids screening, “whether direct, indirect or through questions’, should not be required even in the recruitment of new employees. “There should be no obligation on the employees to inform the employer about his/her Aids status,” the paper state