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Aids fear amounts In places of work

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Increasing fear about Aids infection in places where workers are

in regular contact with one an

other is threatening

organisational 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

synthesise available information

to form some guidelines for Aids

related programmes in

organisations.

The paper is based on the re

port of a consultative meeting

organised by the WorLd Health

Organisation and the International Labour Organisation 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 implication of

this for the workplace a critical

issue.”

The paper dispatched to employers attaches a lot of importance on the need for all workers

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 1-11V infections in workplaces

effectively,” stresses the paper.

The paper emphasises that

there is no medical evidence to

suggest that Aids can be transmitted by casual person-to-per

son 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 emphasises 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