

CF/EXD/2003-016
24 July 2003
FOR ACTION

To: Regional Directors/ Deputy Regional Directors
Representatives/ Assistant Representatives
Heads of Offices: Brussels, Copenhagen, Florence and Tokyo
Directors/ Deputy Directors, Section Chiefs, New York Headquarters
Regional Human Resources and Operations Officers
Human Resources and Operations Officers

From: Carol Bellamy (signed)
Executive Director

Subject: **"Caring for Us" - Setting Minimum Standards in UNICEF Offices Globally on HIV/AIDS in the Workplace Programmes**

HIV/AIDS represent a major threat to our UNICEF workforce, impacting on staff members' rights, loss of jobs and income, fear of stigmatization and isolation. More and more, we are faced with the dilemma of how to handle HIV/AIDS in the world of work.

UNICEF has a primary responsibility to care for our staff, generally, by engendering a culture of care which supports overall staff well-being, as well as, specifically, in providing all staff with basic information on HIV/AIDS.

With this in mind, we are stepping up our efforts to address the impact of the pandemic in UNICEF's workplace as well as to raise awareness among all staff of the importance of HIV/AIDS as a priority area of work for UNICEF. We will be guided in this effort by existing policies and experiences, lessons learnt and achievements of our Caring for Us Programme and the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work (attached as Annex B).

Minimum Standards

As a first step in efforts to scale up the Caring for Us Programme to the global level, we have developed the attached minimum standards (see Annex A) for attainment in all UNICEF offices. Key areas will include information about policies and basic information on HIV/AIDS – including prevention, testing, care and support and talking to our children about HIV – as well as issues of confidentiality, protection from stigma, and strengthening procedures for access to quality care.

These minimum standards are in compliance with our HIV/AIDS policy and encompass staff members' rights and management's obligations for the protection and care of affected UNICEF staff members and their dependants, and draw upon the efforts, initiatives undertaken and experiences so far in addressing HIV/AIDS in the Workplace.

We will provide you with a Tool Kit which provides step-by-step guidance for management on the implementation of UNICEF's Minimum Standards. In addition, supporting documentation and resource materials will also be provided to support implementation and ensure that we respond to the vulnerabilities of our staff and assure the best possible environment for a productive and healthy workforce.

At this time, I wish to remind you of our responsibility, as UNICEF's managers, to make certain that these minimum standards are achieved and maintained in all UNICEF offices. In doing so I would particularly like to draw your attention to the needs to ensure that:

- (a) the rights, principles and strategies relating to HIV/AIDS in the workplace are an integral part of your office's annual work plans;
- (b) staff associations are fully consulted and involved in all stages of the development, implementation and review of workplace programmes;
- (c) special attention is given to involving people living with HIV and AIDS in the design, implementation and evaluation of workplace programmes; and
- (d) annual reviews on implementation progress are conducted and actions to strengthen them are agreed upon and included in office workplans and budgets.

Please also note that you will be required to report annually on the progress achieved by your office, in the attainment and maintenance of the established minimum standards.

Should you have any questions or comments on any of the above subjects, kindly contact Martina Clark, Human Resources Officer for HIV/AIDS in the Workplace.

Thank you.

ANNEX A

HIV/AIDS in the Workplace Minimum Standards for Attainment in ALL UNICEF Offices

UNICEF staff and dependents have the rights to:	Indicators:
Information about UN policies, staff rights, entitlements and benefits, regarding HIV/AIDS and the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN HIV/AIDS policy & ILO Code of Practice made available to all staff Officer responsible for human resources fully oriented to advise on policy All staff and dependents made aware of policies, rights, entitlements and benefits
Information on the facts about HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it, including discussion on stigma and discrimination related to the epidemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current and accurate information materials freely available to all staff and dependents Orientation on HIV/AIDS, including gender-specific dimensions of the epidemic, made mandatory for all staff and made available for any dependents
Interactive learning/training activities conducted annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 3-hour sessions held annually which are gender and socially/culturally sensitive, and age appropriate for all staff and dependents
Free access to male and female condoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male and female condoms available in strategic locations within the workplace All staff made aware of their location(s)
Access to voluntary and confidential counselling and testing (VCCT).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality-assured listing of VCCT service providers that is updated regularly All staff and dependents aware of where and how to access VCCT Learning activities in place to emphasize importance of VCCT
Confidentiality in the management of information regarding HIV status, including processing of (Medical Insurance Plan) MIP and other health insurance claims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidentiality management procedures in place and adhered to Ongoing monitoring of office procedures in handling and processing MIP and other health insurance claims to ensure confidentiality Staff trust in confidentiality procedures
Good-quality, confidential medical care, including Anti-Retroviral (ARV) and prevention of parent-to-child transmission (PPTCT) therapy, as indicated, if HIV-infected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff accessing services as needed. Procedures in place and known to enable access to quality care for staff and dependents.

First aid assistance using universal precautions.	First aid kits in all official vehicles (e.g., IV, plasma substitute, syringes, etc.) All traveling staff trained in first aid and what to do in the event of an accident
Rapid access to HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kits.	Valid PEP kit in country and available within eight hours Staff aware of appropriate use, administration and location of PEP kit, and how to access it
A supportive and caring office environment.	“Caring for Us” programme (or other staff well-being programme) in place and functioning Staff aware of how to access counselling services.
UNICEF managers have an <u>obligation</u> to ensure that these rights have been fulfilled. These obligations include:	
Develop annual workplan on HIV/AIDS in the workplace to achieve and maintain the minimum standards.	Workplan and budget in place, updated annually based on experience
Establish/utilise an existing committee (e.g. JCC, Caring for Us committee) to manage and monitor the HIV/AIDS in the workplace workplan.	Committee includes staff/dependents living with HIV Regular (monthly) meetings held to review progress and advise workplan implementation
Report annually on progress in ensuring the attainment and maintenance of minimum standards (above).	Mainstream in existing annual report Annual report prepared, and reviewed by office management/staff committee, and available for annual audit
Review workplan implementation progress at senior management levels.	Progress, compliance, and best practice experiences reviewed, at least annually, by senior management (at country, regional and global levels)
Ensure confidential processing of MIP and other health insurance claims.	Workflow reviewed and refined, as necessary, at least annually, by senior management Processing narrowed to limit number of staff handling claims

ANNEX B

ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS in the World of Work¹

Key principles:

Recognition of HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue. HIV/AIDS is a workplace issue, not only because it affects the workforce, but also because the workplace can play a vital role in limiting the spread and effects of the epidemic.

Non-discrimination. There should be no discrimination or stigmatization of workers on the basis of real or perceived HIV status.

Gender equality. More equal gender relations and the empowerment of women are vital to successfully preventing the spread of HIV infection and enabling women to cope with HIV/AIDS.

Healthy work environment. The work environment should be healthy and safe, and adapted to the state of health and capabilities of workers.

Social dialogue. A successful HIV/AIDS policy and programme requires cooperation and trust between employers, workers, and governments.

Screening for purposes of employment. HIV/AIDS screening should not be required of job applicants or persons in employment and testing for HIV should not be carried out at the workplace except as specified in this code.

Confidentiality. Access to personal data relating to a worker's HIV status should be bound by the rules of confidentiality consistent with existing ILO codes of practice.

Continuing the employment relationship. HIV infection is not a cause for termination of employment. Persons with HIV-related illnesses should be able to work for as long as medically fit in appropriate conditions.

Prevention. The social partners are in a unique position to promote prevention efforts through information and education, and support changes in attitudes and behaviour.

Care and support. Solidarity, care and support should guide the respond to HIV/AIDS at the workplace. All workers are entitled to affordable health services and to benefits from statutory and occupational schemes.

¹ Full text of ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS in the World of Work is available at:
http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/code/languages/hiv_a4_e.pdf