

**MANAGING HIV/AIDS IN YOUR WORKPLACE:  
PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PROFITABILITY**

**AN INNOVATIVE TRAINING APPROACH FOR SMES**

**SYNOPSIS:**

In South Africa alone, HIV/AIDS has been identified as 1 of the 3 factors that cause the failure of nearly 80 percent of start-up SMEs every year.<sup>1,2</sup> The smaller the company, the less likely it is to report any program against HIV/AIDS for its workforce.<sup>3</sup> Lack of awareness and of capacity to deal with HIV/AIDS are critical problems for SMEs.

As have larger companies, SMEs have expressed the need for a third-party, objective advisor on what interventions to implement in their workplace and whom to choose as partners. Also missing is such an advisor's high-quality, in-depth, and ongoing relationships with SMEs to enable them to counteract HIV/AIDS as a business issue. There is an urgent need for a pan-African program that is anchored in making the "business case" to SMEs and is tailored to enable SMEs to take effective action against HIV/AIDS.

The PEP Africa–IFC Against AIDS Program, "Managing HIV/AIDS in Your Workplace," proposes to raise awareness about the operational risks that HIV/AIDS represents to SMEs and address the HIV/AIDS risk management needs of those enterprises. The approach of the program is one of risk management with systematic hands-on capacity building within the participating companies, and within the NGOs, business associations or chambers of commerce with whom the program will collaborate throughout the three-year period of the project life.

One should not underestimate the significance of private entrepreneurs' engagement on HIV/AIDS. The mere fact that employers have access to employees, i.e. an adult population, every day, is their strongest comparative advantage on the fight against HIV/AIDS, along the other "traditional" actors such as NGOs, local or international health authorities. In Africa, seventy percent of employed people work in the SME sector. "Managing HIV/AIDS in Your Workplace" proposes to leverage the untapped leadership and role of SMEs to increase the reach of HIV/AIDS prevention messages and care referrals. By doing so, the program will create an additional channel for key interventions in the area of HIV/AIDS education, prevention and treatment among adults by helping SMEs to mitigate the operational risks that they face through AIDS.

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW:**

The PEP Africa–IFC Against AIDS Program, "Managing HIV/AIDS in Your Workplace," is a 3-year program to address the HIV/AIDS risk management needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The program has three main components:

1. Make the "business case" for action among SMEs

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<sup>1</sup> "Disease forcing enterprises to the wall, say researchers," *Business Day*, South Africa, July 11, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> S. Van Eeden, S. Viviers, and D. Venter, "An Exploratory Study of Selected Problems Encountered by Small Businesses in a South African Context," *Journal of African Business*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2004): 45–72.

<sup>3</sup> Deloitte & Touche Human Capital Corporation. *Evaluation of Workplace Responses to HIV/AIDS in South Africa: A Rapid Situation Analysis* (Johannesburg: South African Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, 2002).

2. Train SMEs in HIV/AIDS mitigation skills to enable SMEs to take appropriate actions to counteract the epidemic
3. Sustain mentoring follow-up to ensure that participating SMEs take action.

This program is designed to be implemented in East Africa, Portuguese-speaking Africa (Mozambique and Angola), and Southern Africa.

### **PARTNERS:**

The program has been developed under the auspices of two specialized areas of the International Finance Corporation (IFC). IFC is the private investment arm of the World Bank Group. IFC is a global investor and advisor, committed to building a sustainable private sector in the developing world, thus helping to reduce poverty and improve people's lives.

#### ***PEP Africa***

The Private Enterprise Partnership for Africa (PEP Africa) was established in 2005 as IFC's new vehicle for providing technical assistance (TA) for the development of Africa's private sector. Partnering with the private sector, governments, and donors, PEP Africa designs, manages, and implements TA programs. By working in partnership, PEP Africa complements its development partners' private sector development (PSD) initiatives while leveraging IFC's practical experience in the private sector.

#### ***IFC Against AIDS***

Recognizing that HIV/AIDS is as much a business issue as a development and humanitarian concern, IFC initiated a specialized program in 2000 with dedicated resources, IFC Against AIDS. The mission of IFC Against AIDS is to protect people and profitability by being a risk management partner, HIV/AIDS expert, and catalyst for action wherever HIV/AIDS threatens sustainable development. The program has a strong focus on Africa. The program's ultimate goal is to accelerate the involvement of private enterprises in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

### **PILOT PROJECT:**

Between February 2004 and June 2005, 20 training sessions were delivered to 152 participating companies under a pilot project made possible thanks to a grant of the Netherlands Trust Fund of IFC. Training sessions were held in Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, and Tanzania.

As the pilot phase was rolled out, it elucidated a number of lessons that have implications for the expansion of the pilot across the wider region.

#### ***Lessons from Pilot Project***

- SMEs are unaware of the risks and impacts of HIV/AIDS on their businesses.
- To ensure mobilization and action by SMEs, sustained engagement of SME participants is required.
- The ideal beneficiary group is SMEs with 50-500 employees.
- The ideal training cohort size is 15-18 SMEs; the maximum number of participants is 25.

- Successful turnouts at training depend on dedicated staff who give adequate time and attention to planning.
- Successful turnout at training requires dedicated targeting and marketing.
- Targeting human resources managers results in the highest turn-out.
- Partnering is critical.
- A baseline needs to be established at the beginning of the program to enable monitoring and evaluation later.

## **PROGRAM DETAILS:**

### ***Goal and Objectives***

The goal of the PEP Africa–IFC Against AIDS program is to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on SMEs’ operations and on their employees, families, and communities.

The program has two objectives:

1. To increase the capacity of SMEs to implement and sustain an effective HIV/AIDS workplace program
2. To develop a replicable approach to HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation for SMEs that other organizations can adopt.

### ***Objective 1 will be achieved through business case drives, training sessions and follow-up over twelve months***

- Business case drives

The business case drives will consist in interactive presentations or short seminars on the impacts of HIV/AIDS on businesses. They will sensitize SME owners to the risks that HIV/AIDS poses to their businesses and to the resources that exist for their companies. The desired result is that they will enroll their companies in the training program. These events will be organized in partnership with chambers of commerce and industry, Rotary Clubs, and business coalitions on HIV/AIDS.

- Training on HIV/AIDS mitigation skills and prevention to key groups of SMEs

The initial training is one full day. It has four objectives for SMEs:

1. Learn facts and discredit myths about HIV/AIDS
2. Raise their awareness of the impact of HIV/AIDS on their businesses, their employees, and their communities by learning the business case for action
3. Understand the process used to create an HIV/AIDS program in the workplace
4. Develop preliminary action plans for their companies and become aware of NGO resources available for implementation.

- Follow-up process

The pilot indicated that, for companies to take action, consistent follow-up is required. Follow-up sessions will take place every 4 months after the initial one-day training, eventually “graduating” participants into the support group that is fostered throughout the

process. The follow-up process will take place over a period of twelve months and has the following 4 objectives:

1. Facilitator assesses the progress of submitted action plans
2. Participants discuss the success and challenges of implementing their prior 4-month action plans
3. Facilitator gives feedback and guidance
4. Participants complete their following 4-month action plans.

### ***Cost sharing***

Peer education has proved an effective intervention in HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation projects. The program will reserve an envelope of grant money to partially cover each SME's costs of peer education training.<sup>4</sup> The cost-sharing will be provided according to the size of the company:

- 50-100 employees = one peer educator
- 100-300 employees = two peer educators
- 300-500 employees = three peer educators

The training itself and follow-up sessions are free of charge to all participants. Participating companies will finance other aspects of their programs, such as training additional peer educators (the ideal ratio is 1 peer educator per 50 employees). The SMEs also will be required to contribute to their programs through in-kind support, including primarily staff time, meeting rooms, and supplies for employee information sessions.

***Objective 2 will be achieved by partnering with interested business associations, nongovernmental organizations, and other public and private organizations.***

IFC's goal is to systematically pass on the content and process developed by the program to other organizations. Coordination with local NGOs, business councils, chambers of commerce, government, international organizations' programs, and services providers in the area of HIV/AIDS plays a central role in this program.

Interested business associations, nongovernmental organizations, and other public and private organizations will be provided with all relevant SME HIV/AIDS program materials. Individuals in these organizations will be trained as trainers (TOT) to use the materials to replicate the program with their constituent SMEs.

### **CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE: GENDER**

Every year brings an increase in the number of women infected with HIV. **In Africa, 60%** of people aged 15-49 infected by HIV are women. Integrating the needs of women in workplace HIV/AIDS interventions is not only important for their effectiveness, but also a gauge of leadership.

The program will systematically seek to develop gender-sensitive workplace programs among the participating SMEs. There are multiple ways that this can be achieved: provision

of women-friendly services in the workplace, where women can access information, treatment and care services or referrals; participation of women from the workforce or the community in the design of activities or services to be targeted at them; emphasis about women's particular needs and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in awareness and training activities, as well as sensitization about their rights; positive communication about women and men's roles in addressing those vulnerabilities.

**EVALUATION:**

The employees of some participating SMEs will be surveyed anonymously at the beginning of the program and at the end of 12 months to evaluate their knowledge, attitudes, and practices in relation to HIV and AIDS. With this control group, the program will ascertain changed knowledge and attitudes within these workplaces vis-à-vis the implementation of programmatic elements. Ultimately, this evolution will indicate the influence of the training program on HIV prevention behaviors, as well as on stigma, discrimination, and perception of the disease.

Similarly, the program will survey random company owners among cohorts of participating SMEs. The survey will assess the owners' awareness and knowledge about the impacts of HIV/AIDS on their operations at the start of the program and after participating in the 1-year program. The evolution of their awareness will indicate the influence of the training program on owners' understanding of HIV/AIDS as a business risk and the capacity of SMEs to manage the risk by themselves.

**RISKS:**

One risk is the ability to identify and partner successfully with local implementation organizations (availability and capacity).

A second difficulty could be the ability to reach the formal private sector.

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