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Catalyzing Capacity Workplace HIV/AIDS Programs in Kenya

The private sector and large workforces have played key roles in making HIV/AIDS prevention strategies successful in Kenya. But involving Kenyan employers in developing successful prevention strategies for Kenyan workers has taken time and tremendous effort. What has been the role and contribution of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Implementing AIDS Prevention and Care (MPACT_ Project in workplace HIV/AIDS programming?



Hotel Intercontinental's human resource manager showing a peer educator T-shirt to the hotel's general manager



CEO at Pan African Paper Mill awarding certificates to peer educators



Barclay's Bank of Kenya peer educators attending a video session during a peer educator training

- Initial efforts began in 1994 when Family Health International (FHI), through the USAID-funded AIDS Control and Prevention (AIDSCAP) Project, developed a manual for workplace HIV/AIDS prevention programs. The manual described the benefits to employers of ensuring a healthy workforce through HIV prevention activities and provided examples of successful program models. Updated in 2002, the manual has been adapted and used by many organizations around Africa and throughout the world.
- In 1999, with the development of the IMPACT Project in Kenya, workplace HIV/AIDS prevention interventions became a priority with large workforces in Coast, Rift Valley and Western provinces. Such companies such as Bamburi Cement, Mumias Sugar and Slapper Shoes were among the 15 companies initially targeted for assistance.
- Many selected companies needed to be convinced of the efficacy of workplace programs. Concerns identified included costs, job security, and stigma and discrimination against those identified as HIV-positive.
- Besides the work of FHI, the Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) and other groups were educating employers about the need for HIV/AIDS policies in the workplace to ensure non-discriminatory employment practices as well as staff retention.
- Working with the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), FHI developed an outreach approach and curriculum for workplace peer educators to use in factories. Peer educators from seven factories were trained to educate other workers on HIV prevention. Topics included abstinence, monogamy, the importance of HIV testing, and the consistent and correct use of condoms.
- This approach was taught to other implementing partners as well, including the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF), the Family Planning Association of Kenya (FPAK) and the International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH). In some companies, peer educators went into their communities and talked with spouses of workers as well.
- By 2002, 28 companies had ongoing peer education programs and had provided peer education to more than 76,000 workers.

Despite the impressive early activities among factory workers, more interventions were needed to create profound behavior changes among workers and their families. More organizations needed to work with employers and train peer educators. In addition, the private sector needed to take on more of the financial burden for interventions in their own factories to ensure that a true commitment was being made toward behavior change efforts.



Pan African Paper Mill employees participating in an HIV/AIDS prevention campaign walk

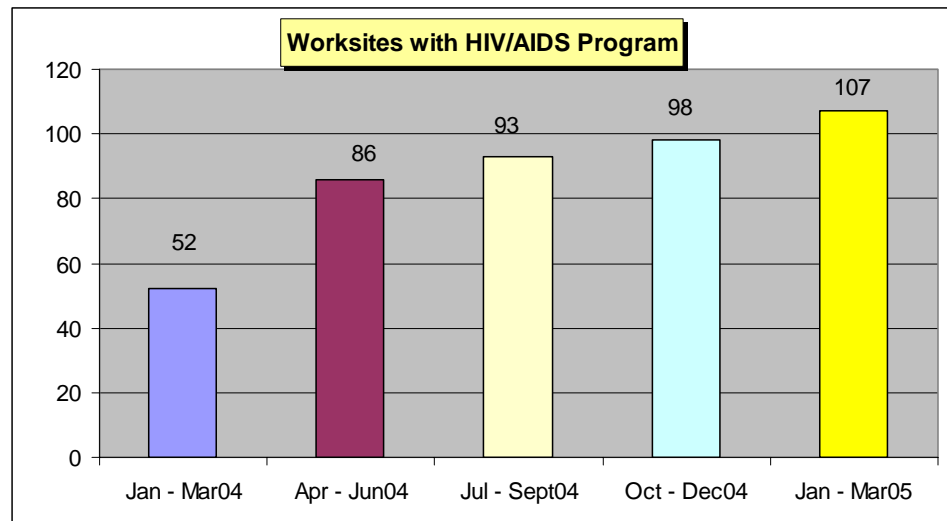


Peer educators leading activities at Mumias Sugar Factory



Workers at the Kenya Revenue Authority in Mombasa participating in an HIV/AIDS education campaign

- In 2003, FHI assisted the National Organization for Peer Educators (NOPE). This NGO, using trainers from various IMPACT implementing partners, began marketing peer education services to companies around Kenya. As employers started to realize they needed to address HIV prevention in their workforces, and were ready to pay for these programs, NOPE was primed to provide this service.
- From 2003 to 2005, using the peer education approach developed by IMPACT, NOPE, AMREF, FPAK and ICRH reached 107 employers with a combined workforce of more than 110,000. Two thousand peer educators in these companies have been trained.
- With the introduction of antiretroviral therapy (ART) in Kenya in 2004, IMPACT implementing partners are now educating employers to incorporate ART as a benefit or referral service. For example, NOPE and Pharm ACCESS Africa Ltd., another IMPACT partner, are orienting and providing ARV drugs to 11 Kenyan companies.
- From a mere 15 companies in 2000 to 107 companies in 2005, workplace HIV/AIDS prevention programs supported by IMPACT have grown exponentially—and are clearly changing people’s lives.



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