

**If not this, what?
If not now, when?
If not you, who?**



United Nations
Development Programme

http://intra.undp.org/ohr/hiv_aids/wecare/

We Care
What You and
Your Family
Should Know



We Care | *We Walk The Talk*

The Answer Lies Within

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There is no more important issue facing the world today than HIV/AIDS. In order for us to help our programme country clients on this, we must first learn to *walk the walk* as well as *talk the talk*. So I hope and expect that you will join me in embracing the initiatives to ensure that UNDP (and the wider UN system) truly becomes an HIV/AIDS competent employer.

Mark Malloch Brown
Administrator

United Nations Development Programme

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We often assume that as UN employees, especially at Headquarters, we are somehow immune. Immune to being infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, immune from stigma and discrimination, immune from needing care, counselling, testing or treatment.

But the truth is, we are as vulnerable as everyone else in society, and just like everyone else, we need to make informed decisions when it comes to HIV and AIDS. We need to be educated, we need to know how we can protect ourselves and how we can have a better quality of life if we happen to be living with HIV. We need to know that we have access to care and treatment and the right to confidentiality and non-discrimination in the workplace.

In addition, as UN employees we have a special role to play. Before we can share with the world how HIV/AIDS should be addressed, we need to look into ourselves. Are we really that well informed, that sensitive? Can we talk openly to our co-workers about HIV/AIDS? Are we really sure that we will not be stigmatized if we happen to be living with HIV? Are we afraid of

working closely with someone living with HIV? Do we discuss our anxieties and concerns within our families, with our partners, friends and co-workers?

The **We Care** initiative addresses these issues. It helps us recognize that HIV/AIDS is not only 'out there' but also among us. And that if we are to create an environment that is empowering and respectful of the rights and responsibilities of every individual, **we must first begin with ourselves.**



The We Care Initiative

The objective of the We Care initiative is to stimulate reflection and discussions on the HIV/AIDS epidemic and its underlying causes, thus generating appropriate action and enhancing the capacity of UN country teams to support staff members and dependants who are affected and/or living with HIV/AIDS.

The underlying principle of the **We Care** Initiative is the application of a rights-based approach to HIV/AIDS in the workplace in order to provide a supportive work environment free from denial, discrimination and stigmatization on the basis of real or perceived HIV status of staff members and dependants.



The specific objectives of the We Care programme include:

1. To ensure full implementation of the UN Personnel Policy on HIV/AIDS and the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS in the World of Work.
2. To ensure that all staff members and their dependants living with HIV/AIDS have full access to anti-retroviral treatment.
3. To facilitate access to adequate care, treatment and support to all staff members and dependants.
4. To ensure that all staff members have access to Voluntary Counselling and Testing.
5. To enhance prevention through information, education and training so as to reduce personal vulnerability.
6. To ensure protection of the rights of staff members and dependants affected by HIV/AIDS.
7. To provide a supportive work environment free from discrimination and stigmatization of staff members and dependants affected by and/or living with HIV/AIDS.

As an UN employee, we have the following rights:



Information, education and other preventive health measures

- UN Staff and their families should be provided with sufficient, updated information to enable them to protect themselves from HIV infection and to cope with the presence of HIV and AIDS.
- All UN staff members and their families should be made aware of where safe blood may be obtained.
- UN Resident Coordinators must exercise their responsibility to adopt measures to reduce the frequency of motor vehicle accidents, not only because of their attendant high mortality and morbidity, but because they represent a particular risk for HIV infection in those localities lacking safe blood supplies.
- All UN staff members and their families should have access to disposable syringes and needles.
- All UN staff members and their families should have access to female and male condoms.



As an UN employee, we have the following rights:

Voluntary testing, counselling and confidentiality

- Voluntary testing with pre-and post-counselling and assured confidentiality should be made available to all UN staff members and their families.

Terms of appointment and service

Pre-recruitment and Employment Prospects

- The only medical criterion for recruitment is fitness to work.
- HIV infection does not, in itself, constitute a lack of fitness to work.
- There will be no HIV screening of candidates for recruitment.
- AIDS will be treated as any other chronic illness in considering medical classification.
- HIV testing with the specific and informed consent of the candidate may be required if AIDS is clinically suspected.
- Nothing in the pre-employment examination should be considered as obliging any candidate to declare his or her HIV status.
- For any assignment in a country which requires HIV testing for residence, this requirement must appear in the vacancy notice.

Continuity of Employment

- HIV infection or AIDS should not be considered as a basis for termination of employment.
- If fitness to work is impaired by HIV-related illness, reasonable alternative working arrangements should be made.
- UN staff members with AIDS should enjoy health and social protection in the same manner as other UN employees suffering from serious illness.
- HIV/AIDS screening, whether direct (HIV testing), indirect (assessment of risk behaviours) or asking questions about tests already taken, should not be required.
- Confidentiality regarding all medical information, including HIV/AIDS status, must be maintained.
- There should be no obligation on the part of the employee to inform the employer regarding his or her HIV/AIDS status.
- Persons in the workplace affected by, or perceived to be affected by HIV/AIDS, must be protected from stigmatization and discrimination by co-workers, unions, employers or clients.

- HIV-infected employees and those with AIDS should not be discriminated against, including access to and receipt of benefits from statutory social security programmes and occupationally-related schemes.
- The administrative, personnel and financial implications of these principles under terms of appointment and service should be monitored and periodically reviewed.





As an UN employee, we have the following rights:

Health insurance benefits programmes

- Health insurance coverage should be available for all UN employees regardless of HIV status.
- There should be no pre- or post-employment testing for HIV infection.
- Health insurance premiums for UN employees should not be affected by HIV status.
- No testing for HIV infection should be permitted with respect to any health insurance scheme.

Our role in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic

Some of us feel rather overwhelmed when faced with the complexity and scale of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Very often we don't realize that we have a role to play in effectively responding to the epidemic.

Let's talk about it

In spite of the need for open communication on HIV/AIDS and related issues, most of us are uncomfortable talking about it to our families, partners, friends, and especially to our co-workers. This may be because we are shy about



discussing sex and sexuality, as these subjects are considered "taboo" in most cultures.

But silence about HIV/AIDS is the most dangerous course of action to adopt. We need to get over our embarrassment and start talking about HIV/AIDS to our partners, families, friends and colleagues. By breaking the silence around HIV/AIDS, we can take the first important step towards coping with it.

Let's get informed and AIDS competent

All of us need to spend time getting correct information about HIV/AIDS. This way, we can not only understand how to protect ourselves and our loved ones, but also help and support those who are living with HIV/AIDS.

The UN has two new sources of information for all staff members and dependents. The new UN information booklet 'Living in a World with HIV and AIDS' and the new web site on 'HIV/AIDS in the Workplace'.

Our role in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic



Let's get tested

Getting tested for HIV is the only way to know our HIV status, and being able to cope responsibly with the reality. If you test negative, it is an opportunity to ensure that you remain HIV negative. If you test positive, it is important that you know it because only this knowledge helps you take care of your health the way you need to, and learn how to protect your loved ones.

Getting tested for HIV can be scary; therefore, some of us may decide to go as a couple, with a friend or go on their own.

The UN medical insurance scheme covers 80-100% of costs of two HIV tests per year. Let's use this opportunity to get tested and encourage others to do so.

Let's live positively

If we test HIV positive we must take good care of our health. It is important to find a skilled physician, with HIV/AIDS experience and with whom you can build a professional and supportive relationship.

Let's get care and treatment

Getting appropriate care and treatment if we are living with HIV/AIDS is vital to continuing a healthy life. As an UN employee, HIV/AIDS related care and treatment, including ARVs, is available to us through the UN's medical insurance plan. It is the individual right of all UN employees to have access to care and treatment. The appropriate care and treatment helps you to continue living productively (including your job at the UN) and to fulfil your social responsibilities to your families and communities.

The UN has provided a Post Exposure Prophylaxis service (PEP) to all staff and dependents. The PEP Kit is available to those who, in an emergency situation, such as rape or professional accident, are likely to have been exposed to HIV/AIDS. The PEP Kit attempts to reduce the possibility of contracting HIV and treatment has to be started within 2-72 hours after the incident.

Let's fight stigma and discrimination

People living with HIV need support, treatment and care. They have a right to live and work and be treated with respect and understanding. Each one of us must do everything we can to fight stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS – in our workplace, home and society. Discrimination can only be dealt with effectively once we are empowered with appropriate information, including facts on how HIV is transmitted and how it is not. Seek this information.

The **We Care** programme provides insights on the manifestations of stigma and discrimination in the workplace and in communities, and how to address them. A discriminatory environment hinders people's access to services that are available. In the UN, there are staff members who prefer not to get care and treatment out of fear of being discriminated against. Fear of stigma leads people to be in denial, and prevents them from getting tested.

Our role in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic



Let's be open

HIV/AIDS affects each one of us. Ignoring it or pretending that it only happens to 'other people' means we are in denial of the facts. We need to recognize that our education or socio-economic status does not protect us from HIV. Regardless of who we are, we are all vulnerable.

Let's use condoms

Over 75% of HIV infections are transmitted through heterosexual intercourse. We can protect our loved ones and ourselves by using condoms correctly and consistently for every sexual encounter.

Let's avoid blood-to-blood transmission

Nowadays, the majority of blood-to-blood transmissions are due to sharing of needles and syringes during intravenous drug use. Even though we encourage every intravenous drug user to quit, we first want to ensure that staff and their family members have access to

Test Yourself!

STATEMENTS	TRUE	FALSE
HIV/AIDS is an African problem. Most people in New York are quite 'safe'.		
Statistically, most women in the world are infected with HIV by their husbands or steady sexual partners.		
HIV can be transmitted by insect bites.		
Inequality between men and women is one of the key reasons for the spread of HIV/AIDS.		
Testing positive for HIV means you have AIDS.		

STATEMENTS	TRUE	FALSE
Contaminated instruments used for body piercing can cause HIV infection.		
Using the same lavatory as an HIV positive person increases the chances for contracting HIV.		
UN employees living with HIV and AIDS sometimes face discrimination and stigma.		
Sharing a drinking water fountain with someone living with HIV is dangerous.		
People living with HIV can work for the		



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