

SWHAP Newsletter December 2014

World AIDS Day

The theme for World AIDS Day 2014, "Closing the gap", focused efforts on empowering and enabling people everywhere to access the HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services that they need, ensuring that no one is left behind.

With 67% of men and 57% of women living with HIV not receiving treatment (UNAIDS), workplaces are an important aspect in addressing some of the social and structural issues that prevent employees and their families from accessing testing and treatment services. Structured programmes provide access to testing and treatment for employees and families at the workplace through regular on-site testing and wellness days. Employee Support Programmes with counselling, nutrition support and follow-up of positive employees help to promote adherence to treatment. Tuberculosis, Condom, Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision and Peer Education Programmes promoting behaviour change also play their role in ensuring no one in the workplace is left behind.

SWHAP partners joined UNAIDS and other actors in commemorating World AIDS through, candle lighting ceremonies, marches, providing access to HIV and wellness screening, and participation in national events. Read more about the activities in the World AIDS Day Supplement.



Candle lighting ceremony at Atlas Copco Tanzania

Addressing Gender Based Violence in the DRC

To commemorate the International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women and the beginning of the 16 day campaign against gender based violence, SWHAP in the DRC held a network meeting to build capacity within steering committees to address populations considered

at higher risk of HIV infection. These groups include women, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Inter-sexed (LGBTI) individuals and men who have sex with men (MSM).

According to the UNAIDS Gap Report, young women and adolescent girls are disproportionately vulnerable to HIV infection, being twice as likely as young men to be living with HIV. There are many reasons for this including culture, biology, economics, unequal power relations between men and women and gender based violence (GBV). Women who fear or experience violence lack the power to ask their partners to use condoms or to refuse unprotected sex, and fear of violence can prevent women from learning and/or sharing their HIV status and accessing treatment. Women who face intimate partner violence are at a 50% increased risk of acquiring HIV (UNAIDS). Stigma, discrimination and fear of violence also means LGBTI persons and MSM are at higher risk of contracting HIV. Laws and social customs in many countries condone discrimination against these groups limiting their access to health care services.

During the network meeting a human rights and gender specialist from UNAIDS explored the link between gender based violence and HIV with the participants. Testimonies from MSM and LGBTI persons also addressed misconceptions and provided confidential hotline numbers for additional information and support. SWHAP considers workplaces an important entry point for raising awareness on the sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) of vulnerable groups.

Promoting access to VCT through social football

Sports intervention programmes are useful in developing positive social behaviours and risk awareness which are important aspects in HIV and AIDS communication for behaviour change. SWHAP partners use football to promote and enhance access to HIV screening for employees, families and communities. In November Atlas Copco Tanzania and Ericom Communications Zimbabwe held football tournaments promoting physical health, awareness of HIV and other non-communicable diseases.

In Tanzania the Football Bonanza was held in Mwanza at Buswelu School. Six football teams including two women's teams participated in the tournament. During matches, Atlas Copco Peer Educators shared messages on "Getting to Zero", zero new HIV infections, zero AIDS-related deaths and zero discrimination. Whilst in Zimbabwe Ericom Communications collaborated with SWHAP and the International Labour Organization

The Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS Programme (SWHAP) is a long-term strategy to support the response to HIV and AIDS at Swedish related workplaces in sub-Saharan Africa. SWHAP is a joint programme between the International Council of Swedish Industry (NIR) and the Swedish Industrial and Metalworkers' Union (IF Metall). It is financially supported by Sida and Norad.

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to hold a tournament for eight teams drawn from the SWHAP partnership and community football teams. Ericom Communications, winners of the competition, were presented a trophy by the Ambassador of Sweden to Zimbabwe, H.E. Lars Ronnås. The ILO Country Director, Hopolang Phororo, was also at the event.



Ericom Communications Social Football Tournament

Over 600 people participated in VCT during both tournaments. Wellness screening for blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes was also available for football players, spectators and the surrounding communities.

SWHAP, ILO and COTU Seminar for Building and Construction Sector

The construction industry in Kenya is one of the key drivers of the country's Gross Domestic Product. Growth in this industry has attracted many foreign and local workers. However HIV and AIDS continue to be major challenges in this male-dominated sector with ignorance on the transmission of HIV contributing to the spread of the virus. Against this background SWHAP in Kenya partnered with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) to raise awareness on HIV and AIDS and occupational health and safety in the Building and Construction sector.

Workers' representatives from the sector were challenged to advocate for structured HIV and wellness programmes and to encourage members of their respective unions to undergo Voluntary Counselling and Testing. Of the 16 workplaces represented at the forum only one had a policy on HIV and AIDS and only two companies had conducted awareness and VCT sessions. These companies will now be supported through a mentorship programme to develop policies on HIV and AIDS, whilst a national policy for the sector is also developed.

Promoting healthier drivers and safer roads

Drivers' general health impacts on their ability to do their jobs. Additionally, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, are a growing concern in the transport industry and long distance truck drivers are especially at risk. In order to promote good health amongst this group SWHAP partners in the transport industry hold targeted campaigns addressing their HIV and general wellness needs.

In Zimbabwe, Scania dealer Scanlink in partnership with SWHAP, ILO, the National AIDS Council and the Ministry of Transport set up a wellness and HIV screening campaign along a busy highway. While motorists participated in VCT and wellness screening, Scanlink technicians provided a bumper to bumper check of vehicles issuing defect sheets where necessary. Peer Educators from Scanlink and Ericom lent their support to this initiative, handing out information, male and female condoms and encouraging truck drivers and motorists to get tested.

On November 29, Scania South Africa used the Southern Africa Regional Finals of the international Scania Driver Competition to offer free VCT and wellness screening to competition participants and spectators. The competition attracted over 700 skilled bus and truck drivers from the region with 38 drivers from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Tanzania making it to the finals. Drivers were judged on three factors: safe driving skills, economical driving and environmental impact. Lawrence Nkwinika from South Africa won Best bus driver, whilst Nicolaas Kallie Truter from Namibia won Best truck driver. Congratulations to Scania for a campaign that puts driver health at the heart of safety.



Drivers who participated in VCT received a SWHAP buddy pack with information on HIV and treatment access points.

In the media

In a recent interview on Musikhjälpen, (a Swedish radio and television campaign that raises money for notable causes) Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven spoke about Sweden's commitment to addressing HIV and AIDS within the country as well as globally. Sweden is a significant contributor to the Global Fund and UNAIDS. Prime Minister Löfven spoke of his experiences at IF Metall when SWHAP was conceptualised and the important role workplaces can play in addressing stigma. He also stressed the importance of empowering women and girls in order to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection. Watch the interview in Swedish here: bit.ly/1wk-leaD

During the same show, Heidi Lampinen from SWHAP was also interviewed about the Programme's work in reaching vulnerable populations such as truck drivers. You can watch this interview in Swedish here: bit.ly/13t-FqOX

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