

SWHAP DRC Newsletter June 2015

World Malaria Day 2015

Malaria is a major health challenge, with 3.3 billion people at risk of infection (WHO). Malaria is also taking a high toll in regions hard hit by HIV and AIDS as the disease increases HIV viral load. In endemic countries such as the DRC, the disease is responsible for decreased productivity, employee absenteeism and increased health care costs. Furthermore malaria infection among employees can have a wider impact on the local and national economy as the overall labour force is weakened by sickness, commerce is slowed, investments and tax revenues are reduced and public health budgets are diminished.



Malaria testing at Ericsson DRC

Many companies within the SWHAP network include malaria prevention and control programmes in their workplace HIV and wellness programmes. These programmes are run through HIV and wellness committees with representatives from both management and employees. Ericsson in the DRC combined their Labour Day celebrations with raising awareness on malaria. Rapid diagnosis malaria tests were provided for all staff and treatment made where necessary. Additionally all employees received treated bed nets.

Business efficiency and health

In 2014 the SWHAP conference theme “*Business efficiency and health: Creating sustainable workplace Wellness and HIV Programmes*” explored ways in which the proactive and strategic management of employee health and wellbeing can create business efficiencies for companies. Building on from the conference, a training forum addressing the practicalities of investing in the health and wellbeing of employees for improved return on investment was held in the DRC on March 6. During the forum management from SWHAP supported companies in the DRC shared with other captains of industry how investment in their workplace programmes was starting to pay off. They noted that HIV is no longer a taboo subject amongst their employees and reduced stigma where condom distribution and voluntary counselling and testing were concerned. These are important in-roads to creating a healthy and sustainable workforce in a country where UNAIDS estimates that 87% of the population is unaware of their HIV status.

The CEO Forum was jointly organised with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNAIDS and addressed by the Ambassador of Sweden to the DRC, H.E. Annika Ben David. In her address the Ambassador noted the important role the workplace has in contributing to the national HIV response and that the SWHAP model was one that could be replicated in other companies within the DRC.



Participants at the DRC CEO Forum

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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Peer Educator Network Training

On April 24, 35 Peer Educators from four SWHAP supported companies participated in a network training meeting. The meeting was an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences of peer education and the challenges and successes of programme implementation.



Peer Educator Network Meeting

DRC programme expansion to Bas Congo

SWHAP partners in the DRC, Tigo, Ericsson and Sodeico Manpower have expanded their workplace programmes to reach eight sites in the Bas-Congo Province. During the last week of February the three companies accompanied by the SWHAP DRC Coordinator, conducted a 600 kilometre road trip, stopping at four different sites to conduct VCT with a final stop at Matadi, where Peer Educator Training took place. The exercise was an excellent example of cost sharing amongst the companies as sensitisation and VCT for all employees was conducted at Tigo shops and one Peer Educators' training session held for all three companies. Moreover the use of Tigo shops meant that the programme was also able to reach the general population who live in remote areas with limited access to VCT or biometric screening.

Sodeico workplace programme activities

On February 28, Sodeico Manpower from the DRC held an awareness session with a difference. The company organised a five kilometre guided walk with hidden clues on recommendations for a healthy lifestyle which participants had to locate. The walk had six intervals where a brief sensitisation message was passed and the participants, divided into small groups, had to come up with slogans for each message. The messages covered the importance of Voluntary Counselling and Testing, consistent and

correct condom use, alcohol abuse and the dangers of tobacco use. Mobile VCT accompanied the 125 participants and 65% were tested for HIV.

In more news from Sodeico, the company held their annual Women's Day celebration on March 21 where over 80 women attended a luncheon raising awareness on HIV, family planning and specific health issues related to women.

Peer Educator profile



In this edition of the SWHAP newsletter we profile Gregg Yambo Mukaz from Ericsson. Gregg is a dedicated and hardworking Peer Educator

who sets aside much of his own personal time to support peer education activities across SWHAP supported companies.

Tell us a little about yourself

I am married and father of seven. I am the Coordinator of the SWHAP programme as well as the Network Deployment and Integration Head at Ericsson.

What is your Peer Educator power principle?

Culture and behaviour change through continuous sensitization.

What challenges do you face in the coordination the workplace programme and how do you plan on overcoming these challenges?

My biggest challenges are; combining SWHAP activities and my own job; driving the steering committee since the departure of the last coordinator; getting the programme activities and budget approved on time and poor reporting from peer education activities.

I am dedicating half a day per week to the workplace programme activities this will allow me to get the programme and budget submitted on time and to improve peer education coaching and follow up.

Farewell

SWHAP would like to bid farewell to Jephte Ngamba who was the Regional Human Resources Manager at Ericsson. We would like to thank Jephté for the instrumental role he played in getting the programme up and running and wish him well in his endeavours.

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