



**SMARTWORK**  
The Workplace Response to AIDS

## **UKRAINE COUNTRY BRIEF**

### **A CRITICAL NEED FOR A GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS, AND LABOR TRIPARTITE RESPONSE TO HIV/AIDS AT THE WORKPLACE**

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## KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- ◆ As of 2002, over 42 million people in the world are living with HIV/AIDS.
- ◆ Ukraine has an estimated adult HIV prevalence rate of one percent—the highest in the region.
- ◆ Nearly 500,000 Ukrainians are living with HIV.
- ◆ Ukraine is second only to Russia in its HIV transmission rate among the newly independent states and Europe. HIV rates have doubled each year over the past five years.
- ◆ If the HIV growth rate in Ukraine is not checked, it is estimated that AIDS could become the second highest cause of death among adults by 2007, and that over 1.4 million people could be infected by 2010.
- ◆ The majority of those infected with HIV are either in their most economically productive years of life, or are approaching this age.
- ◆ Some countries will see a drop of 25% in their workforce by 2010 due to AIDS, and in some countries AIDS is already costing employers over 20% of their total earnings.

## SMARTWORK: THE WORKPLACE RESPONSE TO AIDS

SMARTWork (Strategically Managing AIDS Responses Together in the Workplace) is a project of the Academy for Educational Development. Created with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, and established in Ukraine in 2001, SMARTWork helps forge strategic partnerships between government agencies, business enterprises, labor groups, and non-governmental organizations to create workplace HIV/AIDS prevention education and care and support programs. SMARTWork encourages social dialogue around workplace HIV/AIDS prevention at national and enterprise levels, and promotes the reduction of stigma and discrimination towards those who are living with HIV/AIDS.

SMARTWork/Ukraine offers a wide range of workplace-focused technical assistance, including:

- ◆ Conducting presentations, workshops, and other training to build capacity to undertake and sustain workplace HIV/AIDS programs.
- ◆ Assisting enterprises to assess their readiness to address HIV/AIDS, and helping them to prepare to respond effectively with appropriate HIV/AIDS policies and comprehensive programs.
- ◆ Providing materials and tools to assist government, business, and labor to create and implement programs at their workplaces.

Whether it is out of concern for the health and safety of workers or to help secure the health and welfare of future generations, ensure economic vitality, and protect an enterprise's bottom line, an effective response to AIDS requires a comprehensive workplace approach on the part of employers, labor, and government—SMARTWork helps achieve this.

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

HIV/AIDS is increasingly rapidly in Ukraine, and among Eastern European countries its HIV transmission rate is second only to Russia's. Yet, the Ukrainian public remains largely uninformed about the disease, and most employers have not implemented programs and policies to protect their workers from infection. SMARTWork/Ukraine (Strategically Managing AIDS Responses Together in the Workplace) helps implement HIV/AIDS prevention education and care and support programs built on tripartite partnerships between government, employers, and labor unions. SMARTWork interviewed employers, labor representatives, and workers to assess their views and experiences around workplace HIV/AIDS programs, and to gather their recommendations for ways to protect the public health against the disease.

The needs assessment conducted by SMARTWork found that the Ukrainian public is poorly informed about HIV/AIDS and that stigma is still very much associated with the disease. Although national legislation guarantees access to prevention and medical services, and protects the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, many employers and workers are unaware of these laws. While employers recognize HIV/AIDS to be an enormous problem, they have not prioritized efforts to prevent the disease, in part because they lack information about how best to help their workers. Employees are reluctant to seek information and services, and unions have thus far been largely unengaged in HIV/AIDS programs.

Based on this research, SMARTWork recommends that employers implement workplace HIV/AIDS prevention education and care and support programs, as well as adopt workplace policies that prohibit discrimination. At the same time, unions should advocate more strongly for explicit contract and labor agreements that protect people who are living with HIV/AIDS. Unions can be more actively engaged in advocating for, creating, and implementing workplace HIV/AIDS efforts. The third tripartite member, government, must act to cement relationships between labor and employers, and to reach out to the public as well. Creating and funding HIV/AIDS programs, collecting accurate data on the disease, and providing technical assistance on both programming and evaluation are all critical governmental activities.

Despite a lack of knowledge about either effective HIV/AIDS programs or Ukraine's current legislation, employers and labor representatives are interested, and willing, to make disease prevention a priority. This energy must be tapped to reduce the profoundly negative effects HIV/AIDS is poised to have on the Ukrainian workplace, public health, and society at large.

## II. INTRODUCTION

While many people are familiar with the staggering effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, there are other nations where the disease presents a great, but less well known, threat. Ukraine, an Eastern European nation of 48 million, is one country on the verge of a devastating HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The Ukrainian SMARTWork Project recognizes that the HIV/AIDS epidemic has significant personal costs as well as potentially severe effects upon the workplace. To respond to these challenges, SMARTWork brings government, labor, and industry together to create tripartite responses that benefit both workers and industry. SMARTWork encourages positive workplace policies, education and training programs, care and support for employees affected by HIV/AIDS, and access to health information and services. These efforts help enhance productivity, lower the costs of recruiting and training new workers, increase the quality of human resources, prevent workplace disruptions from discrimination and fear, create positive corporate images, improve staff morale, and protect workers' health.

This report presents SMARTWork/Ukraine's initial project findings, based on research conducted throughout 2002, which will be used to inform the design and implementation of the project over its four-year life. SMARTWork met with employer, labor, governmental and NGO, health care, and labor representatives to gather their views on the current climate affecting HIV/AIDS policies and programs in the workplace. Focus groups were also conducted with employees to gather their perceptions of useful prevention programs and other needs related to the epidemic. These representatives and employees also made recommendations for effective HIV/AIDS prevention and care and support programs.

## III. SMARTWORK'S TRIPARTITE APPROACH: GOVERNMENT, EMPLOYERS, AND LABOR

In response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Ukraine is working to implement workplace prevention and education programs with the technical assistance of SMARTWork. SMARTWork, which is a program of the Academy for Educational Development (AED) funded by the United States Department of Labor, currently works in six countries: the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nigeria, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

SMARTWork connects government agencies, employers, and labor to create tripartite workplace-based HIV/AIDS prevention and education programs, and to establish workplace policies that reduce stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS. SMARTWork was officially launched in Ukraine on July 2, 2002, and the first tripartite workshop was held on December 10-11, 2002. The lead governmental agencies—the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of Ukraine (MOLSP), as well as the Ukraine State Committee for Family and Youth Affairs—have joined with employers and labor unions to form the *Tripartite Advisory Board* (TAB), which held its first meeting on January 21, 2003. The TAB is responsible for devising workplace strategies, providing legislative technical assistance to the government, and advising on SMARTWork programming in Ukraine.

In 2002, SMARTWork researched the challenges of implementing prevention programs in the Ukrainian workplace. Eleven structured interviews were conducted with eight management representatives and three union leaders in the transportation, health care, and service sectors in Odessa and Kiev.<sup>1</sup> These regions were selected because they have the highest number of Ukrainians living with HIV/AIDS, and local government authorities are very supportive of HIV/AIDS workplace programs. In addition, two focus groups were conducted with 19 employees of these sectors to gather their views.

#### IV. OVERVIEW OF HIV/AIDS IN UKRAINE

##### *HIV/AIDS in Ukraine*

Since 1987, over 44,500 individuals have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in Ukraine. As in other countries, the number of people who do not know they are infected is thought to be much higher. **Experts believe that 500,000 people—approximately one percent of Ukraine’s adult population—are living with HIV.** HIV/AIDS occurs most frequently in the regions of Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, Mykolayiv, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.<sup>2</sup> In the last five years, HIV infection has increased by 20 percent; among Eastern European nations, Ukraine’s rate of HIV transmission is second only to Russia’s. Most of those infected are between 20 and 39 years of age; about half are under the age of 25.<sup>3</sup> Injection drug use (IDU) has been the main cause of infection, but perinatal and sexual transmission are both increasing.<sup>4</sup>

The Ukrainian economy has faced many challenges in the transition to independence, and real incomes are now valued at 25-50 percent of pre-independence levels. High rates of unemployment have forced some into dangerous and illegal activities in the shadow economy, especially “survival sex.” Women and youth are particularly likely to trade sex for money, food, and shelter, increasing their risk for infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Ukraine, like many others in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), is currently experiencing rapidly growing rates of both IDU and STIs.<sup>5</sup> For example, while the syphilis rate in Western Europe is 1 case per 100,000 people; in CIS countries, the rate is 100–200 cases per 100,000 individuals.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Participants included: MOLSP, the Ukraine State Committee for Family and Youth Affairs, the Central Committee of the Union of Medical Workers, the Union of Sea Transport Workers in Kiev and Odessa, the City Center for AIDS Prevention and Addressing, Open Joint-Stock Company PIVDEN, MODULE plant, Closed Joint-Stock Company OBOLON, Joint-Stock Company DIAPROFMED, Locomotive Facility KIEV-PASAZHYRSKYI, Joint-Stock Company TRANSPORTNIK, the advertising firm SA-ATCI & SAATCHI, a first-aid ambulance station, Medical Company INTO-SANA (Odessa), Closed Joint-Stock Company HOTEL YUNIST (Odessa), National Union of Journalists of Ukraine, National Academy of Internal Affairs, the Kiev City Health Center.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Strategic Planning Process in Ukraine for a National Response to HIV/AIDS on 2001-2003. New York: UNDP. Available at the UNDP webpage: <http://www.un.kiev.ua>

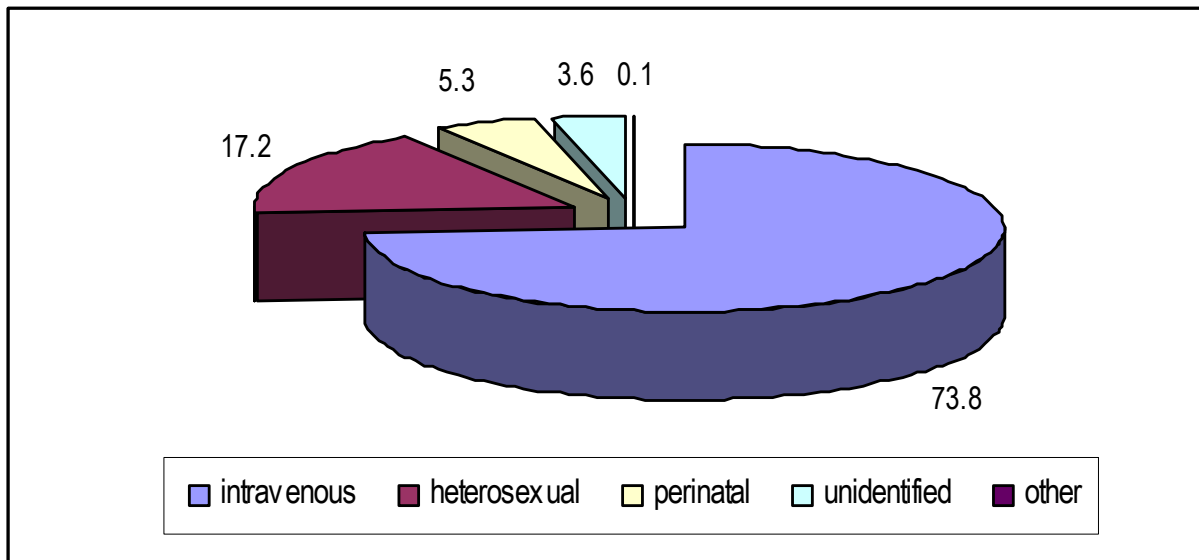
<sup>3</sup> Balakireva O.M. *Analysis of Social and Economic Effects of HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Ukraine*. Report to ILO Sub-regional Tripartite Seminar: “HIV/AIDS Pandemic: Social Effects in CSI Countries. Labor Indicators,” held in Moscow, December 10-12, 2001. Available online at: <http://www.ilo.ru/aids>.

<sup>4</sup> UNDP, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Tony Barnett and Alan Whiteside. Social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS in Ukraine. Kiev: The British Council in Ukraine. 1997. Available online at: <http://www.britishcouncil.org.ua>.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP. Strategic Planning Process in Ukraine for a National Response to HIV/AIDS on 2001-2003. New York: UNDP. Available online at: <http://www.un.kiev.ua>.

**FIGURE:** “Background on HIV/AIDS in the CIS.” *ILO Sub-regional tripartite seminar on HIV/AIDS Pandemic – Social Consequences in the CIS countries. Indicators for the World of Work.* Geneva: ILO. July 15, 2002. Available at: <http://WWW.ILO.RU/aids/docs/dec02/cis/Ukraine-eng.pdf>



These factors—increases in drug abuse, STIs, survival sex, and heterosexual transmission—are pushing the HIV/AIDS epidemic into the population at large.<sup>7</sup> Because most of those who are infected are young, the Ukrainian economy is expected to lose productive and skilled labor as the epidemic expands. The associated costs, including medical care, worker retraining, and recruitment, will negatively impact many businesses. At the same time, people living with HIV/AIDS face discrimination and a lack of health care, affecting both their health and productivity.<sup>8</sup>

**Ukrainian public HIV/AIDS knowledge**

The public is poorly informed about HIV/AIDS transmission, effective methods of disease prevention, and civil and workplace protections for people living with HIV/AIDS. The mass media remains the major source for HIV/AIDS information, but it has not yet fully embraced its role in presenting accurate and timely information about the disease. Half of Ukrainian citizens, and almost three-quarters of young people, would like more information on HIV/AIDS. In one survey of high school students, less than half could explain how HIV is transmitted.<sup>9</sup>

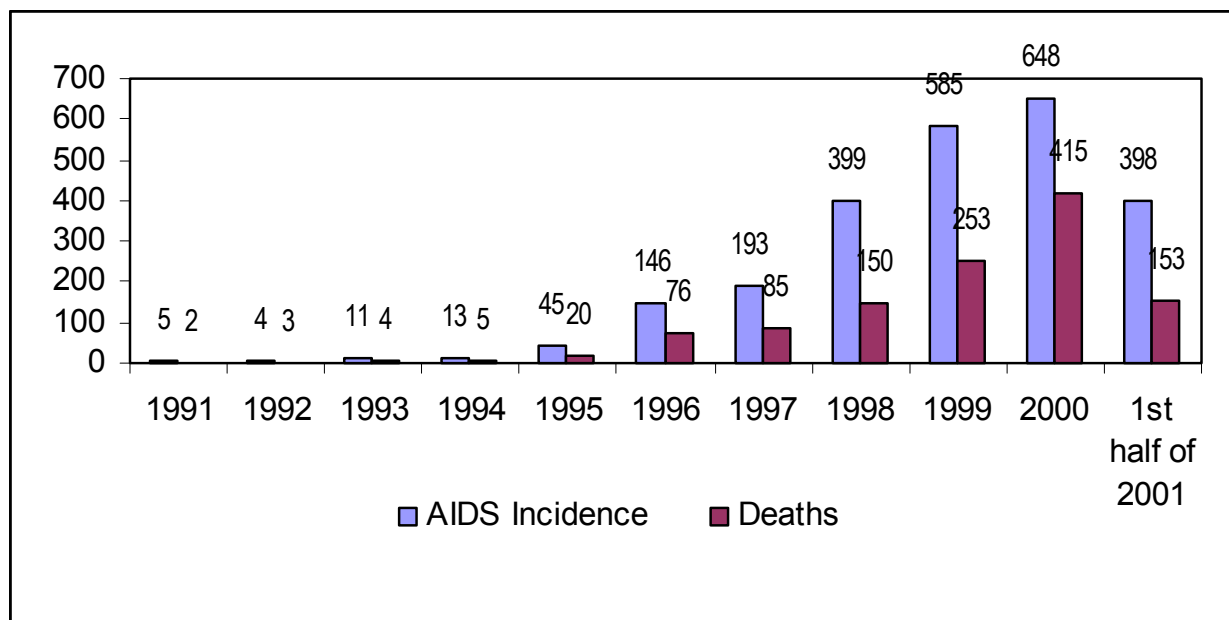
There is still an enormous degree of stigma associated with HIV/AIDS in Ukraine. As a result, people living with HIV/AIDS frequently hide their serostatus and fail to seek care, afraid that they might lose their jobs, social status, and other legal and human rights. In an environment characterized by discrimination, lack of information, and poor access to care, HIV/AIDS proliferates.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See Balakireva O.M, op, cit; Barnett and Whiteside, op cit. In 2001, the Ukrainian Institute for Social Research, with financial support from the British Department for International Development and the British Council, implemented a project examining the Ukrainian HIV/AIDS epidemic.

<sup>9</sup> UNDP, op. cit.

**FIGURE:** “Background on HIV/AIDS in the CIS.” ILO Sub-regional tripartite seminar on HIV/AIDS Pandemic – Social Consequences in the CIS countries. Indicators for the World of Work. Geneva: ILO. July 15, 2002. Available at: <http://WWW.ILO.RU/aids/docs/dec02/cis/Ukraine-eng.pdf>



### **National HIV/AIDS laws and policies**

*Ukrainian law guarantees access to prevention and treatment services, offers social and legal protections for people living with HIV disease, and ensures the right to voluntary HIV testing. These commendable laws need to be both widely known and enforced.*

Controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic will require investment in prevention education, access to voluntary, confidential HIV counseling and testing, and medical care. The Ukrainian government has taken real and significant steps in these directions. In 1991, the first year of Ukrainian independence, the government passed a law titled “On AIDS Prevention and the Social Protection of the Population.”<sup>10</sup> This law guarantees access to prevention and medical services, as well as social and legal protections for people living with the disease. The law also holds that people living with HIV/AIDS can access medical services and care. The 1998 amendments to the law stipulate the right to voluntary HIV testing. While these protections have not been implemented and enforced throughout Ukraine, the law lays valuable groundwork for preventing new transmissions, treating persons infected with the disease, and protecting those concerned about their serostatus.

The *National Commission on HIV/AIDS of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine* was established in 1999 to ensure the development and coordination of HIV/AIDS action plans among various ministries.<sup>11</sup> In 1999-2002, this Council drafted the third National Program for the Prevention of

<sup>10</sup> Law of Ukraine, On Prevention of AIDS and Social Protection of the Population, adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on 12 December 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, N. 1492.

AIDS and Drug Abuse which includes outreach for high-risk populations, such as IDUs and sex workers, educational programs for children and adolescents, and training for medical personnel who treat HIV/AIDS patients.<sup>12</sup> In 2002, Ukraine also implemented a “General Agreement” between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Employer Confederation, and the Trade Union Federation of Ukraine. This Agreement funds tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs, and offers a system for agencies to develop educational partnerships and protect the rights of workers.

In addition, Ukraine works internationally to promote knowledge exchange about HIV/AIDS. In 2002, Ukraine joined the Board of the *Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria*. The organization is funding a U\$92 million national HIV/AIDS intervention effort. Over 60 percent of these funds will be used to provide medical assistance, and care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS; the remainder will be spent on prevention programs for youth and other groups at increased risk of infection, and on monitoring.

## V. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS: EMPLOYERS, LABOR REPRESENTATIVES, AND WORKERS

As part of assisting employers, workers, and their union representatives to work together to address HIV/AIDS and provide support for those living with the disease, it is important to learn the challenges and opportunities each group perceives. SMARTWork met with representatives from each of these three groups to learn what they perceive employers’ responsibilities are with respect to the epidemic, and what they believe can be done at the workplace. Labor representatives explained their view of the role of unions in providing education and securing workers’ rights. Finally, workers themselves explained the climate around disease prevention that acts to encourage or discourage them from seeking information and care. The following section is drawn from SMARTWork’s research with these three groups.

### *Organizational and employers’ responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic*

All of the research respondents agreed that HIV/AIDS is an enormous problem for the workforce, but felt that neither the public nor the private sector has focused on it to date. Few Ukrainian employers offer HIV/AIDS prevention and care and support programs, and most are unaware of the economic impact that HIV/AIDS is poised to have on business. Many do not know that HIV/AIDS may be a growing problem in their industry sector and among their own staff.

*Programs will start [too late] when the disease “gets to everyone... Then it will be time to strike the alarm bells, set up medical stations, and assign someone to be in charge of HIV/AIDS issues.”*

Employers stated that the reason workplace programs are not offered is because management does not think they have any staff living with HIV/AIDS. Employers also said that they are reluctant to assume the costs of these programs on their own and that the supervising governmental ministries do not require them to institute workplace programs and

<sup>12</sup> The first national program for HIV/AIDS prevention was adopted for 1992-1994; the second for 1995-1997; the third for 1999-2000, and the fourth for 2001-2003. A technical work group has been established to draft the National Program for 2004-2007.

protections. Research participants felt that workplaces might delay efforts to address HIV/AIDS until a number of their workers were infected, or affected, by the disease, at which point it would be too late to effectively curtail the epidemic. Reflecting the danger of delaying action, one participant said that programs would start when *“it gets to everyone, and people are afraid they’ll become infected when they take a cup of tea. Then it will be time to strike the alarm bells, set up medical stations, and assign someone to be in charge of HIV/AIDS issues.”* Some managers, however, stated that HIV/AIDS is *“just another disease”* that does not require any special attention.

Even employers who were interested in prevention and care and support programs said that they do not know which are the most effective programs to bring into the workplace. Employers most frequently reported that they provide educational materials about HIV/AIDS through pamphlets, newsletters, or brochures; some make condoms available at the workplace. Employers tend not to offer interactive or multi-faceted programs, which are most effective in changing attitudes and behaviors to prevent HIV transmission. Almost no employers either offer or refer workers to care and support programs.

*Employers need more information on effective HIV/AIDS programs and the specifics of Ukrainian laws on the disease.*

Employers were generally unfamiliar with the Ukrainian laws protecting workers, and many did not comply with them. Some respondents felt that workers living with HIV would be kept on and would be entitled to treatment, benefits, and pensions. As one said, *“Nobody would dismiss such an employee, no way. Honestly, he will be entitled to the same social benefits [as any other worker].”* Other respondents felt that employers would fire workers who *“spoil the image of the organization and constitute a threat to other employees.”* Some felt that workgroups (a committee composed of both employers and employees) should decide whether these employees should be kept on. As one participant commented, *“If he’s too weak in the head to protect himself, why should we all suffer because of that?”* Because employers are unfamiliar with the current Ukrainian HIV/AIDS law, they appear to be inconsistent in protecting workers’ jobs, confidentiality, and access to social and medical care.

Despite their lack of familiarity with Ukrainian law, employers stated that they were willing to collaborate on, and implement, workplace HIV/AIDS prevention and care and support programs. They were interested in providing educational materials, training opportunities, and condoms. Employers were also willing to cover paid leave in order to encourage staff to attend educational sessions.

### **Labor unions’ involvement in HIV/AIDS**

In Ukraine, most labor sectors are represented by trade unions that are members of the Trade Union Federation of Ukraine. Trade unions are respected by industry and have enormous power to protect workers’ rights, initiate social programs, and ensure that they are implemented. Labor contracts and agreements that cover employment duties are beginning to focus more specifically on employment guarantees and protections around HIV/AIDS. Increasingly, labor agreements are being strengthened to address workers’ need for free, voluntary, and confidential HIV counseling and testing, condoms, and medical care. Some respondents felt that the advocacy and

protection of the unions was essential to making sure that workers living with HIV/AIDS would not be fired.

Demonstrating that progress can be made, some unions have implemented HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. The Union of Sea Transport Workers works with both members and employers to offer HIV/AIDS workplace information and education. The Union has provided HIV prevention education through a free worksite newspaper and sometimes distributes condoms at the workplace. It is also working with the Ministry of Transport of Ukraine to include more HIV/AIDS-related issues in its inter-sectoral collective bargaining agreement. The sea transport sector's efforts show how workers, management, and government can collaborate to help prevent HIV/AIDS.

### **Workers perception of HIV/AIDS**

Because of the current climate of fear, workers have no incentive to tell their employer or unions that they have HIV/AIDS. Workers say that they are reluctant to express their needs because of management's perceived indifference to the problem. Talking about the disease may very well lead to a violation of confidentiality, social stigmatization, workplace discrimination, and loss of employment. Even in the few workplaces that offer education or medical care, employees rarely request information about the disease or seek treatment for it. They are unlikely to discuss HIV/AIDS issues with one another, since a show of interest might arouse the suspicion of one's colleagues and lead to stigmatization and discrimination.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS: POLICIES, CONTRACTS, AND PROGRAMS**

Workplace HIV/AIDS programs can only be sustained when the tripartite partners—government, employers, and unions—work together. A comprehensive approach that includes prevention education and care and support is most effective in changing the climate around HIV/AIDS and ensuring that people receive the information and care they need. The following recommendations were generated during SMARTWork's research with these three critical players.

### **The Role of Employers**

#### **Employer Roles:**

- *Implement Anti-Discrimination Policies*
- *Form HIV/AIDS Workplace Committees*
- *Conduct Workplace Educational Programs*
- *Ensure Access to Voluntary, Confidential HIV testing and Counseling*
- *Provide Appropriate Medical Care and Social Services*

***Implement Anti-Discrimination Policies***—Employers can protect workers, who are their core asset, by adopting workplace HIV/AIDS policies. These policies show that employers recognize HIV/AIDS is a problem, want to help prevent the disease, and will not tolerate discrimination towards those seeking prevention education and care and support programs. Employers can reinforce policies by issuing orders and instructions to further prevention programs, such as by providing meeting space and paid leave for workers attending trainings or other programs.

***Form HIV/AIDS Workplace Committees***—These committees organize prevention education and care and support programs aimed

at both employers and workers. The committees should include management and union representatives, workgroup leaders, and informal leaders.

***Conduct Workplace Educational Programs***—HIV/AIDS education programs increase knowledge and decrease discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS. Program content should include medically accurate information about HIV/AIDS and other STIs, referrals to voluntary and confidential HIV counseling and testing, and care. Effective programs include interactive and on-going educational sessions, peer education, condom availability, and prevention education materials. Train the trainer (TOT) programs help spread information throughout the worksite. Certain individuals should be required to participate in the programs: union employees, personnel department staff, medical and clinical staff, labor safety department staff, unit leaders, and informal leaders.

***Ensure Access to Voluntary, Confidential HIV Testing and Counseling***—At all surveyed employers, at least some workers are required to have regular medical exams. When HIV testing is a part of these exams, employees may be required to report their test results to their supervisors. Coercive measures are generally ineffective in changing people’s behavior and improving public health. Requiring employees to be tested and/or reveal their serostatus not only violates Ukrainian law, but also increases the fear of discrimination. Where stigma towards HIV/AIDS is high and the fear of discrimination is well founded, ensuring confidentiality is essential in encouraging people to learn their serostatus, seek medical care, and protect their sexual partners. Employers can help by providing information about free, local, voluntary, and confidential testing and counseling programs.

***Provide Appropriate Medical Care and Social Services***—Access to prevention education and care and support is essential to maintaining workers’ health, especially those living with HIV/AIDS. Effective workplace programs include: paid leave for health-related medical and service appointments, financial and insurance assistance, short- and long-term leave, and access to affordable and confidential medical treatment.

### ***The Role of Labor Unions***

***Labor Union Roles:***

- *Use Collective Bargaining*
- *Review Existing Contracts*
- *Educate Labor Leaders*
- *Engage Union Members in HIV/AIDS Programs*
- *Conduct Needs Assessments*

***Use Collective Bargaining***—Labor organizations and representatives have an active role to play in workplace HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. Respondents felt that unions should be assertive in addressing HIV/AIDS in labor contracts and agreements. Unions can insist that contracts include explicit workplace anti-discrimination policies; guaranteed access to confidential counseling, testing, and medical services; and specific protections for people living with HIV/AIDS.

***Review Existing Contracts***—Existing labor agreements and contracts should be reviewed with respect to the rights of employees living with HIV/AIDS. Doing so will bring the agreements into compliance with Ukrainian law, institutionalize worker protections, and help prevent future labor conflicts.

**Educate Labor Leaders**—Labor unions can educate their leaders and representatives on both Ukrainian HIV/AIDS laws and on international documents on human rights (e.g. International Human Rights Declaration, European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms). This will help them to understand the importance of offering prevention education and care and support programs.

**Engage Union Members in HIV/AIDS Programs**—Union involvement is critical in implementing workplace HIV/AIDS prevention education and care and support programs. Unions can help create programs, implement them, encourage member participation, and assess their effectiveness. Many respondents felt that their industrial labor representatives should be required to attend workplace HIV/AIDS efforts.

**Conduct Needs Assessments**—Labor unions can collect information on their membership’s knowledge about HIV/AIDS, their care and support needs, and their concerns. This information can help make sure that programs will be both effective and useful for the targeted workers.

### **The Role of Government**

**Government Roles:**

- *Educate the Public on HIV/AIDS*
- *Collect and Disseminate Data*
- *Fund HIV/AIDS Programs*
- *Provide Technical Assistance*
- *Evaluate HIV/AIDS*

**Educate the Public on HIV/AIDS**—The government can educate the public about HIV/AIDS by increasing the information that is available to the public. As noted, general knowledge about HIV/AIDS is low, many people do not believe they are at risk, and most employers do not follow Ukrainian laws on HIV/AIDS. The government can provide information to the media, schools, and worksites to teach the public that the disease can be prevented, that all citizens need HIV prevention information, and that HIV can infect anyone—regardless of their age, educational level, or income.

**Collect and Disseminate Data**—Because people living with HIV/AIDS are largely invisible at the workplace, the disease’s economic effects have yet to be felt. The costs of absenteeism, sick leave, and rehiring and training staff are not yet apparent to employers. The government can use data on HIV/AIDS’ likely social and economic losses to focus the public’s attention. Employers, unions, and the media also can benefit from information on the spread of HIV/AIDS and the risk factors associated with the disease.

**Fund HIV/AIDS Programs**—Because employers are reluctant to take on the costs of prevention education and care and support programs, strategic government funding (for example, to provide seed funding for industry initiatives) can help foster and encourage greater industry involvement in these efforts.

**Provide Technical Assistance (TA)**—Employers need help to know which types of prevention education and care and support programs are most effective. Government can provide TA to both employers and unions on many topics, such as implementing effective programs, complying with national law, protecting workers’ rights, and ensuring medical confidentiality. Government can help encourage greater collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGO) and linkages with AIDS service providers (ASOs).

**Evaluate HIV/AIDS Programming**—Employers need help evaluating their programs. Assessment and evaluation results make the case that prevention education and care and support programs are both helpful and cost-effective. This will serve to encourage others to implement programs as well.

## VII. SMARTWORK’S ROLE

SMARTWork prepared this country assessment as one step in nurturing sustainable collaborations to promote workplace HIV/AIDS prevention education and care and support programs. SMARTWork helps government, employers, and unions create sustainable networks to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic, form HIV/AIDS workplace committees, create effective strategies, and evaluate workplace interventions. SMARTWork offers materials that can be adapted by both employers and labor for their own programs.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

***Tripartite Efforts Can:***

- *Limit economic and social damage*
- *Reduce business and personal losses*
- *Enhance productivity*
- *Lower medical costs*
- *Save lives*

The HIV/AIDS epidemic destabilizes markets and societies, threatens workers’ health, undermines national investments, decreases productivity, and increases labor costs. These negative effects can be reduced through collaborative, tripartite efforts to develop and implement HIV/AIDS workplace programs and policies. Working together, government, employers, and unions can prevent economic

and social damage, reduce business and personal losses, lower medical costs, and—most importantly—save lives.

In the face of difficult and uncertain economic times, Ukraine’s national commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention is commendable. The on-going collaboration between government ministries, the unions, and sector industries has enormous potential to combat the HIV/AIDS threat to both the public and the workplace. Tripartite efforts will be essential to stabilizing the workforce and ensuring that Ukraine can withstand the growing economic and social pressures created by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

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