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Why should AIDS be part of the Africa Development Agenda?

BACKGROUND

The HIV burden in Africa remains unacceptably high:

- While there is 19% reduction in new infections in Sub-Saharan Africa, new infections are increasing in North Africa. Alarming, more than half of all adults in the Africa region do not know their HIV status.
- Africa accounts for 71 per cent (24.7 million) of the 35.3 million people living with HIV worldwide, 71 per cent of new HIV infections and 74 per cent of AIDS-related deaths, yet, three out of five persons living with HIV still lack access to treatment on the continent.
- The gender dimensions of the epidemic are starkly apparent and women in the region are highly vulnerable to HIV. In particular, young women (15-24) have double the rate of new HIV infections compared to their male counterparts.

AIDS affects economic growth negatively through lost productivity. The Africa region needs to create 18 million new jobs every year¹. The promotion of decent employment and the creation of decent jobs must be an integral part of Africa's sustainable development agenda. Decent employment not only reduces poverty, it contributes to a healthier workforce by contributing to preventing new HIV infections and, increasing access to and adherence to antiretroviral treatment².

Africa cannot afford to leave HIV and AIDS out of the sustainable development agenda. ILO and UNAIDS urge African leaders to:

- 1) integrate the goals of Ending AIDS and Ending Poverty with the goals of eliminating inequality and discrimination;
- 2) scale up investments to effectively address the structural factors – economic, social and legal—that fuel the spread of HIV and perpetuate extreme poverty and inequality;
- 3) respond to the need for universal access to HIV-sensitive social protection – so that services may truly reach the poorest and most marginalized households and communities, especially those engaged in the informal economy.

An intensified commitment to ending AIDS would also fully support the objectives of the Africa Development Agenda on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development. The goal of ending AIDS by 2030 is fully achievable in Africa, but requires high-level political commitment from the region's leaders.

This brief covers three issues of major importance that must be addressed to ensure effective and sustainable responses to HIV and AIDS in the Africa region:

- 1. Social protection**
- 2. Youth and Women's Employment**
- 3. Labour Migration**

¹ See http://www.ilo.org/addisababa/media-centre/news/WCMS_249556/lang--en/index.htm

² The Impact of Employment on HIV Treatment Adherence, ILO, 2013. Available at : http://www.ilo.org/aids/Publications/WCMS_230625/lang--en/index.htm

SOCIAL PROTECTION, HIV and AIDS

HIV-sensitive social protection programmes strengthen resilience by enabling people living with HIV to receive life-saving treatment, benefits and employment assistance. These programmes in turn enhance the health, welfare and productivity of the entire national workforce, including migrant and mobile workers.

Inclusive social protection systems are critical to eradicating poverty, including for those in the informal economy. Moreover, extending social protection coverage to older people and HIV-affected households contributes to improving access to education, care and support for orphans and vulnerable children and employment opportunities for poor households¹.

A 2014 ILO study found that among those who received social protection 63– 95 per cent of people living with HIV were able to retain their jobs or some form of productive activities, 49 – 99 per cent of their children remained in school, and 72 – 96 per cent was able to access Anti-Retroviral Treatment².



Investments in social protection make both political and economic sense. Promoting fairer distribution of opportunity and inclusive economic growth ultimately results in more resilient and stable societies. The more social protection programmes are established and rolled out, the more we see that such programmes are both effective and surprisingly affordable: an estimated 2 per cent of countries' GDP would provide their poor with a minimum package of social benefits and services³.

African leaders have committed to integrating HIV responses into social protection programmes

In adopting the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, African leaders undertook to provide social protection coverage to people living with and affected by HIV, including children and young people, their families and caregivers. (Source: Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, 2011, paragraph 82)

- Accelerating implementation of the commitment to include HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in national social protection schemes will contribute to a sustainable economic future for African nations that is founded on principles of social justice.
- Scaling up evidence-informed social protection interventions will enhance HIV prevention, treatment, care and support as an integrated strategy to combat unemployment, extreme poverty and inequality.

1 Old-age non-contributory pensions, HIV/AIDS and the world of work in Africa: Exploring links for policy recommendations from a decent work perspective, ILO and ODI, 2010, at page 5.

2 Access to and effects of social protection on workers living with HIV and their households: An analytical report, ILO, 2014

3 ILO. Social security for all: Investing in global social and economic development: A consultation. Geneva: 2006.

YOUTH AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT, HIV AND AIDS

More than 50 per cent of Africa's population is under the age of 25. Young people aged 15-24 are twice as likely to be unemployed compared with the general adult population¹, yet 11 million young women and men will be seeking to enter the labour market every year over the next decade². Prioritizing employment for young women and men helps to ensure that they will be able to earn a living for themselves and their families. Decent work opportunities will also reduce their HIV vulnerabilities and help ensure the overall health of the region's future work force.

I am a young woman

My sister was raped when she was 15 and got HIV.

I was denied a job because I am HIV-positive.

I am responsible for taking care of family members sick with AIDS, so I do work, but I am not paid enough.

I have a relationship with an older man because he helps me with money for rent, food and clothes. I am worried because he doesn't want to use condoms.

At present, HIV vulnerabilities are unacceptably high among Africa's youth, with 2.9 million young people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa alone³. Moreover, only 10 per cent of young men and 15 per cent of young women in the region are aware of their HIV status⁴.

Adolescents and young people do not think that they are at risk of HIV infection and seven out of ten do not have accurate knowledge about HIV transmission⁵. Globally, 15 per cent of all women living with HIV aged 15 years and older are between the ages of 15–24. Of these, 80 per cent live in sub-Saharan Africa.

1 World of Work Report 2014: Developing with jobs, ILO, Geneva, 2014.

2 Filmer, Deon and Louise Fox. 2014. Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa Development Series. Washington, DC: World Bank.

3 UNAIDS GAP Report, 2014, at page 26.

4 UNAIDS GAP Report, 2014.

5 UNAIDS GAP Report, 2014, at page 34.

Increasing youth access to comprehensive sexual health services, including HIV services, and skills development to complement their employment needs will also empower them to make healthier decisions that reduce their HIV vulnerabilities and promote their overall well-being. Making HIV an integral part of strategic youth employment programmes will ultimately contribute to maintaining a fit, healthy and productive workforce for the benefit of the Africa region as a whole.

African leaders have committed to integrating HIV and AIDS into youth and women's employment policies and programmes

The path to employment and better jobs for young women and men in Africa must include HIV, and AIDS and sexual/reproductive health in general in order to meet the challenge of creating decent work opportunities in conditions of equality and dignity.

- Stable and decent employment for young women and men reduces factors that increase HIV vulnerability (i.e. poverty), supporting the sustainability of investments in youth employment programmes and a healthy and productive workforce for future generations.
- Implementing the commitments made to ensure the meaningful participation of today's young women and men in shaping and leading the HIV response will support the goal of an AIDS-free generation.
- Reviewing age bands and other criteria for social protection, including bursaries for tertiary education and cash transfer programs will help to reach young people, especially young women when they are most vulnerable to HIV, and contribute to their health and productivity in the society.
- It is important to recognise and actively respond to the particular vulnerability of young women as they transition from adolescents into adulthood.

LABOUR MIGRATION, HIV AND AIDS

There were more than 3.2 million migrants and displaced people moving and working within the African continent between 2005 and 2010; more than 45 per cent of these migrants were women or girls. People migrate for number of social, economic and political reasons. Of the estimated 1.8 million people living with HIV who were affected by conflict, displacement or disaster in 2006, 1.5 million were living in sub-Saharan Africa, making political instability and conflict critical labour migration issues.

Conflict and post-conflict settings are especially conducive environments for increased labour mobility and heightened vulnerability to HIV.

A range of factors make migrant workers and their families more vulnerable to HIV than the general population in the destination country, including: lack of social support, social safety nets, information and access to health services; stigma and discrimination; difficult living and working conditions; and lack of occupational health and safety protections.



In countries where they are imposed, HIV-related travel restrictions undermine prevention, treatment, care and support efforts. Addressing HIV in sending, transit and receiving countries enhances the rights of migrant workers and contributes to fair and effective labour migration.

Policies and programmes that facilitate migrants' access to HIV-related services and protect their fundamental rights contribute to the implementation of fair and effective migration processes. By improving the health and well-being of migrant workers and their families, HIV programmes contribute to strengthening the benefits of labour migration for individual migrants as well as for both sending and receiving countries. These benefits include: better employment opportunities and wages for migrants, enhanced social protection, reduced care needs, increased remittances to originating countries, and improved access to education for migrants' children. They also ultimately contribute to overall economic growth in the region.

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African leaders have committed to addressing HIV and AIDS in the context of labour migration

Heads of States and governments have undertaken to promoting fair and effective labour migration policies and processes, including by integrating HIV and AIDS responses in labour migration policies and strategies.

- Addressing the pull and push factors of labour migration by improving employment opportunities, migrants' health services and labour conditions as well as the overall business environment will promote health and productivity in all affected countries.
- To realize the commitments made, agreements between sending and receiving countries must safeguard labour migrants' fundamental right to health.
- AU member states have committed to ensure equal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for all migrant workers.
- Active work to prevent and mitigate the effects of political instability, civil conflicts and disasters will help decrease people's vulnerability to HIV and the felt push to migrate, and promote healthy and stable employment, poverty eradication and inclusive development throughout societies.

CONCLUSION

African leaders have the power to create a future of opportunity for their people by accelerating implementation of their commitment to ending AIDS in a new road map grounded in principles of social justice and inclusive growth. The AU has a vital role to play in supporting coordination and collaboration among member States in charting a sustainable path to decent work, poverty eradication and inclusive development for all African nations in partnership with other regional and international stakeholders. No one can be left behind on this journey. Only by including those most vulnerable and ensuring their equal access to decent employment and social protection can we build an AIDS-free future in Africa.