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Key strategies and approaches to integrate HIV into broader agency mandate

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally-recognized human and labour rights, and to pursuing its founding mission that social justice is essential for universal and lasting peace. Its mandate is to promote decent work for all workers, regardless of where they work.

HIV is an aspect the ILO's focus on the health and well-being of workers. Within the context of HIV, the ILO supports Member States to scale up comprehensive HIV programmes that address prevention, treatment, care and support through a wide range of actions and across several development areas.

Contributing to progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The importance of decent work in achieving sustainable development is highlighted in SDG 8 which aims to “*promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*”. SDG 8 will not be achieved without a healthy workforce. Promoting the health and safety of workers has been part of the ILO's mandate since its foundation.

As a result of the inclusion of significant components of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda in the integrated and transformative framework of the 2030 Agenda, the ILO plays a full and active role in the implementation of the SDGs. An ILO-wide effort ensures that it plays a strong role through the UN team at country, regional and global levels to provide well-integrated policy advice and effective development cooperation programmes that are built on a normative system and on tripartite working methods.

Integration of HIV into all aspects of ILO's work

The framework for the ILO's work around HIV integration explicitly calls for measures to address HIV as part of national development policies and programmes, including policies related to labour, education, social protection, poverty reduction strategies, income-generation strategies, social security systems, private insurance and other schemes, occupational safety and health structures and programmes, among others.

The updated ILO Strategy on HIV and AIDS—*ILO's response to HIV and AIDS: Accelerating progress for 2030*—was adopted by the ILO governing body in 2019, embracing a twin-track approach which synergistically combines HIV-specific actions with HIV integration into the

broader development mandate of the ILO. The Strategy commits to promote HIV integration across the wider scope of the ILO's work with special emphasis on areas such as social protection, multidisease HIV testing, labour standards, labour migration, gender equality, occupational safety and health, wellness workplace programmes, LGBTI+ issues and ILO training courses among others.

The ILO Programme and Budget 2020–2021 comprises eight mutually reinforcing policy outcomes, with HIV issues integrated into outcome six on *gender equality and equal opportunities and treatment for all in the world of work* with the inclusion of two indicators that explicitly mention HIV. The integrated nature of the indicators facilitates HIV integration across several areas of work, including but not limited to programmes addressing the needs of adolescent girls and young women, LGBTI+ people, indigenous and tribal people, and people with disabilities. The crosscutting nature of outcome six also means that HIV is integrated into other outcomes.

In western and central Africa, capacity development webinars on HIV-sensitive social protection were conducted for 240 national partners from diverse groups, including civil society, academia, networks of people living with HIV and international development partners by UNAIDS Secretariat, ILO, WFP, UNICEF and World Bank. As a direct result of the tailored webinars, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo were prioritized for focused action in 2021.

A study on medical insurance coverage for people living with HIV in selected multinational insurance companies in Malaysia explored the reasons for and consequences of a lack of coverage of people living with HIV in private health insurance. The report identified good practices for private health insurance coverage for people living with HIV and highlighted policy recommendations regarding people living with HIV.

The ILO strategically shifted the focus of HIV workplace programmes to wellness and well-being programmes which address a broader range of health-related issues. Similarly, the VCT@WORK Initiative has been situated within the context of multidisease testing initiatives which provide workers with opportunities to screen for TB, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, body mass index and blood sugar, among others. The integration of HIV programmes into health programmes, provides the added value of reducing the stigma often associated with standalone HIV programmes, while increasing appeal for workers.

The ILO has supported HIV integration into work on improving occupational safety and health in hospitals and health facilities in some HIV Fast-Track countries. Capacity has been built in more than 200 hospitals in Africa and Asia.

The ILO integrates HIV into ILO Courses at the global, regional and country levels. For example: Decent Work and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the International

Academy on the transition to the formal economy; the International Labour Standards Academy for Judges; the Global Gender Academy; and SDGs and Decent Work.

Contribution to the COVID-19 response

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 prompted the ILO to find opportunities and synergies for HIV and COVID-19 integration across a wide range of health and development programmes—particularly focusing on protecting the gains in the HIV response and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable workers. There are six focal areas where HIV and COVID-19 are integrated: social protection; occupational safety and health; HIV workplace programmes and multidisease testing; international labour standards, ILO training courses and research and impact studies.



Social protection schemes

Social protection is an indispensable part of the coordinated policy response to the COVID-19 crisis. The ILO intensified its efforts to support Member States in their efforts to design and implement and adapt flexible social protection measures to address the social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, at the global level, the ILO and partners issued global guidance and calls to countries to ensure that ongoing social protection initiatives meet the needs of people living with HIV. Tailored support was provided to 63 countries to scale up social protection coverage for vulnerable populations, including, in some cases, people living with HIV and affected by HIV.

UNAIDS, ILO, WFP, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNODC, UNHCR and UN Women issued a call to Governments to strengthen HIV-sensitive social protection in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries were requested to enhance the responsiveness of their social protection systems to address basic and changing needs and vulnerabilities, with specific mention of people living with at risk of and affected by HIV, including key populations, young people, women and girls, people with disabilities, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and populations in a state of food insecurity, malnourishment and in humanitarian settings. A *Joint Statement on the role of social protection in responding to the COVID-19* was issued by the ILO and World Bank-led Social Protection Interagency Cooperation Board, calling on governments to support vulnerable populations, including people living with HIV.

In Malawi, the ILO conducted transformational leadership in social protection trainings for 300 policy makers from Government, civil society and media to enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare to develop a strategy for social cash transfer targeted at orphans and other vulnerable children. Working with other UN agencies, ILO in Zambia supported the provision of emergency cash transfers to informal and low-income workers (including persons with disabilities and people living with HIV) who have lost income and employment or been forced on leave due to the financial impact of COVID-19.

Multidisease testing programmes

To better protect workers and preserve the hard-won gains in the HIV response, the ILO provided COVID-19 prevention support to workplaces. To facilitate the implementation of wellness programmes, ILO guidelines published in 2020 included: *Health & Wellness@Work guidelines for an integrated health testing approach to the VCT@WORK initiative*; *ILO COVID-19 Action checklist for the construction industry*; *ILO COVID-19 Checklist for health facilities*; and *ILO checklist on prevention of COVID-19 in the mining sector*, among others.

Partnerships with national actors and trade unions in Kenya enabled the UNAIDS Secretariat, WHO and ILO to reach more than 3,000 workers and key populations with HIV testing services and commodities. The STAR initiative enabled the ILO and UNAIDS Secretariat to partner with the Ministry of Health, Population Services International and national nongovernmental organization partners in Mozambique to promote HIV testing in four provinces and to support training and distribution of HIV self-test kits through the Business Coalition Associations Against AIDS. The VCT@WORK initiative in the Russia Federation prioritized seminars on strengthening HIV workplace programmes for health experts. Materials and guidelines were developed to support VCT@WORK campaigns. In 2020, a total of 190 467 took the HIV test and a total of 33 611 HIV self-testing kits were distributed as part of the broader VCT@WORK Initiative.

Studies on the impact of COVID-19 on populations affected by HIV

The ILO undertook a global study, *Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being*, in 112 countries in partnership with the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on young people aged 18–29 years. One in six youth reported having stopped work since the COVID-19 pandemic, with half experiencing anxiety and depression over their job situations. In China, the ILO, UNAIDS Secretariat, UNFPA, WHO, other UN agencies and the Women's Network against AIDS, conducted a joint study on HIV and poverty, including in relation to HIV. In India, an online socioeconomic impact study on COVID-19 and key populations was undertaken by ILO, UNAIDS Secretariat and partners.

Integration into international labour standards

HIV is integrated into the ILO Recommendation concerning HIV in the world of work. In 2019, the Member States of the ILO adopted the ILO Convention on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, including protection against violence and harassment for people living with HIV, LGBTI+ people, sex workers, migrant workers and other vulnerable and marginalized people. In 2020, the ILO provided support to around 40 countries to support the process of ratification of the *Convention on eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work*. In 2021, the ILO issued policy guidelines on *12 ways in which the Convention on violence and harassment can support the COVID-19 response and additional guidelines were issued on addressing stigma and discrimination in the COVID-19 response, key lessons from the response to HIV and AIDS*.

Integration and occupational safety and health programmes

In 2020, to make the health-facility focused WHO and ILO HealthWISE tool more relevant, an additional checklist on protecting health personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic was compiled in consultation with WHO and with support from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund of the joint ILO, OECD and WHO programme working group for Health. The tool now addresses HIV, COVID-19 and other health issues.

Integration and ILO training courses

In 2020, the ILO started developing two online courses on eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work and a self-learning online course on VCT@WORK, which integrate HIV and will be launched in 2021. The ILO and the Pandemic Resilience Accelerator for African Health-Related Businesses—founded by the African Union Development Agency—established an expert advisory group to facilitate webinars on occupational safety and health, COVID-19, HIV and TB. The group delivered 12-online courses between April and July 2020 for more than 1,000 senior officials from all 55-Member States in the Africa region.

Case study: HIV integration into economic empowering programmes with networks of people living with HIV to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic



The majority of people living with HIV are of working age and most are engaged in the informal economy, which has been severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ensuing economic malaise has disproportionately affected informal economy workers and has disrupted their livelihoods. People living with HIV are at risk of being left further behind.






To mitigate the devastating impact of COVID-19 on people living with HIV in Zambia, the ILO provided financial and technical support to the Network of Zambian People living with HIV to start a hand sanitizer income generation project, following WHO guidelines for the local production of hand sanitizer. To establish market linkages for the product, the ILO involved the Zambia Federation of Employers in marketing the sanitizer to its members, with other marketing strategies also being undertaken by the network. A proportion of sales revenues were targeted towards households of people living with HIV. This includes nearly two-thirds of households (60%) that are female-headed. Beneficiaries who wanted to start small businesses were trained in entrepreneurship skills using the ILO GET Ahead Module.

The initiative has created jobs for people living with HIV and supported the distribution of some income to households of people living with HIV who were negatively affected by disruptions in informal work due to COVID-19. Part of the profit was re-invested into the income-generation activity. An initial 210 households and 1,260 beneficiaries received an emergency cash transfer. Through this initiative, the Network of Zambian People living with HIV + has built its capacity in business management and marketing skills.

Through the initiative, participants developed and improved skills transferable to other entrepreneurial activities, improving capacity for independence through business activities. The desire of the network to remain self-sufficient provides inspiration and impetus to engage in other income-generating activities. The main challenge was the costs of reagents and availability of packing materials, while the fluctuating Zambian currency was a limitation.

Knowledge products

	<p><u>COVID-19 and the world of work: Ensuring no one is left behind in the response and recovery</u></p> <p>This brief is part of a series on leaving no one behind in the context of COVID-19 and the world of work. It provides an overview of specific groups that risk being left behind: people with disabilities, indigenous and tribal peoples, people living with HIV, and migrant workers.</p>
	<p><u>Covid-19 and the world of work: A focus on people living with HIV</u></p> <p>Part of the ILO series on leaving no one behind in COVID-19 and the world of work, this brief describes the impact of the pandemic on people living with HIV and makes recommendations for a COVID-19 response and recovery in the world of work that is inclusive of people living with HIV.</p>

	<p><u>Addressing stigma and discrimination in the COVID-19 response: Key lessons from the response to HIV and AIDS</u></p> <p>Stigma and discrimination manifest differently in different contexts and for different populations, yet some aspects remain constant. Useful lessons have been learned in the HIV response that could be applied to the COVID-19 response.</p>
	<p><u>ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190): 12 ways it can support the COVID-19 response and recovery</u></p> <p>This note highlights the relevance of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) to the current COVID-19 pandemic. It provides examples of work-related violence and harassment that have been reported across countries in the context of Covid-19 and mentions specific provisions of Convention No. 190 and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206 that can help prevent and address those situations.</p>
	<p><u>Family-friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19: Key steps employers can take</u></p> <p>This interim guidance note, developed in a fast-evolving situation, builds on material developed by UNICEF and the ILO. It provides general recommendations that aim to help employers strengthen support for workers and their families.</p>
	<p><u>UNAIDS, ILO, UNICEF and Cosponsors call on governments to strengthen HIV-sensitive social protection responses to the COVID-19 pandemic</u></p>
	<p><u>Guidelines for an integrated health testing approach under VCT@WORK</u></p> <p>These guidelines, developed as part of the ILO's ongoing Voluntary Counseling and HIV Testing for Workers (VCT@WORK), will help in adopting a more integrated approach to health, as recommended by the Sustainable Development Goal 3. An integrated approach will help in reducing stigma associated with HIV testing; and will enable workplaces to implement an overall health and wellness approach.</p>
<p>COVID-19 and mining: Prevention and control checklist publication</p>	<p><u>COVID-19 and mining: Prevention and control checklist</u></p> <p>This checklist is a tool to help implement and continuously improve practical actions to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in mining</p> <p>Source:</p>
	<p><u>COVID-19 and health facilities: Checklist of measures to be taken in health facilities</u></p> <p>This checklist applies the ILO-WHO HealthWISE participatory, action-orientated approach to prevent COVID-19 infection in health facilities and protect health personnel.</p>

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