



Norwegian People's Aid



HIV/AIDS Work Place Policy

HO Mangement Decision
24.05.2005. Valid as from
same date for all EOs.



1 General

Norwegian People's Aid puts people first, as individuals, as groups and societies. As a humanitarian organization, NPA works in partnership with oppressed, but right-based groups towards a society that secures political, civil, cultural, economic and social rights for all. Lack of respect for and access to human rights increases susceptibility to HIV infections for the whole society, individuals or groups. Men and women who don't enjoy equal rights, benefits of protection and who are discriminated are both more susceptible to become infected by HIV and less able to cope with the burdens of AIDS.

HIV/AIDS now affects a growing number of the world's population. There are circumstances unique to HIV infection and to AIDS. HIV is not transmitted by casual contact. What makes HIV/AIDS unique is the mainly sexual mode of transmission of HIV, linking HIV/AIDS to sexuality and silence, fuelling stigmatisation of groups and people at risk as well as infected and allowing the virus to spread silently until its effects are visualised through AIDS. Equally important is the fact that HIV/AIDS especially hits the economic active age group and has adverse, negative effects on the economic life and productivity of a household, a work place and a society, including a nation. While HIV/AIDS does not discriminate between the sexes, the increasing epidemic shows that women are at greater risk for HIV-infection and more likely to suffer heavier impacts of AIDS than men. Because HIV/AIDS deepens gender inequalities and compounds poverty, it undermines development work and those gains that hitherto have been achieved.

Safeguarding human rights through addressing the underlying structural conditions that breeds poverty and blocks development contribute to reduce susceptibility to HIV and vulnerability to AIDS. Such long term HIV/AIDS strategy is important as it can empower men and women to cope more successfully with the impacts of HIV/AIDS, including ability to seek and ask for access to necessary treatment, care and support if already infected.

2 Justification

The work place plays a crucial role in international and national, coordinated efforts to reduce the spread of HIV and to minimize the impact of AIDS. By affecting the life and wellbeing of an increasing number of male and female employees, their families and friends, HIV/AIDS has become a serious threat to many work places and organisations, including those involved in development work. Norwegian People's Aid is no exception to this rule.

Norwegian People's Aid recognizes the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and its negative impacts on our capacity to realise our vision and objectives. NPA's employees are not only at risk for HIV/AIDS, but many are already infected by the virus or affected by AIDS. Reduced wellbeing, sick leave, other forms of absenteeism, concern and caring for family members or close friends impact on morale, work performance and work environment, reducing the productivity and the cost-efficiency of the organisation.

Norwegian People's Aid is committed to maintaining a safe, healthy and non-discriminatory work environment for all employees and does not tolerate discrimination on any grounds, including HIV status, suspected or real. A right-based approach can help to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS as it allows for a supportive environment to be created, so that all people infected or affected by HIV/AIDS are able to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development despite their HIV status.

While such approach is necessary and will be adhered to, it does not solve all immediate problems and needs of our employees and our organisation. Employees with HIV may live full and active lives for a number of years during which they offer valuable and needed know-how and skills to the organisation,



our work and our partners. Access to treatment enables men and women with HIV to postpone AIDS and to live healthier and longer, thus increasing their capacity to be economically active. By prolonging life expectancy and reducing the body's viral loads, medical treatment (ARV) has positive impacts on behaviour and prevention efforts.

3 Purpose and scope

This policy outlines NPAs approach in dealing with HIV/AIDS at the work place. NPA acknowledges that HIV/AIDS can have consequences for workers at their workplace. As such the serious situation caused by HIV/AIDS on the workers and their family is the justification for NPAs commitment.

Its purpose is to ensure that NPA adopts a consistent and equitable approach at the work place in the prevention of HIV and the management of the consequences of AIDS, including minimum standards for care and support of employees living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. However, it is important to state that HIV/AIDS is not a work related illness and as such falls outside the legal responsibility of NPA, as an employer.

This policy is complimentary to existing policies and Human Resource Processes such as recruitment, appointment, and all conditions of service and service benefits. It covers all employees and is inclusive of immediate family members in its prevention strategies and awareness raising clauses (*family members* are defined as one registered wife/husband and all registered children explicitly stated in the contract of employment).

The policy will support and link up to national and international, coordinated efforts to reduce the likelihood of the HIV infection to spread and to minimize the impact of AIDS. This includes establishing strategic partnerships with other institutions and organisations dealing with HIV/AIDS.

The policy will provide an entry point to the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS into all NPA's programmes.

4 Policy Principles

NPA recognises the unique circumstances of HIV/AIDS on the principle that HIV infection and AIDS require special attention and is as such, unlike any other serious condition or illness that may infect or affect male and female employees. Hence, the following principles shall guide the development of local policies and practises:

- a) NPA shall ensure that all male and female employees have equal rights and access to services and other benefits provided at the workplace, such as access to information about HIV/AIDS, Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), other prevention and awareness efforts, as well as the provision of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) within the limitations set in Implementation measures (cf Attachment 1 ch.II 1.) NPA shall do it utmost to ensure that NPA's male and female employees have access to treatment, care and support and that their families are included in HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness programmes.
- b) NPA shall not use HIV screening/testing as a pre-condition for employment, nor dismiss a male or female employee on the basis of his/her real or suspected HIV status.
- c) NPA shall protect the confidentiality and privacy of all staff with respect to HIV status, real or suspected. However, shared confidentiality will be promoted within the organisation so that male and female employees living with HIV can have access to the benefits they are entitled to.

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- d) NPA shall ensure that there is no stigmatisation and discrimination against individuals with regard to job applications, hiring, advancement, discharge, discipline and grievance handling, compensation, training or other terms, conditions or privileges of employment based on their HIV status, real or suspected.
- e) NPA shall promote gender equality and equity but recognizes that women are at greater risk than men so special consideration will be given for prevention and impact mitigation services that target women. NPA shall ensure that all employees are treated equally, irrespectively of gender and whether they are infected or not. Thus measures like time management, family responsibility leave and outreach programmes should include both genders.
- f) NPA shall foster responsible behaviour and an adherence to its code of conduct by all male and female members and employees, consultants on short and long term contracts included. Candidates on recruitment process will be assessed on their understanding of HIV/ AIDS issues.
- g) NPA shall create and promote a supportive environment of compassion that encourages openness and disclosure. This will assist men and women to seek services such as Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), such counselling services being on referral basis. Voluntary counselling and testing shall be encouraged given continued care and support mechanisms are available, including guarantee of confidentiality. NPA shall ensure that its male and female employees have access to VCT regardless of income and status in the organisation.
- h) NPA shall promote and respect human rights particularly of people living with HIV. NPA recognizes the importance of involving all employees, including men and women living with HIV or AIDS in workplace programme activities such as awareness-raising and peer education. The Greater Involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS principle (GIPA) will be upheld.
- i) NPA is committed to ensuring effective implementation and sustainability of this policy, establishing measures that foster understanding of and create adherence to this HIV/AIDS workplace policy. In order to implement and evaluate the HIV/AIDS policy effectively, NPA will encourage the undertaking of a survey to establish baseline data and regular risk and impact assessment studies. The studies will include knowledge, attitudes and behaviour/practices and shall be carried out in consultation and with the consent of employees and their representatives in conditions of complete confidentiality.
- j) NPA shall establish an HIV/AIDS committee to coordinate and implement the HIV/AIDS work policy in consultation with all male and female employees, including in all the Regional Offices. The resident representative has a direct responsibility for the establishment of the committees and the proper carrying out of this policy, including promoting the HIV/AIDS competence of the committee.
- k) NPA intends the policy to be dynamic, reviewing it annually and amending it according to circumstances, increase of knowledge and experience, and in consultation with male and female employees at all levels. Local policies and practises shall be formulated within the framework of this policy and principles, adapting to existing laws of the host country and to country specific conditions.

5 Implementation Measures

NPA has approved a set of implementation measures that reflect this work place policy. The measures

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are meant to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the HIV/AIDS work place policy and are attached to this document. (cf [Attachment 1](#))