

TRADE UNIONS RESPOND TO HIV/AIDS: Examples from Lesotho, Swaziland, and South Africa

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Take Action, Take Control

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Workers' Struggles

- Over the decades the lines of workers' struggles have become blurred as we try to push back the frontiers of the globalizing informational economy.
- Our struggle is narrowed to bread and butter issues in the workplace; whether the bread is affordable and available is another matter.

Trade Unions

- Trade unions are custodians of worker rights, and we know that worker rights are human rights.
- Human rights include affordability of the bread. HIV/AIDS is like affordability of bread to some of us.
- Is HIV/AIDS the trade unions responsibility?

Trade Unions

- The logical response would be it is health matter, and therefore, it is government's domain.
- What do you do when your members are dying?

HIV/AIDS Impact

- Trade union membership is going down due, among other things, to AIDS-related deaths.
- The union spends most of its resources defending cases of absenteeism.
- Fading of worker solidarity.

Lesotho and Swaziland Projects: Clothing Sector

- Partnership venture.
- Why this sector and these countries?
- Building on previous successes.
- Support from the Solidarity Center through funding from CDC.

Project Description

- Union buy-in at all levels of leadership.
- Stakeholders buy-in.
- Shop floor buy-in.
- Corporation with other service providers.
- Project activities and accomplishments.

South Africa: SACTWU AIDS Project

- Partnership—employers, government, and funding agencies.
- Project activities and accomplishments.
- Support from the Solidarity Center through funding from CDC.

Challenges

- Continuity—sustainability.
- Access –during working life and outside the workplace.
- Reach.
- Balancing power relations in relationships and the society.

Achievements

- Continuity—sustainability.
- Access—ARV treatment.
- Stigma reduction.
- Disclosure.
- VCT—voluntary counseling and testing.
- Reduction of disability claims.
- Placing HIV/AIDS on the union agenda.

Solidarity and Support

- HIV/AIDS will remain with us for a long time if we don't join hands and push it back. Trust me you are not safe until your brothers and sisters are safe.
- These projects are but a drop of dye in a bucket of water or a pebble thrown in a river. Small as they are, sustained they will cause a killer wave. We need your support.

Take Action, Take Control

- SACTWU's theme for this World AIDS Day celebration is, "Take Action ,Take Control." We chose a white T-shirt for the day because when you are wearing white, you take control of every space you enter and who touches you.
- We believe this is what all of us must do to win this war.

Workers' Pledge

- As a worker I want to say, “The people’s flag is stained deepest red by our blood.”
 - The impact of globalizing information economy.
 - Occupational injuries and diseases.
 - And now, HIV/AIDS.
- Traitors stare and grin and cowards shudder; but we must keep the faith and fight on. Let’s raise the standard and keep the red flag flying high.