

CABINET SUBMISSION

No:MLSS/ /2007

NATIONAL WORKPLACE POLICY ON HIV/AIDS

1. Cabinet is being invited to consider the National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS for implementation throughout all workplaces nationally.

BACKGROUND

2. Cabinet will recall that the Government acting through the Ministry of Health and the Project Coordination Unit of the Jamaica HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project signed an agreement with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the provision of a loan in the sum of US\$15,000,000.00 to finance the implementation of the Jamaica HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project.
3. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was subsequently signed between the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of Health to facilitate the execution of the National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security has been facilitating the multi-sectoral response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic under the Jamaica HIV/AIDS/STI National Strategic Plan (2002-2006).
4. Cabinet is being asked to note that this policy was discussed and endorsed at the Human Resource Council meeting held March 26, 2007. (Refer No. 10/07).

ISSUES

5. The Ministry of Health National HIV/STD Control Programme, Jamaica HIV/AIDS Epidemic Update December 2006 reported that between 1982 and December 2006, Jamaica recorded 11,739 cases of AIDS. Over 6,673 deaths were reported during this period. Approximately 70 per cent of all reported AIDS

- cases in Jamaica are in the 20-49 year old age group while 85 per cent of persons reported with AIDS were between 20 and 60 years old. This age group, which has the highest incidence of AIDS cases, forms the core of the workforce.
6. One thousand one hundred and eighty six (1,186) persons with AIDS or advanced HIV cases were reported between January and December 2006 compared to one thousand three hundred and forty four (1,344) in 2005. However HIV and AIDS claimed four hundred and thirty two (432) lives between January and December 2006 compared to five hundred and fourteen (514) for the same period in 2005. In 2006 eight (8) persons per week died from AIDS.
 7. The data therefore shows that since the first instance of this epidemic in Jamaica, the rate at which persons were dying from the disease has however declined as a result of treatment and public education programmes.
 8. The reality is that there is no definitive figures on the number of new HIV cases in the short term. As such much emphasis has to be placed on HIV Prevention policy and programmes.
 9. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Jamaica has meant that an increasing number of persons within the working population are being infected with the disease. This can place added pressure on productivity and output of local firms and simultaneously increase the cost of medical care.
 10. The National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS will provide organisations with the methodology to create the environment that will sensitise the Jamaican workforce in order to control the spread of HIV and AIDS. This will result from increased awareness, public education, and the provision of counselling, care and support which are expected to contribute to the reduction of stigma and discrimination and influence positive behavioural change on a national scale.

OVERVIEW OF POLICY GUIDELINES

11. The National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS provides the framework on which local companies can develop a company policy on HIV and AIDS. This policy will provide management and staff with the capacity to:

- Understand their role and responsibility at the workplace in contributing to the reduction in the transmission of HIV/AIDS.
- Contribute to the reduction of HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination through continuous education, training and participation of all persons within the workplace including persons living with HIV and AIDS.
- Facilitate the dissemination of information through sensitisation programmes.
- Strengthen the provision of treatment, care and support for workers within the workplace infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.
- Establish the legal framework to address HIV/AIDS as a workplace issue
- Contribute to the reduction of HIV transmission through effective implementation
- Manage and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS in the workplace through workplace-based research and prevention and support programmes

CONSULTATION

12. The National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS was drafted at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in consultation with the Policy and Advocacy Focal Point at the National HIV/STI Prevention and Control Programme. The Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions (JCTU) and The Jamaica Employers Federation (JEF) also contributed to the development of the document.

IMPLEMENTATION

13. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security has overall responsibility for implementation of the policy, however to attain its full objectives, it is necessary to adopt or adapt this policy for implementation in all workplaces.

It is envisaged that the government will establish posts within each Ministry to support the implementation and maintenance of the National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS.

14. The MLSS has also created its own workplace policy on Life Threatening Illnesses (including HIV/AIDS) as a sub document to the National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS.

15. The MLSS has sensitised and trained over seventy percent 90 % of its staff of more than 1500 persons as a first step in preparation for the implementation of this policy. Areas of training include counsellors under the Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), PEER facilitators, counseling under the Care and Counselling Services and general awareness sessions. The training and sensitisation process is continuing.

16. Additionally, the Ministry has started the process of training labour officers as well as inspectors of the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH) to disseminate information and assist with the implementation process.

17. Four condom machines have been installed at certain offices of the Ministry in Kingston and St. James, two parishes with the highest incidence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in order to facilitate easy access to the product.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

18. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security will absorb some of the implementation costs by integrating the policy into existing training programmes and other operational activities.

19. The remaining financial resources required for the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to implement aspects of the programme are being provided through a loan agreement with the Government of Jamaica and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development under the Jamaica HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project.

20. The Submission was reviewed by the Attorney General's Chambers and the contents have been approved.

APPROVAL

Cabinet is therefore being invited to approve the implementation of the National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS and the Ministry Paper that will be laid in the House of Representatives. (Attached as Appendix).

**PEARNEL PATROE CHARLES (M.P.),
MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY
FEBRUARY 2008**