

NEEDS

Work Place Policy (for HIV positive people)

1. Introduction: This Policy paper is guided by the following principle to help its Diversity Policy in place effectively.

- **Democracy and participation;** the organisation will promote the rights of its stakeholders to be fully informed and participate in all decisions that affect their lives
- **Respect for Human Rights;** the organisation will respect, promote and defend the human rights of individuals and communities to live in safety, security and dignity
- **Respect for diversity;** the organisation recognises, accepts, respects and promotes the uniqueness of each individual and community along the dimensions of religion and religious beliefs, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age physical ability, socio-economic status, geographical location, political beliefs or other ideologies
- **Social justice and gender justice;** the organisation will promote fairness, impartiality and equity in all its activities, practices and dealings with all stakeholders and will not discriminate on the basis of caste, class, religion, age, colour, nationality, ability, disease or sexual orientation. The organisation will adopt affirmative policies and practices that facilitate equal opportunities for women and groups facing discrimination and exclusion

NEEDS recognises HIV/AIDS as an issue that threatens the productivity, welfare and morale of all staff as well as the effectiveness and sustainability of our work. Moreover it is a contributing factor in exclusion of all kind promoting discrimination and injustice. NEEDS being an organisation dedicated for inclusion of marginalised in an equitable and just society, felt the necessity of a Work Place Policy to address the issue a within a structured framework. The Work Place policy will help the organisation to be a part of national response to HIV/AIDS and reduces the organisation's vulnerability to the impact of HIV & AIDS at institutional level. The Workplace Policy is an integral part of our work on mainstreaming of HIV & AIDS. It aims to make staff aware of their rights and responsibilities with regard to benefits, training and education, treatment, care and support. It also demonstrates the organisation's commitment to providing an inclusive environment for people living with HIV & AIDS where staff and volunteers can work without fear of stigma and discrimination.

We have drawn on policies developed by other international non-governmental organizations, National HIV Policy and multinational companies in writing this policy and it is hoped that staff and volunteers will in turn share this policy with their colleagues and partners.

Objective of this policy paper is to

Give direction on how the organization can encourage mainstreaming diversify group like people living with HIV by providing a supportive work environment.

Acknowledge needs of this diversify group without compromising the requirement of the organization to deliver its strategic objectives towards the journey in becoming a mainstream inclusive organization(reframe-suggsion)

2. Principles: NEEDS is guided by the following principles while developing policy on workplace:

- NEEDS is a more effective organisation when it has a diverse workforce. Therefore, we *proactively* seek to attract, recruit and retain those who will ensure that the workforce reflects the communities we work with e.g. in terms of gender mix, people with disabilities and those living with HIV/AIDS
- It is common practice to include diversity targets and budget allocation, where required, in all programme plans i.e. project managers should specify the diversity profile of programme staff to be recruited and anticipate any costs associated with this activity such as transportation, making reasonable adjustments, special leave required etc
- Every employee is treated with respect and given the opportunity and environment to reach their full potential to the benefit of the NEEDS and themselves
- A person's diversity characteristics alone are not sufficient to make them a suitable candidate. They must also have a minimum level of capability/competency e.g. we are looking for people who can empathise and relate to excluded people in the community. A candidate who her/him self is excluded may be more likely to be able to do this due to their personal experience, but this capability needs to be demonstrated through an objective assessment process
- However, it is recognised that there are barriers to recruitment of minority groups. NEEDS has processes and procedures to maximise the accessibility of employment and promote equal

opportunities e.g. recruitment criteria and process that allow the broadest range of candidates to apply or making reasonable adjustments to the work environment to enable people to be effective

3. Screening and Recruitment: NEEDS will implement non-discriminatory policy and practices while recruiting and managing individual with HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS screening should not be required for job applicants or persons in employment or for purposes of exclusion from employment or worker benefits unless required by law for work permits and/or visa applications in countries where these are mandatory requirements. (This may restrict visits of staff to those places who are HIV positive or do not wish to take an HIV test).

4. Information and Training: Training aims to staffs and volunteers to have correct information and knowledge of HIV/AIDS as well as remove stigma and discrimination. This training will be provided to all staffs and should be on going. The content should be revised in light of change in pandemic. The training and information sharing will also help the team to become sensitive towards the need of people infected or effected with HIV and improve their skill and capacity to work with this diversify group

5. Stigma and discrimination: NEEDS will not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived HIV status, in the condition of work, including opportunities for promotion, study or advancement. Discrimination and stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS inhibits efforts aimed at promoting HIV/AIDS prevention. NEEDS will undertake activities to address HIV related stigma in the workplace, including staff/ volunteers training and the promotion of an open supportive, accepting work environment. Where an individual is guilty of stigmatizing or discriminating in the work place, NEEDS will take action according to its grievance address mechanism.

6. Gender equality: Women are more likely to become infected and adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic than men due to biological, socio-cultural and economic status. Equal gender relations and the empowerment of women are vital to successfully preventing the spread of HIV infection and enabling women to cope with HIV/AIDS. NEEDS being a Gender Friendly organization will promote gender equality through its workplace policy

7. Confidentiality :NEEDS would not force any applicant or staffs to disclose HIV-related personal information. It would not encourage colleagues/team members to reveal personal information about fellow team members. It will provide an environment where staffs and team members can discuss HIV/AIDS openly including their experience in living with HIV. Any disclosure related to HIV will be treated as confidential. Only with voluntary and informed consent of the person concerned, and only where strictly necessary, for the purpose of the recruitment or assignment of staff or volunteers living with HIV, can HIV related information be disclosed.

8. HIV prevention: HIV infection is preventable. Staffs/ volunteers will be provided with sensitive, accurate and up to date information around HIV prevention strategies. Through education and awareness activities, staff/volunteers should be aware of their own responsibility to protect themselves from HIV infection.

9. Care and support : Solidarity, care and support guide the response to HIV/AIDS in NEEDS. Care and support includes the provision of voluntary testing and counseling, workplace accommodation, employee and family assistance programmes, and access to benefits from health insurance and occupational schemes subject to be resource available.

All employees of NEEDS are entitled to affordable health services including access to counseling and testing, ART and treatment for STI and opportunistic infections and to benefits from statutory and occupational schemes. The availability of treatment encourages confidential voluntary HIV testing, making it easier to provide care and support and encourages prevention

10. Leave Policy: Staff or volunteers living with HIV or AIDS are entitled to the same sickness benefits as other staff and volunteers.

Staff sickness benefits are agreed with the employer as part of their terms and conditions of employment. NEEDS will share its policy with employers. Application for additional leave is subject to be decision of Chief Functionary of the organization but could not be claimed as right.

11. Reasonable Adjustment: NEEDS is sensitive towards the need and requirements of diversify group. Reasonable adjustment could be provided to staffs to reduce impact of living with HIV subject to be resource available. For staff, such measures may include a commitment to support flexible working arrangements; time off for counseling and medical appointments; temporary or permanent reduction in hours; staggered return to work programmes following a long period of sick leave; permanent or temporary transfers to more suitable duties where possible and appropriate; and extended sick leave. NEEDS will give every consideration to requests for such adjustments, although they will not be given automatically.