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## **HIV/AIDS Policy**

### **Context and Objectives**

GOPA acknowledges the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the impact it has in many of the countries they work in. The company understands AIDS as a chronic, life-threatening disease with social, economic and human rights implications.

GOPA recognises its responsibility towards its employees and therefore strives to minimise these implications through comprehensive, proactive HIV/AIDS workplace programmes, and commits itself to providing leadership in implementing such programmes. The objectives of these programmes are to ensure an effective prevention of HIV/AIDS among employees and their families, and the comprehensive management of the needs of HIV-positive employees and employees living with AIDS.

This policy is in compliance with the position paper "HIV/AIDS in German Technical Cooperation (TC)" of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It has been developed and will be implemented in consultation with GOPA's employees at all levels: Head Office personnel, seconded field staff, international experts, and national personnel. Since the degree of suffering caused by HIV/AIDS, the legal framework conditions, and the social security systems vary widely from country to country, this framework policy must be adapted to local conditions and be implemented accordingly wherever GOPA operates.

### **Basic Principles**

Through the provision of information, education and communication about HIV/AIDS this policy aims to protect all HIV/AIDS-positive employees from stigmatisation and/or discrimination by colleagues.

Employees living with HIV/AIDS have the same rights and obligations as all staff members, and they will be protected against all forms of discrimination resulting from their HIV status. GOPA therefore guarantees that job access, status, promotion and job security, and training will not be influenced by an employee's HIV status.

GOPA rejects HIV testing as a prerequisite for recruitment, access to training or promotion. It guarantees confidentiality of any medical information relating to the HIV status of employees that any of their representatives may have by virtue of his/her position in the company. GOPA strives to create a climate that allows for and encourages voluntary disclosure of an individual's positive HIV status.

For this reason GOPA facilitates access to voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) for all employees.

With this policy, GOPA acknowledges the desire and ability of HIV-positive employees to work. They therefore guarantee that employees living with HIV and AIDS may continue to work as long as they are able to perform their duties in accordance with job requirements.

If, for medical reasons, an employee is no longer able to continue his or her normal employment duties, GOPA will make efforts to reasonably accommodate the employee in another position in line with existing legislation and company policies.

## **Workplace Programmes**

Based on a situation analysis on HIV/AIDS policy development and performance in all countries where they operate, GOPA will develop context-specific workplace programmes that provide information on HIV/AIDS and make access to condoms at the workplace possible.

Information in workplace programmes will comprise:

- basic knowledge on HIV-Infection and the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome;
- transmission and factors fuelling the epidemic;
- suitable prevention measures and treatment options;
- information on places to seek further services; and
- impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

In addition, such programmes will include, where necessary and appropriate:

- appointment of, and ongoing support for, peer educators in the workplace;
- promotion of voluntary counselling and testing and demonstration of proper condom use;
- inclusion of expectations on HIV/AIDS prevention-related behaviour into the orientation of local employees;
- provision of guidance to local implementing partners on HIV/AIDS programme design; and
- contribution to local insurance scheme costs of employees, against documentary proof, to cover basic health care including the treatment of HIV-infection and AIDS related diseases.

## **Additional Elements**

### **Diagnosis and treatment**

Diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, as well as counselling and testing for HIV will be promoted for all employees. A major concern of the company is to assure accessibility for their employees to treatment for HIV and associated diseases, as far as available within the country of project execution. However, the implementation of these elements of the workplace programme will depend on the availability of either local, regional, or project-related insurance schemes that will cover the respective costs. GOPA will contribute to premiums of employees who have such local insurance policies. To be able to also offer a minimum health care coverage including HIV-AIDS treatment in countries where these insurance policies are not available, GOPA will endeavour to develop such policies together with international insurance companies.

### **Community involvement and support**

Beyond these guidelines, GOPA considers community involvement and partnerships with other stakeholders and institutions to be an integral part of their HIV/AIDS policy. GOPA/ and its partner NGO "IMPACT on HEALTH" therefore support community-based HIV/AIDS efforts by the following means:

- GOPA's project managers will raise the issue of HIV/AIDS prevention and care during formal and informal meetings with counterparts.
- GOPA will actively encourage subcontracting partners to introduce and/or maintain HIV/AIDS programme standards at least equivalent to those of GOPA itself. This will be an important criterion for GOPA in the selection of partners.
- GOPA will advocate for, negotiate with and encourage other governmental and nongovernmental organisations to adopt or expand HIV/AIDS prevention programmes.

### **Implementation and coordination**

To promote education and awareness on the issue of HIV/AIDS within the company, GOPA's headquarters will:

- place HIV/AIDS prevention and care on the agenda of management meetings and make HIV/AIDS part of their orientation process for all new employees;
- incorporate the issue of HIV/AIDS into project proposals as a cross cutting issue where applicable;
- provide systematic and continuous information about HIV/AIDS using all company media and communication methods: e. g. regular features in newsletters, articles available via the respective GOPA Web-site, distribution of publications and references to other support and information resources; and
- arrange support sessions for managerial staff and staff representatives so as to enable them to perform their support and advisory roles appropriately

Continuous monitoring, evaluation and reporting are critical to assessing the programme's impact. GOPA will therefore design a system for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the implementation process of their HIV/AIDS policy. GOPA commits itself to regular and formal communication within the company about the HIV/AIDS Policy and its development. GOPA Management will review this policy at regular intervals and conduct a formal review in the first quarter of each year.

The headquarters of GOPA's subsidiary company, EPOS Health Management serves as the contact point for any assistance needed.

### **Contact particulars**

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