



POLICY

FOR

MANAGING HIV & AIDS IN THE WORKPLACE



CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	3
List of Abbreviations	4
1. Purpose of this Policy	5
2. Employment Conditions and Rights	6
3. Treatment and Care	8
4. Education / Prevention	9
5. Implementation and Monitoring	11
6. Review	12



FOREWORD

HIV & AIDS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA




AIDS has killed more people than any previous epidemic in the world. PNG, too, has been hit hard by the HIV & AIDS epidemic and the number of HIV & AIDS infected people is on the rise.

Exact figures are not known; as of December 2004 about 11,000 cases of HIV infected people were reported in PNG. According to the NACS (2004), AIDS has become the leading cause of mortality and morbidity among adults at the Port Moresby General Hospital.

Estimates of infected people are between 40,000 and 80,000, suggesting a prevalence rate of 1.5% to 2.5%.

These figures might not be exact, but they do show that HIV & AIDS is now growing exponentially in PNG showing an increase in infection rates of 15-30% every year.


But even without approved figures the first signs of an epidemic taking grip of PNG are showing, such as

-  increased number of death announcements in newspapers, especially of the young and productive generation
-  increase of diseases due to immune deficiencies, such as TB
-  increase of funeral related businesses (“coffins for sale” road signs)

Most people infected are aged 15-34 years, the most economically productive age group. This will have major personal impacts on individuals and families and a significant negative impact on business profits, public services and the general economy in PNG.

While the prevalence rate is escalating, stigma and discrimination has overwhelmed people living / affected by HIV & AIDS (NACS, 2004).

With this workplace policy on HIV & AIDS Department of Treasury recognises the need to create awareness and knowledge of the cause and the impact of this epidemic among each single employee and his / her family. Furthermore, Department of Treasury acknowledges the need to care for HIV & AIDS infected and affected staff members as well as the need to overcome stigma and discrimination against those staff members.



Hon. Bart Philemon, MP
Minister for Finance & Treasury

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome – a cluster of medical conditions, often referred to as opportunistic infections and cancers for which there is no cure
HAMP ACT	HIV / AIDS Management and Prevention Act 2003
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus – a virus that weakens the body’s immune system, ultimately leading to numerous diseases (TB, etc.) causing AIDS
HR	Human Resources
ILO	International Labour Organization
NACS	National Aids Council Secretariat
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PEP	Post Exposure Prevention -. For HIV-uninfected persons who are exposed to HIV, there may be a window of opportunity in the first few hours or days after exposure in which some highly active drugs may prevent HIV infection. Protease inhibitors used in combination with other HIV drugs have been extremely effective in reducing the levels of HIV in the blood and restoring health to many patients
PNG	Papua New Guinea
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund





1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The Department of Treasury recognizes the seriousness of the HIV & AIDS epidemic and its significant impact on the workplace. The Department of Treasury supports national efforts to reduce the spread of infection and minimize the impact of the disease.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a consistent and equitable approach to the prevention of HIV & AIDS among staff and their families, and to the management of the consequences of HIV & AIDS, including the care and support of staff members living with HIV & AIDS.

The policy has been developed and will be implemented in consultation with staff at all levels in all locations. It complies with PNG law and international principles, including:

- *HIV/AIDS Management and Prevention Act 2003 (HAMP Act)*
- *The 12 Principles of Workplace Policy for HIV/AIDS, PNG National AIDS Council, 2004*
- *the UN's HIV/AIDS and Human Rights: International Guidelines (1996),*
- *ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work (2001).*

Department of Treasury recognises that there is a high degree of gender discrimination in PNG society, which means women, will be more negatively affected by HIV & AIDS.

Department of Treasury does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination against staff members or job applicants on any grounds, including HIV & AIDS. This policy rests on the principle that HIV & AIDS should be treated like any other serious condition or illness that may affect staff. It takes into account the fact that people with HIV & AIDS may live full and active lives for many years. Department of Treasury is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for all staff, recognizing that HIV is not transmitted by casual contact.





2. EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND RIGHTS

2.1 No discrimination

Department of Treasury and its staff will not discriminate against people with HIV & AIDS in any aspect of employment, and will not tolerate stigmatization, vilification, victimization or harassment on the basis of that a person is actually, known or perceived to be infected or affected by HIV & AIDS.

Recognising the gender dimensions of HIV & AIDS, the Department of Treasury will endeavour to create equal gender relations in a non-discriminatory work environment.

2.2 Testing

Department of Treasury rejects HIV testing as a prerequisite for recruitment, access to training or promotion. Pre-employment medical examination – or any other test required for employment purposes - will not include an HIV test. However, staff members are encouraged to take the opportunity to access voluntary counselling and testing.

2.3 Confidentiality

A staff member with HIV & AIDS has no obligation to inform Department of Treasury or other staff members of their status.

Where a person chooses to inform another staff member that he/she has HIV & AIDS, this information is not disclosed to any other person, including human resources managers and medical personnel, without the consent of the person who has given the information.

Department of Treasury recognizes its obligation to maintain absolute confidentiality about all aspects of a staff member's health. Breach of confidentiality in relation to HIV & AIDS will be considered a serious disciplinary offence. However, in line with Department of Treasury's philosophy of openness, Department of Treasury will provide full support to staff members who choose to be open about their HIV status.

2.4 The promotion of staff members' well-being

Where the infection of a staff member with HIV & AIDS comes to the knowledge of Department of Treasury, the Department will treat this staff member with empathy and care. Consequently, Department of Treasury will provide the same reasonable assistance as with all other illnesses, which may include counselling, time off, sick leave, and information regarding the virus and its effects as long as they are in line with the general policies and the General Orders.

2.5 Work performance and reasonable accommodation

It is the policy of Department of Treasury to respond to the changing health status of staff by making reasonable accommodation where possible.

Staff members may continue to work as long as they are able to perform their duties safely and in accordance with performance standards. If a staff member with AIDS is unable to perform his/her tasks adequately, the manager or supervisor with the support of the HR Branch must resolve the problem according to Department of Treasury's normal procedure on poor performance/ill-health.



3. TREATMENT AND CARE

3.1 Access to testing and treatments

Department of Treasury recognizes that counselling and testing for HIV is not widely available in PNG yet. Similarly, it is difficult to access treatment for sexually transmitted infections outside major centres, and there is very little access to HIV treatments.

However, the majority of staff of Department of Treasury is based in Port Moresby. The HIV & AIDS Co-ordinator of Department of Treasury will make recommendations about where these facilities are available and publish their contact details on Treasury's website.

For staff members in the provinces the HIV & AIDS Co-ordinator will advise the Treasury managers in the province to publish contact details in the provinces on a black-board which is accessible for all staff members.

Where there are no such services available in these provinces, the HIV & AIDS Co-ordinator will find out whether some form of support can be provided to local health facilities to provide these services.

3.2 Care and support

Department of Treasury will develop links and provide support for local NGOs or church organisations providing care and support for persons affected by HIV & AIDS and will refer affected workers to those organisations where appropriate.



4. EDUCATION/PREVENTION

4.1 Shared responsibility

HIV & AIDS prevention is the responsibility of all staff, including senior management and supervisors.

Department of Treasury recognizes the importance of involving staff members and their representatives in the planning and implementation of awareness, education and counselling programs, especially as peer educators and counsellors.

4.2 Education programs

Awareness and education programs will be conducted to inform staff about HIV & AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, and help them to protect themselves and others against infection. Awareness and education programs will take into account the different needs of male and female staff members, different languages and cultures, and – where appropriate and affordable, will also be provided to family members and surrounding communities.

The education programs will aim at improving the life skills such as communication, negotiation and self esteem (according to UNICEF) to enable Treasury's staff member to prevent themselves from infection and to create awareness for the risks and prevention of HIV & AIDS themselves among peers, family and wantoks.

4.3 Cooperation

Where possible, awareness and education programmes will cooperate with, support, or draw on the resources of local NGOs or church organisations with expertise in HIV & AIDS.

4.4 Specific risk factors

HIV & AIDS is called the poor men's disease, but statistics show that the infection rates in percentage within the group of the well-educated and wealthy people are higher than within the group of the poor.

The well educated work-force of Treasury is facing specific risk factors related to their life style through which they can access and have means to be put to risks through

- Lengthy periods away from home, family and regular partners
- Less inhibition and restriction in a new province or a new country
- Influence of alcohol and peers

- Promiscuity

Continuously carried out awareness and education programs will keep staff informed about specific risk factors.

4.5 Safe sex

Staff members will be encouraged to practice safe sex at all times. The Department of Treasury will make condoms and lubricant available in all workplaces.

4.6 Occupational Health and Safety

Department of Treasury will carry out hazard identification and risk assessment in consultation with workers and their representatives, and will implement risk control measures to prevent exposure to HIV and other blood-borne viruses in the workplace.

Department of Treasury will identify one officer per division to be trained in safe first aid measurements and will provide a first aid kit to every division.

These processes will be reviewed annually.

4.7 Post Exposure Prevention (PEP) Treatment

PEP Treatment will be available to staff members:

- Who have accidentally become exposed to HIV in the course of their work (e.g. by needle-stick)
- Who have been sexually assaulted at their work-place.

It will not normally be made available to individuals who have engaged in voluntary activities involving potential HIV transmission, such as unprotected sex.

4.8 Personal Responsibility

Every staff member has the moral responsibility to protect themselves and a moral and legal responsibility to protect others from HIV infection.

Intentional transmission of HIV to another person is a serious criminal offence.



5. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

5.1 HIV & AIDS Coordinator

Department of Treasury will appoint an HIV & AIDS Coordinator to facilitate, implement and follow up on the implementation of the HIV & AIDS workplace policy.

The HIV & AIDS Coordinator will be the point of contact for all activities regarding the implementation of this policy. She /he will coordinate awareness sessions, provide information to staff, ensure and update the availability of relevant data on Treasury's website and will help to create an environment free of discrimination and stigmatization.

In this function the HIV & AIDS Coordinator will report directly to the Secretary of Treasury.

5.2 Management and Management Meeting

The managers of Treasury will act as role models for their divisions, creating awareness for HIV & AIDS issues, encouraging staff members to discuss these issues openly and providing a working environment where infected and affected staff members can continue to work free of discrimination and stigma.

In every first management meeting of each month, the management of Department of Treasury will monitor the implementation of the HIV & AIDS policy and program and take action if and when necessary.

5.3 Communication of this Policy

This policy, and related information on HIV & AIDS, will be included in orientation materials, and communicated to all staff, associated organizations and businesses and the wider public, using the full range of communication methods available to Department of Treasury and its network of contacts.



6. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary in the light of changing conditions.



SIMON TOSALI
Secretary of Treasury

November 2005