
HIV/AIDS POLICY STATEMENT

1.0. PREAMBLE

The goal is to prevent the spread of HIV infection among Malawians, to improve the quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS, and reduce the socio-economic and psychosocial impact of HIV/AIDS on individuals, families, and communities

The impact of HIV/AIDS in the workplace is increasingly being felt. Among other factors, absenteeism and death result in low productivity, premature payment of employee benefits and low workplace morale.

Discrimination against PLWAs has also been perpetuated through practices such as pre-employment HIV testing, dismissal as a result of being HIV-positive and the denial of employee benefits if known to be infected. One of the most effective ways of reducing and managing the impact of HIV/AIDS in the workplace is through implementation of an HIV/AIDS policy and a prevention, treatment, care and support programme.

Eye of the Child (EyC) recognizes that the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) are serious public health problems that have socio-economic, employment and human rights implications. And the organization also recognizes that:

- AIDS is still a disease surrounded by ignorance, prejudice, discrimination and stigma.
- HIV has no social, gender, age or racial boundaries much as socio-economic factors have a big influence on the patterns of the disease. HIV thrives in an environment of poverty, ignorance, and other disparities in resources.
- AIDS affects work outputs especially due to prolonged staff illness, absenteeism, death, occupational safety and health measures, production costs, morale and employee benefits.

Policy Statement:

To assist the staff of Eye of the Child, the organization and its collaborating partners in the efforts to prevent and control the deadly disease, AIDS.

Eye of the Child recognizes that the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) are serious public health problems that have socio-economic, employment and human rights implications and the AIDS is still a disease surrounded by ignorance, prejudice, discrimination and stigma.

Eye of the Child believes that adopting and implementing a HIV-AIDS policy will assist the staff, the organization and its collaborating partners in the efforts to prevent and

control the pandemic.

2.0 DEFINITIONS AND MEANINGS

In this Policy Document, the following shall have the following meanings:

- 'HIV' means the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, a virus that weakens the body's immune system resulting into AIDS.
- 'AIDS' means Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, a cluster of medical conditions often referred to as opportunistic infections and concerns and for which, to-date, there is no cure.
- 'VCT' means Voluntary Counseling and Testing.
- 'Affected Employee' means an employee of Eye of the Child who is affected in any way by HIV.

3.0 OVERALL GOAL OF THE POLICY

To reduce the incidence of HIV and improve the quality of lives for those infected and affected by HIV-AIDS pandemic.

The Eye of the Child policy on HIV/AIDS will aim to attain the following broader goals.

- Eliminate discrimination for those people living with HIV/AIDS so that they may feel free to be open with other staff on their status without fear, rejection or stigmatization.
- Enhance the appropriate and effective ways of managing HIV epidemic in Eye of the Child thereby contribute to the efforts by the country on the same.
- Promote Voluntary Counseling and Testing among Eye of the Child members of staff.
- Maintain confidentiality of staff HIV status.
- Create a conducive atmosphere for gender equality.

4.0 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The policy aims at achieving the following specific objectives.

1. Provide a non-discriminatory atmosphere within Eye of the Child through:
2. Create a non-discriminatory work environment, for example, in awarding benefits, work resources, managing complaints and grievances, education, training and communication channels and methodologies.
3. Maintain confidentiality of staff HIV status.
4. The policy will provide guidelines to Eye of the Child employees on how they can manage the epidemic and its impact through:
 - a. Creating a safe working environment for employees regardless of sex, age or any other distinguishing factors.
 - b. Promoting ways of preventing the spread of HIV acceptable within the overall Eye of the Child's Policy framework
 - c. Facilitating support mechanisms among members of staff infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS.

5.0 HOW TO USE THIS POLICY.

Eye of the Child will make available this policy to all staff members. New employees will be oriented to the basis and use of this policy. Hence this policy will give guidance to each member of staff on the following:

- Protecting those with HIV or perceived to be so by eliminating all issues of discrimination and stigmatization of all Eye of the Child staff.
- Help in efforts of preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS through safeguarding the health and welfare of Eye of the Child staff and their immediate families, and through information and education to help in combating the spread of the disease.
- Help Eye of the Child to come up with collective agreements that will help to reduce the incidence of HIV among its staff.
- Promote dialogue especially with other stakeholders, including the communities supported by Eye of the Child, in development and an effort to fight HIV/AIDS.

6.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. HIV/AIDS AND THE WORKPLACE

The workplace has a role to play in the efforts to reduce the spread and effects of HIV/AIDS.

2. GENDER ASPECT

More equal gender relations and empowerment of women shall be advocated for by Eye of the Child in order to reduce imbalances in gender relations have shown to have an adverse effect on the spread of HIV/AIDS and suffering among women.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS

Every human being has the right to life as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). HIV/AIDS affects the rights of individuals to life and as such Eye of the Child as an organization will apply principles that promote the prevention and spread of HIV/AIDS to ensure survival of its staff.

4. DECENT WORKPLACE AND HUMAN DIGNITY

In the spirit of decent work and respect for human rights and dignity of persons infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, there shall be no discrimination against employees on the basis of real or perceived HIV status or related family responsibilities. Such human rights are extended by Eye of the Child and its staff to beneficiaries with whom we work.

5. COMPASSION AND SUPPORT

The policy will create a compassionate, supportive and conducive environment so that staff infected or affected or perceived to be HIV positive are able to continue working under normal conditions in Eye of the Child for as long as they are medically fit to do so.

6. HIV/AIDS AND TESTING

HIV/AIDS testing is not compulsory to staff. However, mechanisms to encourage Voluntary Testing are in place.

7.0 SPECIFIC POLICY STATEMENTS

1. EMPLOYMENT AND RECRUITMENT

Eye of the Child follows a non-discriminatory stance on employment and recruitment of its entire staff. Selection for any post shall be based on the job requirements, qualifications and experience. Sero-status testing of individuals is not be a pre-condition for employment.

2. DECLARATION OF HIV STATUS.

In keeping with the rights of all staff, declaration of someone's HIV sero-status is not be compulsory. Individuals shall feel free to declare their sero-status to the organization and the information will be treated as confidential as advised by those sharing the information.

3. RULE OF PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All information that an employee of Eye of the Child who is infected or affected conveys to the organization shall be kept confidential. Employees are not obliged to reveal or disclose their HIV-related personal information.

4. NON-DISCRIMINATORY TENDENCIES WITHIN THE ORGANISATION.

Eye of the Child staff regardless of their sero-status or other distinguishing factors shall be treated in the same manner. Rewarding of benefits, educational opportunities, training, promotions or demotions is based on the performance of the individuals and not on the HIV status of the individual.

5. SUPPORT TO OSA EMPLOYEES AND THEIR IMMEDIATE RELATIVES.

To support behavioral change amongst its staff, Eye of the Child makes available counseling, care and referral services to its staff.

Individual employees that have declared their sero-status to be HIV positive are supported with care services on a case-to-case basis and without discrimination.

6. SICK LEAVE

Employees with HIV related illness shall be able to work as long as they are medically fit

and available for appropriate work assigned to them.

Employees shall be accorded a flexible sick leave opportunity for resting, part-time work and/or even accepting a less than ideal level of performance as long as minimum standards are met in order to assist people who are sick. This, too, will be considered on a case-by-case basis without discrimination or stigmatization.

When a staff member's work performance and attendance becomes affected, he or she is entitled to the same sick leave allocation as any other members of staff as outlined in the Conditions of Service of the organization.

7. STAFF WHO WILL AND RECEIVE HOME-BASED CARE

While as the responsibility of where to get medication is dependent on the employee's discretion, Eye of the Child shall Endeavour to assist its employees to access better medical attention depending on the case in question.

8. VOLUNTARY COUNSELING AND TESTING

Eye of the Child shall provide information on the importance of its employees to know their sero-status without forcing them. Individuals that need to go for testing shall be given an opportunity to go for such tests.

9. STAFF SUPPORT TO GET ANTI-RETRO VIRAL DRUGS

Eye of the Child will facilitate acquisition of ARVs for its staff on as agreed terms the affected staff member.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Eye of the Child recognizes the many challenges that HIV/ AIDS poses to the people across the country and its employees. Eye of the Child remains proactive in finding solutions to matters affecting its employees. This policy document is therefore expected to be one way of promoting dialogue among its employees and in a way together find solutions to one of the deadly enemies of mankind, HIV/AIDS.

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