

HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy



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Preface

We are pleased to present the National HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy of **Ecumenical Commission for Human Development**. This is our workplace policy in relation to HIV and AIDS and it sets the strategic directions and principals for organization in future.

This document was prepared by following participatory methods which included not only our staff, but also other key players such as members of Board of Directors, religious leaders, civil society organizations including grassroots level institutions in our program areas and consultants, all of whom are our partner in the Ecumenical AIDS Alliance. The consultation was done through meetings, focus group discussions and workshops. This document is therefore as much ours as theirs.

Very special thanks are extended to **Dr. Ali Razaque**, Project Director, Punjab AIDS Control Program, Directorate of Health, Government of Punjab and their team for coordination and technical support for the activity and their valuable technical inputs for Ecumenical Commission for Human Development. These technical inputs are a source of encouragement and guidance for us to develop our HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy.

We also acknowledge the encouragement provided to us by our Board of Directors by approving this document. Internally, we acknowledge the tireless efforts and participation of all Program Managers and other staff in the process of developing this document. We especially acknowledge the contribution of **Mr. James Rehmat**, Programs Manager, who led the process as HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy advisor and coordinator respectively. The input at the final stages of this document by honorable members of Board of Directors has been invaluable for which we are grateful to them. We also appreciate the good work done by **Shahbaz Mahmood Shams** for the final layout of the document.

We will appreciate and welcome your comments and feed back on this document.

RIFFAT RAFIQUE
Executive Director

REV. RANA AJMAL JACOB
Chairman Board of Directors

HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development

1. Context

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development decided as part of its National Strategic Plan “Together for love, peace, solidarity and development in Pakistan” 2006 – 2010 that HIV and AIDS would be one of its program focuses alongside education, participation and governance. Nevertheless HIV and AIDS would also be a cross cutting theme in whole range of organization policy and program matters. Ecumenical Commission for Human Development is developing its Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Program; therefore we consider it as an imperative to have HIV workplace policy for organization to proactively address that how HIV can be prevented on one hand and at the same time rights of those who are infected or affected are not infringed.

The outlook of this policy is kept general because Ecumenical Commission for Human Development is at the initial stage of HIV and AIDS mainstreaming at internal and external level. Through this work place policy our organization is giving a statement of commitment to HIV cause, that we would be learning from its work and these learning would feed back into this policy and thereby making it more specific. Time to time review would be carried out to see how far the policy has been successful in terms of prevention and non-discrimination.

2. Workplace Policy

The workplace policy defines our commitment to HIV cause. Sets expectations from employees and prepares our organization to proactively handle HIV at workplace so that the staff and volunteers can be protected from contracting HIV and adopting non-discriminatory attitude towards those who are infected or affected by HIV. It serves employees to be upfront with the information to overcome fears; negative reactions; behaviors that can limit productivity and morale.

3. Workplace Policy Rationale

- Makes an explicit commitment to corporate action;
- Ensures consistency with appropriate national laws;
- Lays down a standard of behavior for all employees (whether infected or not);
- Gives guidance to the organization to prevent HIV and protect the rights of those who are infected and affected;
- Helps employees living with HIV and AIDS to understand what support and care they will receive.

4. General Statement

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development recognizes the seriousness of the HIV and AIDS epidemic and its significant and potential impact on the workplace. We support 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 and AIDS among employees, volunteers and their families, and to the management of the consequences of HIV and AIDS, including the care and support of employees living with HIV and AIDS. The policy has been developed and will be implemented in consultation with employees at all levels. It is in compliance with existing laws regarding HIV and AIDS where relevant regarding discrimination, working conditions and safety and health.

5. Policy framework and general principle

The policy establishes some general principles as the basis for other provisions. Ecumenical Commission for Human Development does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination against employees or job applicants on any grounds, including HIV status. While the organization recognizes that there are circumstances unique to HIV infection, this policy rests on the principle that HIV infection and AIDS should be treated like any other serious condition or illness that may affect employees. It takes into account the fact that employees with HIV should live full and active life. Ecumenical Commission for Human Development commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for all employees is based on the recognition that HIV is not transmitted by casual contact.

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development has strong belief in its partnership that has its bases in shared objectives and values. We consider non-discrimination policy as an imperative for sustained partnership that partner and Ecumenical Commission for Human Development envisions.

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development will continue to encourage partner, stakeholders and suppliers to adopt a HIV workplace policy. We will prefer not to partner and work with any organization, individuals or group that discriminates on the basis of HIV, health status, caste, gender, religion and ethnicity or does not have effective HIV prevention behaviors and services.

6. Specific Provisions

The policy includes provisions in the following areas:

- The protection on the rights of those affected by HIV and AIDS;
- Prevention through information, education and training;

- Care and support services for workers and their families.

7. Protect of Rights

- **Stigma, discrimination and rights**

No rights from confidentiality to access and to benefits should be affected by an individual's HIV status, whether real or suspected. Stigma and discrimination compromise employee welfare, safety and healthy work environment. They also undermine HIV prevention efforts, which depend on an atmosphere of openness, trust and respect for basic rights.

- **Rights of employees who are HIV positive**

HIV positive employees will be protected against discrimination, victimization or harassment through the application of normal organization's disciplinary and grievance procedures, and provision of the information and education about HIV and AIDS to all employees.

- **Employment opportunities and termination of employment**

No employee should suffer discrimination or denial of appropriate alternative employment opportunities whether appointment, promotion, dismissal, merely on the basis of HIV infection. All job advertisements will explicitly invite people with HIV to apply for job opportunity at Ecumenical Commission for Human Development.

- **HIV Testing**

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development rejects HIV testing as a prerequisite for recruitment, access to training or promotion. However, we promote and facilitate access to voluntary confidential testing with counseling for all employees.

Testing programs to establish local/national HIV prevalence will be the subject of appropriate consultation with recognized employee organizations and will be subject to independent and objective evaluation and scrutiny. The result of epidemiological studies will not be used as a basis for discrimination against any class of employee in the workplace. All testing will comply with generally accepted international standards on pre and post test counseling, informed consent, confidentiality and support.

- **Confidentiality**

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development recognizes the sensitive issues that surround HIV and AIDS and therefore, undertakes to handle matters in a discreet and private manner. Where an employee with HIV has revealed his/her status, we will keep the identity of the person confidential. However, in line with Ecumenical Commission for Human Development philosophy of openness, employees will be encouraged to be open about their HIV status.

8. Awareness Raising

- Ecumenical Commission for Human Development will provide general awareness and training on the epidemic, on appropriate responses, and on the general needs of people living with HIV and AIDS as part of staff induction and for volunteers. The awareness and training would be gender sensitive in the cultural context of Pakistan.
- Ecumenical Commission for Human Development will make it a part of partnership agreement that volunteers are bound to attend training or orientation sessions that we will be organizing time to time.
- Awareness and education programmes will be conducted for partners about HIV and AIDS, and to help them to be sensitive to HIV+ people and protect themselves and others against infection. Programmes will take into account the different needs of male and female employees.
- Practical measures to support behavioral change and risk management will include the treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and tuberculosis, where possible and also referral to STI and TB treatment services.
- Training will be arranged for key staff members, including managers, supervisors and volunteers. While keeping equal emphasis on women and men in terms of participation and application.
- Reasonable time will be given off to the employees for participation in education and training sessions or workshops.

9. Prevention

- Ecumenical Commission for Human Development will provide condoms to staff and volunteers for prevention of HIV and these condoms would be kept at accessible locations within the office.
- If in case a volunteer or a staff member fears that they have been exposed to a situation where there is a risk of HIV contraction so information is provided on PEP services existing in Pakistan.
- Ecumenical Commission for Human Development will provide first aid kits to the staff and volunteers that will include disposable syringes if in case there is no guarantee of proper sterilization of such material at the job or travel station.

10. Care and Support Services for workers and their families

It is in interest of both Ecumenical Commission for Human Development and its employees that infected individuals be offered assistance in order to remain at work for as long as possible.

a. The promotion of employee's well being

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development will treat employees who are infected or affected by HIV and AIDS with empathy and care. Consequently, we will provide all reasonable assistance, which may include counseling, time off, sick leave, family responsibility leave, and information regarding the virus and its effects. However, if an HIV+ employee requires special package in terms of leaves, office hours and work nature, this would be at the discretion of Executive Director.

b. Work Performance

It is the policy of Ecumenical Commission for Human Development to respond to the changing health status of employees by making reasonable accommodation. Employees should continue to work as long as they are able to perform their duties safely and in accordance with performance standards. If an employee with AIDS is unable to perform his/her tasks adequately, the manager or supervisor must resolve the problem according to the organization's normal procedure on poor performance/ill-health.

c. Benefits

Employees living with HIV and AIDS will be treated no less favorably than the other staffs who are HIV negative or in having any other serious illness condition, in terms of benefits, workplace compensation, leaves where appropriate.

d. Health Care

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development will support employees and volunteers living with HIV and AIDS to find appropriate medical or counseling services as well as professional support and self-help groups (if required) in the community. Reasonable time will be given off for counseling and treatment. We have already a panel of hospitals in major cities that provides range of services to our staff and volunteers, which includes HIV services also.

Medical cover to HIV+ staff and volunteers would be dealt under the existing medical policy. Staff and volunteers infected with HIV would get medical coverage for treatment, counseling, ARV and testing (if the staff agrees voluntarily). Contracts would be done with hospitals and organizations that are providing HIV services. Information regarding ARV providing outlets would be updated and share with the staff and volunteers regularly.

e. Gender Role

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development believes that HIV+ health and social impact on women is worse than which also affects her role and responsibilities at domestic and social level. Therefore special support may be given to the female staff. This would be at the discretion of the Executive Director and decided on case to case basis.

11. Implementation and monitoring

- a. Ecumenical Commission for Human Development will establish an HIV and AIDS committee to coordinate and implement the HIV and AIDS Policy and programme. The committee consists of employees representing all constituents of Ecumenical Commission for Human Development; including general management e.g. staff committee, medical services, human resources department etc.
- b. In order to plan and evaluate its HIV and AIDS policy and programme effectively, we will be regularly collecting data from secondary sources and if the need is felt may undertake a survey to establish baseline data, as well as regular risk and impact assessment studies. The survey will include knowledge, attitudes and behavior/practices. Studies will be carried out in consultation with, and with the consent of, employees and their representatives and in conditions of complete confidentiality.
- c. This policy and related information on HIV and AIDS will be communicated to all Ecumenical Commission for Human Development employees and partners.

12. Budget and Finance

Ecumenical Commission for Human Development will develop its budget while keeping HIV+ activities as integral part of every budget proposal.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and the review process would include staff, volunteers and partners. HIV focal person in Ecumenical Commission for Human Development would lead on the process.