

GOPA/EPOS HIV/AIDS Policy

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

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

GOPA/EPOS recognise their responsibility towards their employees and therefore strive to minimise these implications through comprehensive, proactive HIV/AIDS workplace programmes, and commit themselves 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/EPOS' 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/EPOS operate.

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/EPOS therefore guarantee that job access, status, promotion and job security, and training will not be influenced by an employee's HIV status.

GOPA/EPOS reject HIV testing as a prerequisite for recruitment, access to training or promotion. They guarantee 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 companies. GOPA/EPOS strive to create a climate that allows for and encourages voluntary disclosure of an individual's positive HIV status.

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

With this policy, GOPA/EPOS acknowledge 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/EPOS 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/EPOS 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 Companies 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/EPOS 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/EPOS will endeavour to develop such policies together with international insurance companies.

Community involvement and support

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

- GOPA/EPOS' project managers will raise the issue of HIV/AIDS prevention and care during formal and informal meetings with counterparts.
- GOPA/EPOS will actively encourage subcontracting partners to introduce and/or maintain HIV/AIDS programme standards at least equivalent to those of GOPA/EPOS themselves. This will be an important criterion for GOPA/EPOS in the selection of partners.
- GOPA/EPOS 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/EPOS' 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 EPOS/GOPA Web-sites, 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/EPOS will therefore design a system for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the implementation process of their HIV/AIDS policy. GOPA/EPOS commit themselves to regular and formal communication within the company about the HIV/AIDS Policy and its development. GOPA/EPOS Management will review this policy at regular intervals and conduct a formal review in the first quarter of each year.

EPOS' Headquarters serves as the contact point for any assistance needed.

Contact particulars:

EPOS Health Consultants
Hindenburggring 18, D-61348 Bad Homburg, Germany
Phone: +49 6172 930-374 Fax: +49 6172 930-372
Email: hivaidinfo@epos.de