

## **Agro Eco/EPOPA Uganda Office**

### **HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy**

Based on: Living with Aids Programme, Standard Chartered Bank Uganda  
AE Uganda Staff discussions

Commissioner: Sida

Date: February 2006

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#### **The key elements of our policy are:**

- a) Provide health information to all employees on HIV/AIDS, its magnitude, impact and preventative measures
- b) Implement non-discriminatory policies, procedures and practices in managing individuals who have HIV/AIDS
- c) Approach individuals who have AIDS in the same manner as those with any other progressive or debilitating illness and with all the support that this entails
- d) Clearly define HIV/AIDS policies and procedures taking into account local practices, culture and legislation
- e) Co-operate with other organisations to counter HIV/AIDS and alleviate its impact by sharing experiences and supporting their efforts where appropriate

#### **Policy Objective**

The objective of the HIV/AIDS policy is to minimise, monitor and manage the impact, spread and consequences of the HIV/AIDS as far as it affects the employees and operations of Agro Eco/ EPOPA

#### **Policy Applicability**

The policy applies to all employees of Agro Eco and associates of EPOPA

#### **The need for an HIV/AIDS policy**

The HIV/AIDS policy has been developed for the following reasons:

##### **a) Social Responsibility**

The actual and potential growth and impact of the HIV/AIDS disease on people of productive and economically active age poses an enormous global and business challenge. Agro Eco/EPOPA considers that it has a corporate social responsibility to support HIV/AIDS preventative efforts and to protect the basic human rights of those in the workplace who are HIV positive.

We will also contribute to reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS with an awareness-raising programme aimed at educating and protecting our employees, associates and hopefully their families.

#### **b) Employee and Associate Health and Well-being**

Employees and associates are critical to the success of our business. The loss of such a person is not only a personal tragedy to the family, but also results in direct and indirect loss to Agro Eco/ EPOPA in terms of medical costs, retraining, recruitment and productivity.

Agro Eco/EPOPA is committed to the protection and maintenance of its employees' health and well being within affordable limits.

All Agro Eco employees are covered by IAA medical cover and this covers HIV/AIDS testing, counselling and treatment of illnesses caused as a direct consequence of HIV/AIDS status.

#### **c) Non- discriminatory Policies, Procedures and Practices**

Misconceptions and misinformation regarding HIV/AIDS can contribute to discriminatory management policies, practices and behaviour. This can result in panic, poor employee moral and disturbed working relationships between employees and those infected with HIV/AIDS. Agro Eco/ EPOPA therefore recognises a need to disseminate standard, consistent and factual information on the HIV/AIDS disease and to educate our employees to minimise and manage the HIV/AIDS infection.

Agro Eco/EPOPA will also try to adjust workload to allow for the physical ability of the employee or associate.

Agro Eco/ EPOPA will not terminate pre-maturely the employment of an infected staff member or associate who has HIV/AIDS. In the event that the health status of an infected employee would warrant termination, this shall be treated like any other terminal illness and the procedure stipulated in the employment act will apply. HIV/AIDS status will also not be used by Agro Eco/ EPOPA to discriminate against people in job application, hiring, advancement, benefits, insurance or otherwise.

#### **d) Work as an educational centre.**

Employees spend a considerable part of their lives in the Agro Eco/ EPOPA workplace. The workplace therefore has an advantage as a location Agro Eco/ EPOPA can use to establish, implement and promote HIV/AIDS prevention strategies and programmes. A list will be produced and displayed at the HIV/AIDS Info Point to indicate where staff can find extra expert support on HIV/AIDS issues, should this be desired.



**e) Minimising HIV/AIDS spread; Education programme and Dissemination of information**

Agro Eco/ EPOPA will regularly disseminate information on the magnitude of the disease and developments in scientific research, especially those related to prevention.

To implement this effectively, Agro Eco/ EPOPA will distribute information on HIV/AIDS to all staff and associates. An HIV/AIDS information post will be positioned in the office where staff and associates, and indeed visitors to the office, can obtain additional information on HIV/AIDS such as posters, fliers and other media- based information. Agro Eco/ EPOPA will draw the attention of staff and associates to the presence of this information point and also invite occasional speakers (at least once a year) to address them, so that awareness is kept up to date and at the front of peoples minds.

Employees and associates will be encouraged to use and share this information resource as they move out to various locations throughout the country in the normal course of their work. This will ensure that other Agro Eco/ EPOPA contacts will benefit from the available information and have their HIV/AIDS awareness raised.

**Additional Issues**

**a) Confidentiality**

Agro Eco/ EPOPA will protect the employees right to privacy, including confidentiality of medical conditions

**b) HIV/AIDS Testing and Counselling**

Agro Eco/ EPOPA shall not in any way oblige any employee to do an HIV test but shall otherwise encourage the employees to know their status on a voluntary basis. Voluntary testing with pre- and post-counselling and assured confidentiality will be made available for all Agro Eco/EPOPA staff and associates

**c) Joint Responsibility**

Through the HIV and AIDS workplace policy and program, Agro Eco/ EPOPA seeks to foster a work environment that promotes prevention, care and support for people living with HIV. The company encourages employees and their dependants to maintain a personal lifestyle in which they will not put themselves or others at the risk of HIV infection.



**d) Peer Educator**

Agro Eco/ EPOPA will identify a lead person amongst its staff and associates to act as a *Peer Educator* within the HIV/AIDS workplace policy. This person will have the responsibility of ensuring the policy is being implemented and having it's desired impact.

