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Costa Rica's Business Association for Development Promotes the Involvement of the Business Sector in the Response to HIV

“Including the HIV issue in the labor sphere is more than a mere social-responsibility matter; it is a strategic investment in long-term growth and profitability and, above all, sustainability.”

Erika Linares/AED



Erika Linares Orozco, AED Social Area Director giving the welcoming speech at the Workshop on Successful Experiences Implementing the Toolbox. Photograph: USAID|PASCA LMG



Dr. Marco Vinicio Chacón, Head of Health Services, Kimberly Clark. Photograph: USAID|PASCA LMG

Since 2012, the Business Association for Development (AED) has been actively involved in the national response to HIV in Costa Rica. Not only has it developed its HIV workplace policy with technical assistance from the USAID|PASCA LMG Project, but it has also led efforts to engage its more than 150 member firms.

AED has taken HIV issues to the top echelon of the private sector and it has made one of its work groups available to companies: Business Response to HIV. This is an opportunity to train and coordinate those firms interested in learning how to address HIV and its links with corporate social responsibility. The work group seeks companies' compliance in following the Guideline to Prevent HIV in the World of Work, issued by the Occupational Health Council under Costa Rica's Ministry of Labor. This guideline is aimed at complying with HIV Millennium Goals and the Initiative on Humane Work and Economic Development.

With AED technical assistance, in alliance with USAID|PASCA LMG, 20 firms have created and are implementing their HIV policy. They are directly benefitting 50,000 workers and nearly 200,000 indirect beneficiaries.

At the end of 2013, AED developed and published a Toolbox to persuade firms to incorporate into the business-sector response to HIV and to improve it. This is an instrument that provides support to planning, policy development, and implementation of HIV programs. It is free and helps companies to generate the processes that are necessary to guarantee the human rights of workers with HIV, to promote a culture of prevention in workplaces, to encourage stigma- and discrimination-free environments, in addition to making easier the alliances to promote education, voluntary testing, counseling, occupational health, and access to post-exposure prophylaxis in cases of sexual violence.

In August 2014, AED facilitated a workshop with the aim of promoting the Toolbox. It was a good opportunity to share the successful experiences they had while implementing policies. The Kimberly Clark firm and the Costa Rican Red Cross provided practical examples of how the tool has been useful to address prevention and awareness-raising programs, internal communication messages to disseminate policies, promote stigma- and discrimination-free behaviors and special cases in which schedules and functions must be adapted, a harassment-free workplace, and keeping confidentiality. AED is a leading organization that promotes the engagement of the business sector in the response to HIV.

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