

HIV Policy Design Supports Positive Workplace Practices

Grassroots community Health Task Force members are proactively improving the health and well-being of remote area dwellers within the Kuru Family of Organisations (KFO) with the adoption of an HIV/AIDS workplace policy. With a mission to create an enabling and supportive environment for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and related illnesses in surrounding communities, the KFO Task Force works to put positive living into practice. KFO recognises the impact of HIV/AIDS on the workplace and supports national and international efforts to reduce the spread of infection and minimise the impact of the illness. The formulation of a flexible and essentially supportive HIV/AIDS policy and guidelines enables the KFO team to respond to the needs of all employees. A Skillshare International development worker, funded through our PPA with DFID, was placed with Letloa (the support "network" of KFO) to design a mainstreamed health programme for each of the family's eight NGOs. Before the policy, it was difficult for some of the NGOs to allow employees time to participate in HIV/AIDS activities. The policy has helped the organisations to establish structures which address the care and support of employees infected and affected by health related issues.



Community Health Task Force Members, photo by Laura Martindale

One task force member expressed great gratitude for the policy as *"it is very important to have a mandate for employees to be involved in the health training programme."* This workable document combines the Botswana Ministry of Health's recommendations for mainstreaming workplace support programmes with the needs of co-ordinators, task force and community members, enabling each of the individual NGOs to support the needs of its employees.

Grassroots empowerment is achieved by educating colleagues about their human rights and responsibilities to accept each other regardless of gender, sexual orientation and health status. The legal backbone protecting individuals also filters into the daily lives of remote area dwellers as awareness of international human rights increases. KFO's HIV/AIDS workplace policy contributes to the Botswana National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework and to the Millennium Development Goals. The implementation provides a practical formula for equality amongst all individuals and ensures a workplace free from discrimination.