



## HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination at the workplace of Vietnam

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This research showed the current situation of employment discrimination for people with HIV in six enterprises in Hatay province (Hanoi). It identifies the kind of support needed to address HIV-related stigma and discrimination in the workplace, and aims to inform development of better HIV/AIDS programmes in the workplace.

HIV/AIDS related-employment discrimination is a reality in Vietnam. It affects the fundamental right of People living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) to work. In the enterprises, HIV/AIDS is considered as a workplace issue.

The study found that some 66% of respondents believe that HIV-positive colleagues were seen as belonging to 'evil groups'. Employers were concerned with the ability of HIV-positive workers to continue working, and about the risks of transmission through casual on-the-job contact (baseline survey in the workplace - questionnaires to 400 employers and employees, focus group discussions and interviews).

*"Most HIV/AIDS positive people are from the high risk group such as sex workers or drug users. They have no job and often have bad behavior. I think to prevent HIV/AIDS, they need to disappear from the society."*

*Worker, 25 years old.*

### Findings

**Where and how do stigma and discrimination appear?** Findings from the research revealed several categories of workplace interactions within which HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination might occur.

- **Stigmatizing message:** Almost a two thirds of respondents believed that HIV workers were seen as belonging to evil groups and regularly portrayed negatively through images of drug injectors and sex workers.
- **Job dismissal or changing working position:** Employee interactions relating to physical job requirements includes potential stigma from workers concerned with the ability of HIV-positive workers to continue working, and about the risks of casual on-the-job contact. Results from in-depth interviews revealed that employers could refuse a worker if they found this worker manifested HIV/AIDS.
- **Fear of transmission through casual contact** was found to be a potential source of stigma at the workplace, but only among a minority of workers. About 20% indicated they would not be comfortable using the same toilet or sharing their food and drink and a small proportion (5.2%) did not agree shaking hands with an HIV positive colleague or friend.

### Conclusions and recommendations

- Fear of transmission through casual contact raises the greatest concern about stigma, as many social interactions take place in the workplace.
- The fear of social isolation, rather than the fear of being fired, seems to inhibit workers' willingness to disclose HIV status.
- Education is needed in the workplace so that people stop associating stereotype perceptions with 'social evils' and HIV/AIDS. Information, education and communication materials should be developed on stigma, discrimination and disclosure.

*"In our company, we will refuse a worker whenever we found he manifested this problem (HIV)."*

*An employer in a Hatay enterprise.*

### Partners

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