Welcome to the first newsletter of UN Cares!
November 2008 • Issue number 1

UN Cares 10 Minimum Standards
1. Information about UN policies and benefits related to HIV
2. Information about preventing transmission of HIV and accessing services
3. Learning and Training activities on stigma and discrimination
4. Access to male and female condoms
5. Voluntary counseling and testing
6. Insurance covering HIV-related expenses
7. Confidential handling of personal information
8. First aid using universal precautions
9. Rapid access to PEP starter kits
10. Managerial commitment

What’s been happening on the UN Cares front so far?
• Materials developed for disseminating information: UN Cares website, Implementers Action Toolkit, Booklet on Living in a World with HIV, brochure, poster, and magnets.
• UN Cares Global Database on HIV, with information on treatment and care services, voluntary counseling and testing sites, PEP starter kit custodians and local UN office HIV focal persons
• Plans to address unique learning needs of staff in remote locations.
• 5 new Regional Coordinators appointed in:
  * East and Southern Africa
  * West and Central Africa
  * Middle East and North Africa
  * Eastern Europe and Central Africa
  * Asia and the Pacific

What is UN Cares?
UN Cares is the UN system-wide workplace programme on HIV. At present approximately 1.4% of UN staff, about 1,400 people, are HIV positive, many more have family members and friends living with HIV, and others have died from AIDS-related causes. UN Cares seeks to provide “universal access” to a comprehensive range of benefits, called the 10 Minimum Standards, for all UN personnel and their families (see sidebar). Click here to learn more.

Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon launches UN Cares
“Whatever our role in life, wherever we may live, in some way or another, we all live with HIV. We are all affected by it. We all need to take responsibility for the response.”

BAN Ki-moon, Secretary-General
The Secretary-General has made UN Cares a priority, stating his determination “to make the UN a model of how the workplace should respond to HIV.” Click here to read more. To watch a short introductory video, click here.

What is UN Plus?
UN Plus invites all staff members living with HIV to join the group, whose mission is “uniting for solidarity, equality and acceptance for people living with HIV within the UN system through awareness raising, policy change and advocacy.”

The group accepts membership from those who are openly living with HIV and those who are not. For more, visit: www.unplus.org, write to unplus@unaids.org

UN Cares: The UN system-wide workplace programme on HIV  www.uncares.org
What can I do?

For staff:

- Know the essential facts about HIV and AIDS; read the booklet “Living in a world with HIV”, visit www.uncares.org to learn more;
- Attend UN learning sessions on HIV and invite family members to do the same;
- Protect yourself and your family from HIV transmission;
- Get tested for HIV and make healthy choices; for facilities near you search the UN Cares Global Database for HIV at www.uncares.org;
- Ensure zero tolerance for stigma and discrimination in the UN workplace;
- Take a first aid course that includes information on universal precautions;
- Know who in your duty station keeps the emergency prevention measures [the Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) starter kits], and make sure your family does, too.

Highlighting Minimum Standard 1

All personnel and their dependents in all locations should have access to information about UN system policy, programmes, personnel rights, entitlements and benefits. They must also be aware of their responsibilities regarding HIV and AIDS in the UN workplace. UN Cares is also working to create a workplace environment free from stigma and discrimination. UN staff living with HIV are entitled to treatment, care and support. HIV infection or AIDS is not considered a basis for terminating employment and all UN employees regardless of their HIV status should enjoy the same health and social benefits.

FAQs about UN Cares

Why are HIV and AIDS priorities among all other health concerns?

In the 25 years since the first case was reported, AIDS has affected all regions of the world and has become the leading cause of death of both men and women of working age in Africa and Asia. As a result, the workplace is inevitably affected by the epidemic. HIV is affecting the well-being of personnel and UN productivity. A 2007 study of the impact of HIV and AIDS in the UN workplace found that HIV and AIDS would cost the UN nearly US $10 million a year in “replacement costs” (recruitment, induction and retraining), funeral costs and death benefits as compared to doing nothing.

How do UN Cares and the UN Learning Strategy on HIV/AIDS fit together?

The Learning Strategy will continue to build staff knowledge to address HIV on a personal basis and in the UN workplace, but will additionally work to build UN system professional competence to address the epidemic with partners through joint programmes of support on AIDS. UN Cares provides the system-wide implementation framework and overall coordination to deliver “universal access” to essential information and services to all UN personnel and their families.

Contact Details

Any questions, concerns or suggestions please write to info@uncares.org

Voices from the field

“They should continue this [UN Cares] programme because as they enlighten us, we enlighten the societies around us.”

-Susan Kimwele, Staff Member, UNON, Nairobi.

“Too many countries have been resting on the laurels of a low prevalence rate, only to see it jump and increase quickly. As UN staff, I urge all of you to make informed decisions to protect yourselves from HIV.”

-Frode Mauring, UN Resident Coordinator, Macedonia

“As a peer educator, I would like to share information regarding HIV with all people around me, as a neighbour, colleague. On sharing information or doing campaign maybe I/we can reduce the number of HIV infections.”

-Pascoela de Carvalho, NVPU, Dili, Timor Leste

When I met a group of HIV-positive staff members at the United Nations... read more

S-G BAN Ki-moon

Mind your Language!

HIV and AIDS – what is the difference and why does it matter?

HIV is the virus that can lead to AIDS. Everyone with AIDS has HIV but not necessarily the other way around. To be most inclusive we speak of “people living with HIV” so we are sure to include everyone we’re trying to support. Check out the UNAIDS terminology guidelines to learn more.