

# Provision of **affordable health care** in the face of HIV/AIDS

*The provision of primary health care at the workplace is critical in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS. The **Labour Bulletin** investigates the feasibility and the costs involved in delivering health care to ordinary workers.*

**S**outh Africa would go a long way in dealing with the spread of HIV/AIDS if sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) were properly treated. This is according to Capital Alliance Health MD Richard Malkin. He believes the country is debilitated by the disease because there is a very mobile employed population, which is no more promiscuous than any other society. The difference however, is the failure to properly treat STDs. The treatment of STDs is happening on the mines but it is questionable to what extent this is being duplicated in other workplaces. Malkin believes the proper treatment of STDs would go a long way towards halting the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Malkin says the easy access to STD treatment could happen in a confidential manner in workplace clinics. Education around the disease has its place. However, money spent on access to STD treatment would be more beneficial. 'All the education in the world will not result in a person who has been drinking to put on a condom for protection.'

Malkin and others believe that affordable health care can be delivered

to blue-collar workers at the workplace. Instead, employers are spending large sums of money on medical aid contributions for a small portion of the workforce while the remainder are without any form of cover. There are ways of giving equal benefits to everyone in a company. Primary health care could cost as little as R50 a worker per month.

The proper management of health care in the workplace should ensure integration between occupational health and safety and the treatment or prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS,

Malkin says. This too is the view of the Solidarity Centre, which has initiated an extensive education programme amongst the main trade union federations.

Presently, employers are too scared to take on the long-term liability of keeping an employee alive on anti-retrovirals. However, eventually, companies could face mounting pressure in this regard. Under these circumstances, a sustainable primary health care delivery system is needed if companies are to eventually move towards providing anti-retrovirals. LB

## ***Zambia uses music to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS***

In Zambia, the music industry has become involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS. A local recording company – Mondo Music has, with donor funding, distributed tapes to (truck-drivers) on which popular songs are punctuated with a short AIDS-awareness segment. Chisha Folotiya, from Mondo Music explains that, as a through-road for goods across the SADC region, Zambia has been particularly vulnerable to the spread of HIV/AIDS. By targeting truckers directly, the initiative seeks to alert key role-players in the spread of the pandemic across the country and in the sub-region. (Quoted in 'Small Enterprise Development and Employment Creation in the Music Sector in the SADC Region', ILO's InFocus Programme on Boosting Employment through Small Enterprise Development' (IFP-SEED).