Overview

Workplaces are ideal environments to reach large groups of people with social and behavior change HIV prevention interventions and can help reduce HIV-related stigma. Recognizing this, BRIDGE II advocated for HIV interventions within some of Malawi’s largest work sites.

Identifying Partners

In order to fully understand the context for implementing workplace-based social and behavior change HIV prevention interventions among employers in Malawi, BRIDGE II undertook a needs assessment of companies in BRIDGE II implementation districts that employed large numbers of people. The participating companies were then triaged according to those that: a) had a workplace HIV prevention program, but needed it to be strengthened; b) did not have a program, but were interested in developing one; and c) were not interested in promoting HIV prevention. Based on the results of the needs assessment and triage, the BRIDGE II team identified employers that were especially well positioned to improve their HIV prevention programs, and others with whom they could advocate for the creation of programs.

Activities

After identifying key partner organizations, BRIDGE II worked with them to implement and strengthen workplace HIV prevention programs. Through advocacy among organization leadership, BRIDGE II set minimum standards for HIV prevention programs and facilitated inter-company learning. BRIDGE II also trained peer educators within each workplace to use interactive drama, Tasankha posters, and transformational tools such as the Journey of Hope and African Transformation toolkits to generate discussion.

Voices from the Field

Mary Lemea, a factory worker at Eastern Produce Tea Estate in Mulanje says BRIDGE II’s Support for Work Place Interventions enabled her to understand a lot about HIV — what it is, how it is spread, how it can be prevented. She now understands that the only way a person can know their HIV status is by getting an HIV test. She says this knowledge has prevented her from being discriminatory and judgmental against those she suspected of being HIV-positive.

“I used to bad mouth and pass judgment on people that they were HIV-positive based on their appearance until I learnt about HIV and AIDS. Now I am no longer discriminatory against anyone and I understand that an HIV test is the only way a person can know their status,” Mary said.

Employees from Eastern Produce Minimi Factory, one of the workplaces supported by BRIDGE II, participating in a Journey of Hope small group session.
Achievements

Overall, there was remarkable improvement in workplace HIV interventions, evidenced by reports from employers and employees that:

• Stigma against people living with HIV had been reduced.
• More employees were disclosing their HIV status in the workplace.
• Employers were granting leave to their employees to access HIV treatment.
• Employers were making condoms available for employees in the workplace.
• Workplaces were organizing HIV testing days.
• Absenteeism was reduced as more HIV-positive employees access needed HIV treatment.

Additionally, the number of organizations participating in the program increased throughout the implementation of the workplace intervention program. Overall, 16 large companies in Southern Malawi participated in this intervention and thousands of people have been exposed to BRIDGE II Workplace HIV Prevention Interventions:

• 786 peer educators were trained on how to use the Journey of Hope toolkit and interactive drama.
• 16,019 people were reached with Journey of Hope toolkit small group interventions.
• 2,722 people were reached with HIV prevention messages through community wide events.
• 2,992 people participated in Tasankha open days.
• 16,232 people were reached with HIV prevention activities in their respective workplaces.
• 405 people were linked to HIV testing and counseling during community wide events.

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Local Partners: Corporate Graphics, J&F Consult, Galaxy Media Consultants, National Association of People Living with HIV and AIDS in Malawi, Story Workshop Educational Trust, YouthNet and Counseling.