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Summary report of “HIV Counselling and Testing Initiative in the Workplace” Project

Institute of Developing Economies -
Japan External Trade Organization

The Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO) has conducted “HIV Counselling and Testing Initiative in the Workplace” project at Toyota South Africa Motors (Pty) Ltd. (TSAM) under the Memorandum of Understanding between IDE-JETRO and TSAM. The purpose of this project, agreed by both parties, is to increase the uptake rate of HIV test among TSAM’s employees. Herewith, IDE-JETRO is willing to present the report and our policy proposal based on the analyses of the data that were collected through the project.

SUMMARY OF RESULT:

The project contacted 3,318 employees, among those 2,688 persons (81.0%) took HIV tests. Through the project 129 HIV-positive cases were identified, therefore, the infection rate among the TSAM employees in those samples is at 4.8%. The direct cost of the project activities amounted 2,635,125 Rand (794 Rand per person).

POLICY PROPOSAL:

1. Mask any sign of individual decisions on HIV testing.

: It is conceivable that a relatively high uptake rate in the project was made possible through combining HIV testing with the Medical Surveillance Programme (MSP) and the Wellness Programme. Universal provision of programmes and *opt-out* system of HIV test will have an effect to mask individual decisions on uptake. On the other hand, voluntary testing approach, because it relies on individuals to visit the testing site, can give a hint of individual decisions by observing the visits. Our evidence shows that many employees are afraid that their colleagues may catch such a sign and start reacting under an HIV/AIDS context. Confidentiality in the clinic is not enough to ease such fear in the workplace. “HIV test for everybody, as a normal and routine procedure” will be an ideal principle. Such uniformity will be ensured by initiating HIV tests among the top management.

2. Share information on personnel and maintain up-to-date data.

: One needs the accurate personnel information to engage in employee assistance programs, however, TSAM's Medical Services seemed not to be provided with such. All the information on personnel movement and affiliation is expected to be recorded and maintained in the form of searchable database that is accessible to Medical Services.

3. Collect data on *subjective probabilities* of HIV infection.

: Highly risky individuals have a higher probability of infection, yet they tend to avoid HIV tests. In due course, as the uptake rate approaches closer to 100%, the costs of getting highly risky individuals to have tests will become increasingly large. In order to obtain the whole picture of HIV infection whilst keeping costs at a reasonable level, doing a short subjective probability questionnaire will help detecting these individuals, whose information can be later used in more tightly targeted interventions.

IDE-JETRO sincerely hopes that our work and this report could contribute to TSAM's efforts in alleviating the HIV/AIDS problem that is putting a considerable burden on its workforce and the region where it is situated.

On behalf of IDE-JETRO,

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