

## HIV AND AIDS

### **Introduction**

1. GL recognises the seriousness of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Southern Africa and that everyone is affected by it.
2. GL is aware of the gender dimensions of this pandemic including the fact that often women do not have the power within relationships to insist on safe sex; the link between gender violence and HIV and AIDS; the fact that men are often more reluctant than women to go for testing and seek treatment and that women tend to bear a disproportionate burden of care associated with HIV and AIDS. The organisation supports all efforts to reduce the spread of HIV infection and reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS on its employees, partners and beneficiaries of its work. It also supports efforts to ensure that the fight against HIV and AIDS is used as an opportunity to promote the equal rights of women and men and a human rights culture in our country.
3. The organisation wishes to ensure that there is consistency between its workplace practices, and the messages it communicates through its training, advocacy and publications.
4. This policy is informed by national legislation, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Employment Equity Act, the Labour Relations Act and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality Act. It is also informed by national policies and international best practice. It should be read in tandem with the Company's gender policy.
5. This policy is also informed by a medical and scientific understanding of HIV and AIDS, that HIV and AIDS are not transmitted by casual contact; that employees with HIV may live productive lives for a number of years after infection and that HIV and AIDS should be treated like any other serious condition or illness.
6. Implementation of the different components of the policy will rest with programme managers. Overall responsibility will rest with the CEO.

### **Workplace**

#### ***Rights of employees with HIV***

7. GL will not discriminate against employees or job applicants with HIV/AIDS.
8. Employees with HIV and AIDS will be protected from all forms of discrimination, victimisation and harassment. Such protection will apply equally to women and men.
9. Should any employee refuse to work with a fellow employee with HIV, this will constitute misconduct and will be treated as such by GL. The employee will be warned that such conduct is unacceptable and that action may be taken in terms of the Disciplinary Code.

10. GL recognises that the failure to take action against any employee who harasses, victimises and/or discriminates against an employee with HIV and AIDS will render the Company liable in terms of the provisions of the Employment Equity Act for failing to protect the rights of all employees. GL will provide all reasonable assistance to any employee who has been victimized, harassed and/or discriminated against on the basis of his or her HIV status.
11. There is no obligation on employees to disclose their HIV status to the Company, although every effort will be made to create an atmosphere in which they feel free to do so.
12. No employee will be dismissed, denied access to promotion or training or suffer any adverse consequence as a result of their HIV status.

### ***Testing***

13. As part of its employee assistance programme, GL will promote and facilitate access to confidential HIV testing and counselling for all employees who wish to know their HIV status. Conscious of the gender dimensions of this, appropriate ways will be developed for encouraging both women and men to go for testing, and for encouraging them to do so with their intimate partners.
14. GL recognises the impact of a positive HIV test result on an employee and his or her family, and will facilitate access to 10 sessions of post test counselling for employees and immediate family members, as part of the employee assistance programme.
15. In accordance with the relevant legislation, GL will not require any employee or job applicant to undergo HIV testing and HIV testing will not be a prerequisite to accessing employment, training or promotion opportunities.

### ***Confidentiality***

16. GL encourages a supportive workplace where employees can discuss HIV/AIDS openly and where women and men with HIV are encouraged to live openly with HIV, without suffering stigma or any other repercussions.
17. GL recognises the sensitive nature of HIV/AIDS and undertakes to ensure that all employees' rights to privacy and dignity are respected, especially where employees do not choose to disclose their HIV status.
18. Where an employee elects to reveal his or her HIV status to a manager or supervisor, GL will ensure that this information remains confidential.

### ***Awareness raising and education***

19. As part of its HIV awareness campaign, GL will conduct appropriate, accurate and up to date information and education programmes to inform and educate all employees about HIV, and how to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
20. These education and awareness campaigns will seek to explore the power relations between women and men that underpin the pandemic, and how these can be more

effectively addressed. Subjects such as negotiating safe sex; the female condom and research on microbicides will be included in the awareness campaigns.

21. The education and awareness campaigns will include a component on the relationship between gender violence and HIV and AIDS, and the need for all employees, especially women, to be aware of the need for survivors of sexual assault to avail themselves of Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) as soon as possible.
22. An HIV workplace forum consisting of employees and management will be formed to plan and implement awareness and education programmes. Activities undertaken by the forum will include brown bag lunch meetings, where experts will provide information, workshops on specific topics related to HIV and distribution of materials. Employees will be given reasonable time off to participate in these activities.
23. Members of the forum will receive training to assist them to plan and implement an awareness raising and education programme for the Company.

### ***Treatment, care and support***

24. GL will treat employees living with AIDS with empathy.
25. GL also recognises the impact of HIV and AIDS on employees caring for and supporting family members and friends with HIV and AIDS and those who have lost family members and friends to the epidemic, and will also treat these employees with empathy.
26. GL will provide all reasonable assistance to employees infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, including counselling as part of the employee assistance programme, time off, sick leave, family responsibility leave and information about HIV consistent with the organisation's sick leave and compassionate leave policy.
27. Employees with HIV may continue to work and perform their duties safely as long as they are able to meet the standards set by the organisation.
28. GL will respond to the changing health status of employees with HIV and AIDS and will make reasonable accommodation in the workplace in terms of the relevant labour legislation.
29. When an employee is no longer able to work due to ill health, GL will resolve the issue in terms of its normal procedures on poor performance due to ill health.
30. Employees with HIV and AIDS will receive the same workplace benefits and other services provided to other employees.
31. GL will encourage employees with HIV to access medical treatment and care and help to facilitate this. Mindful of the gender dimensions of this, the Company will ensure appropriate approaches to both women and men to ensure that they avail themselves of treatment and care. Medical care includes access to anti-retroviral medication, treatment for opportunistic infections, reproductive and sexual health care services and advice on healthy living, through their medical aid.
32. Where employees are accessing treatment through public health care facilities, the Company will assist those employees to find appropriate medical treatment and care

in their community and will give them reasonable time off to attend medical appointments if required.

33. GL will take a holistic approach to treatment that includes balancing access to and the taking of drugs with good nutrition and a positive outlook. Well researched information and expertise on these subjects will be made available.

### ***Occupational and accidental exposure***

34. GL recognises that HIV is not transmitted through casual contact.
35. In the case of any workplace accident or injury involving the exposure of employees to blood, universal precautions will be used to reduce the risk of transmission of HIV and other blood born infections.

## **Editorial content, publications and training**

### ***Quantity of coverage***

36. GL shall ensure that in whatever editorial content it produces or training it conducts (e.g. the Opinion and Commentary Service; Business unusual training) at least ten percent of the written or programme content is on HIV and AIDS.

### ***Topic treatment***

37. GL shall ensure that in its coverage of HIV and AIDS, it gives equal attention to prevention, treatment, care and support.
38. Particular attention will be paid to the gender dimensions of these, such as the unequal sexual power relations that underpin the spread of the pandemic; differences between male and female attitudes towards treatment; and the unequal burden of care shouldered by women that adds to their unwaged work in the home.
39. Given the high levels of gender violence in Southern Africa, and the fact that the intersection between gender violence and HIV and AIDS is not well understood, GL will give particular attention to this subject and to creating awareness on the need for survivors of sexual assault to avail themselves of PEP.

### ***Sources***

40. In all written materials and course content addressing HIV/AIDS, every effort will be made to ensure that (People Living With HIV/Aids) PLWA are accessed for comment.
41. In all stories dealing with HIV and AIDS, the Company will ensure that women and men are accessed for comment.

### ***Ethical principles***

42. GL shall ensure that all stories conform to the ethical principles developed and adopted by the Southern African Editors Forum (SAEF).

### ***Language***

43. GL shall develop a style sheet to guide the use of appropriate language in reporting on HIV and AIDS and ensure that journalists do not use language that is stigmatising and demeaning to people with HIV and AIDS and that stereotypes them.

***Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy***

44. The HIV and AIDS policy, together with the gender policy, shall be championed by the manager of the HIV and AIDS and Gender programme in his capacity as a member of the Well being Committee.
45. The policy and action will be reviewed annually and revised as necessary in light of emerging medical and scientific knowledge about the epidemic and the changing environment.

