



# Papua New Guinea Business Coalition Against HIV & AIDS

HIV Testing

For circulation in your workplace & for your workplace notice board

## HIV testing in PNG

According to the 2008 STI, HIV and AIDS six monthly surveillance report January – June, 2008 (National Department of Health STI, HIV and AIDS Surveillance Unit) **24,769** people have tested HIV positive people since the first case in 1987 up to June 2008.

***Westpac HIV site Committee visit Salvation Army's House of Hope VCT at Ela Beach, Port Moresby. The Committee decided that if the committee hadn't been to the centre, it was unlikely anyone else would take up the offer to "just walk in"***

This month the BAHA newsletter aims to provide some practical advice for increasing the promotion, access to and participation in legal, voluntary, confidential HIV testing that is accompanied by pre and post test counselling. We ask all workplaces to dedicate June to developing HIV testing promotions, campaigns, partnerships and conversations about HIV testing.



We have created a new webpage full of details about where to get an HIV test in PNG see [www.baha.com.pg](http://www.baha.com.pg) and we share some of our homemade examples for helping every workplace create their own HIV testing campaign materials.

This month there are more fabulous stories collected by the BAHA staff about workplace programs and experiences of HIV testing. Some appear in this edition and more can be read on the BAHA HIV testing webpage.



## Facts from HIV testing in PNG

**From January 2008 to June 2008, 48,126 people were tested for HIV.**

**From January 2008 to June 2008, 1334 people tested positive for HIV.**

If we add the number of people previously tested positive (**24,769** from 1987 to 2008), to the **48,126** people tested for HIV between January and June 2008 we can estimate the number of people who knew their HIV status in June 2008 as **72,895**.

**24,769 + 48,126 = 72,895 people knew their HIV status in June 2008**

***Helen Samilo, HIV advocate, television personality and HIV counsellor facilitating discussion at BAHA workplace training***

If we take this as a percentage of the entire PNG population of 6,500,000 then, 1.1% of people in PNG knew their HIV status in June 2008.

## Only 1.1% of people in PNG know their HIV status!

The first assumption in this estimate is based on the fact that you only know your HIV status at the time of your last HIV test, and until the next have unprotected sex (with someone and do NOT know their HIV status).

If we assume there are three million people of reproductive age in PNG, and they all need to know their HIV

status, then 72,895 out of 3,000,000 or 2.4% of the reproductive age people know their HIV status.

## **Only 2.4% of people of reproductive age in PNG know their HIV status!**

Regardless of the assumptions, the data reveals that too few people know their HIV status. This month, BAHA challenges all workplaces to think creatively about how to encourage more people to have an HIV test as part of routine health behaviour for adults of reproductive age.

Like the provision of free condoms, promoting HIV testing is an essential part of every HIV workplace program. Just like successful consistent condom use, participation in HIV testing in any form requires more than just knowledge and skills about the testing process. Volunteering for an HIV test requires confidence that knowledge of their HIV status or even participation in testing will not put them at risk of rejection or violence or job loss.

All testing participants need to know their rights and have to believe that test results are kept confidential and not shared with workmates, bosses or other family members without their explicit permission.

Good workplace programs result in voluntary tests, when there is a culture of open discussion about health issues including HIV, trust in process or care, treatment and support for those who participate in any form of HIV testing regardless of HIV status outcomes.

## **Understanding HIV testing in the workplace**

HIV testing is an important part of prevention and treatment efforts. By law, HIV testing in PNG must be voluntary and accompanied by pre and post HIV test confidential counselling. This is known as VCT. Studies show that those who learn they are HIV positive through voluntary counselling and testing centre do modify their behaviour to reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

Early detection through voluntary testing is also important for people with HIV to enable access to free medical care and support services that can reduce morbidity and mortality and improve quality of life. Read Barrow's story on this month's webpage about PNG Ports and Westpac's HIV site committee and their plans to introduce VCT to their workplace programs.

## **Develop your own HIV testing campaign**

Creating a workplace environment in which all employees understand their rights is essential. No employee will volunteer for HIV testing if they fear job loss or fear that their health information will be disclosed to others without their consent. So every workplace HIV testing campaign has to start with information and training about the laws of PNG, how they protect employees who choose have an HIV test, and the support and treatment option available if they test positive for HIV.

## **Making free HIV testing easily available**

Even when, confidentiality, support and treatment of HIV are well understood, no one will attend the testing option unless it is easily accessed. In PNG, HIV testing is available in a range of places. Workplace programs can incorporate some of these services into their workplace HIV programs. Like exercising regularly and eating well, don't assume anyone will "just get tested" because you told them it was good for them.

This month our webpage provides a list of places and ways to access Voluntary, Counselling and Testing for HIV. Ideally, all employees will voluntarily walk in to their local VCT centre.

## **Where to get an HIV test in PNG**

People can ask about or access FREE testing for HIV in many places: They include:

- Voluntary confidential counselling (VCT) centres
- Antenatal clinics
- The Blood Bank
- Provincial hospitals
- Urban clinics
- Health clinics who offer provider initiated counselling & testing (PICT) for HIV
- Sexually transmitted infection (STI) clinics
- Susu Mamas
- Family planning clinics
- Defence Force Clinics.

Please note that normal medical charges may apply if HIV testing is requested as part of an examination at a private doctor's clinic. Some medical centres also run VCT services and employees need to ask for access to FREE VCT services not a private appointment with a doctor.

Find out more on the webpage [HIV testing...](http://www.baha.com.pg) [www.baha.com.pg](http://www.baha.com.pg)

## BAHA member Mainland Holdings and VCT in the workplace.

BAHA recommends your HIV program identify local expert and accredited testing treatment partners to roll out your workplace policy - for both VCT and treatment services. Companies do not have to take on all these responsibilities. Local service providers like ADRA, Anglicare StopAIDS, Save the children, CARE, Susu Mamas, have all teamed up with businesses to provide counselling, testing and treatment services either on or off site.

In 2007 Trukai Industries teamed up with ADRA in Lae to enable employees to learn about and access VCT services.



Mainland Holdings employs over 2000 people in seven divisions in Morobe province.

**Geoff Whitehouse - Group HR Manager, Mainland Holdings addresses shipping and transport sector managers at the BAHA Lae HIV tokaut**

Mainland Holdings see their HIV program as part of their "triple bottom line" culture. That is, profit, people and excellence are fundamental to improving the wealth, work and social conditions of it employees. Since the roll out of its HIV policy in 2007 the promotion of HIV testing through voluntary, confidential, counselling and testing (VCT) for HIV has part of

the program of activities. VCT information and services have been delivered by staff and outreach personnel from Anua Moriri, the 6 mile clinic and ADRA. Recent collaborations with ADRA have lead to the development of a mobile service to ensure easy access to private counselling and voluntary testing. Over 1200 employees have attended testing and repeat testing over the past two years.

Companies like Mainland Holdings and Hastings Deering set new standards in the provision of voluntary counselling and testing opportunities for staff and employees.

Read our 'planning a VCT program' story by Barrow Kirupana on the webpage [HIV testing...](http://www.baha.com.pg) [www.baha.com.pg](http://www.baha.com.pg)

## Tips for Promoting July as the HIV Testing promotion month

You have all of June to start the conversations and planning for your workplace 'know your status' campaign. Start by reading our "testing stories" experiences of HIV testing from BAHA members.

**Modify** our get tested slogans or talk about what would work in your office



**Adore him, care for him, Protect him**

**Ask him to go with you for your next HIV test  
Call BAHA toll free 7200 2242 to find our where**

**Adore her? Care for her?**

**Respect her?**

**Ask her to go with you for your next HIV test.**

**Care together**

**"Make your next date special. Get an HIV test together."**

**Adore him? Care for him?**

**Respect him? Ask him to go with you for your next HIV test.**

Copy our home made posters. Thanks to Maddy (BAHA) & Constantine (NASFUND) Or copy ours from [www.baha.com.pg](http://www.baha.com.pg)

**Call** BAHA Digicel Toll Free HIV infoline 7200 2242 to find out where to get an HIV test in PNG.

### Arrange

Arrange for someone from your HIV NGO to give different ways of getting an HIV test. Unless you ask for an HIV test while visiting your private doctor, HIV testing is FREE in PNG.

### Invite

Arrange for someone like **Rodney Mukinere** from IGAT hope or your local association of people living with

HIV to talk to your employees about positive living, treatment and support programs  
phone xxx to talk to staff about living with HIV

### **Create**

Call a meeting to ask how your employees would like to promote or participate in HIV testing. Ask your colleagues and employees to develop your very own slogans BAHA's examples "get tested" "know your status" "I care, do you" for your intranet or company website - create workplace banners, buttons, and logos. We made our own YouTube video check it out at



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0E11\\_Retyil](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0E11_Retyil) or See our BAHA examples [www.baha.com.pg](http://www.baha.com.pg), click on [HIV testing](#). Most digital cameras have a very easy to use video – make a video of the boss assuring everyone that VCT is a good thing and that all employees are assured of keeping their job whatever their HIV status.

**Sponsor** a VCT promotion poster competition at your local upper primary or high school.

**Run a competition** in your own office. Challenge employees to develop posters, banners, slogans, or logos that tackle issues and challenges in your community. **Barrow Kiripuna sports a BAHA "I am HIV + badge" – "it gets people talking!"**

**Share** your newly created company posters, slogans, logos with smaller companies, shops or clinics in your area, village or community

**Add a message** to your email signatures and letters that says "**In July 2009 [our company] is promoting Voluntary, Counselling and Testing for HIV**" July is HIV Testing Month.



**Find out where?** Do you know where to go for a HIV test your province?

**Nominate** someone on staff to be trained as voluntary confidentially counselling and testing, for HIV testing counsellors to better prepare staff for all aspects of HIV testing.

**Subsidise** a VCT provider to visit your local health or community centre on a quarterly basis and inform employees and family members about the regular visit. Sponsor extended hours of operation at the local VCT to enable employees to visit outside their working hours on their way to or from work or on a Saturday morning.

**Save** 7200 2242 into your Digicel mobile phone – call to find where to get a FREE HIV test

**Snap** Most cameras have a very easy to use video - create your own YouTube video with someone calling Toll FREE HIV infoline. If you think it is really good - send it to us. Look at ours

**Read our stories about experiences of HIV testing on the webpage HIV testing... [www.baha.com.pg](http://www.baha.com.pg)**

"Now Shanty knows her rights"" , Find a friend to go with" and "a little family in Moresby" We have published the stories on our website feel free to use them on your intranets and start conversations about HIV testing.

## Q and A about HIV testing in PNG

All employees should be concerned about the personal freedom and privacy implications of HIV testing in the workplace. We have summarised some of the important questions about employee and employer rights and responsibilities regarding HIV testing.

Rodney Mukinere founder Morobe Network of Friends.



### I am HIV+. Do I have to disclose my HIV status to my employer?

No. There is no legal duty, statutory or at common law, for a person living with HIV to reveal his/her HIV status to employers.

**HIV status is almost never relevant to one's employment circumstances.**

### Why is HIV status not relevant at work?

HIV is not relevant for two reasons. First, most people living with HIV are healthy and able to work - just like any other employee. Second, HIV is not relevant because HIV is not an easy virus to catch. There is little to no risk of passing on the infection to other employees unless you have unprotected sex with them.

The primary ways of transmission of HIV are:

- Unprotected sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal)
- Sharing needles and a small amount of blood remains in a needle after it is used. If the needle is not sterilized after use, infected blood can be injected into the blood of the next person using the needle
- Mother to child, if a woman is pregnant and HIV positive, there is a chance that she will pass the virus to her child during pregnancy, labour, delivery or breastfeeding
- Blood transfusion - if HIV infected blood is not detected during the screening process, HIV can be transmitted during a blood transfusion.

### What about workplace injuries? Can't HIV be transmitted this way?

There is almost no chance that HIV can be transmitted this way. If there is a workplace injury and an employee with HIV is injured and bleeding, employees administering first aid are only at a slight risk of infection if they have open wounds themselves. They can also protect themselves from this slight chance of infection by wearing gloves. Well stocked first aid kits are essential. All recruits can be introduced to the emergency procedures for post exposure prophylaxis or PEP for HIV (check your local health facilities have PEP available). PEP for HIV is an emergency short-term disease-specific treatment to reduce the likelihood of HIV infection. PEP may be prescribed after a workplace accident, sexual assault or sexual accident like a condom breakage. Ensure the PEP help cards are in all first aid kits (download the sample from the BAHA website – download from the young working women BAHA webpage). Everyone needs to understand the process involved in PEP in the case of sexual or workplace accident or injury.

### What about HIV+ health care workers? Won't they spread the virus?

No. There is almost no chance of this happening. If a person living with HIV is a health care worker, there may be a small risk of transmission if he/she performs highly invasive procedures (for example surgeons or dentists) and he/she sustains an injury (for example, a puncture wound from a needle) during surgery. However, the risk of this happening is very slight. There is actually a greater risk that an HIV infected patient will infect a health care worker. Therefore, in a health care environment, an employer should ensure that protective equipment like gloves are available and that proper infection control procedures are in place.

### Can an employer ask for an HIV Test?

If an employer introduces "voluntary" testing in the course of employment, employees may feel pressured into taking the test for fear of losing their jobs. Therefore, "voluntary" testing at the worksite is sometime not truly voluntary and should be avoided. Enable testing off site for all contractors, temporary workers, seasonal workers, and family members is a better solution for lifelong participation in HIV testing.

If your workplace wants to provide voluntary HIV testing to all employees in the interests of general health and safety promotion, then:

- Testing should be done anonymously
- Test results to be kept in the strictest confidence, preferably with the medical service or the VCT service provider
- Test results should not be placed in the employee's personnel file
- Test results should not have any effect on the employee's employment status
- Proper pre and post test counselling should be made available.
- Links to care and support services must be planned before testing begins

## Can an employer demand an HIV test?

NO. PNG has enacted legislation, which prevents for "mandatory" HIV testing in the workplace. However, there are also ways for employers to make an HIV test feel "compulsory". Employers and employees need to ensure HIV testing campaigns include awareness of the HIV/AIDS management and prevention (HAMP) Act.

**Medical Exams** In order for an employer or doctor to perform an HIV test he/she must have your informed consent.

**What happens after I take a medical exam?** If a medical exam is completed and you are deemed "physically unfit" for the work you were originally employed, then you may discuss what work you may reasonably be able to perform.

**Prospective Employees** If you are a prospective employee with no contract and you refuse to take the medical exam, or specifically, an HIV test, the employer may simply decide to hire someone else. The only possible recourse to this type of behaviour would be for you to argue that the prospective employer violated your right to equality by refusing to hire you (on the grounds of a real or perceived disability).

**Employees on Contract** If you are already employed and refuse to take a "mandatory" HIV test or medical exam, your employer could argue that you are in breach of your duty to "be an obedient employee". In some circumstances, disobedience can be grounds for dismissal. However, the request or demand being made by the employer should be work-related before dismissal can occur. Since HIV status is not relevant to the job, requesting an HIV test is not work-related.

**Therefore an employee should be entitled to refuse an HIV test without repercussions.** If you have already signed a contract and have agreed to take an HIV test and then are deemed "unfit" for the work contemplated by the contract because of an HIV positive test result, you will have to argue that being HIV positive does not make you "physically unfit".

## Is HIV testing a good thing?

Yes of course! HIV testing is an important aspect of health promotion and is an essential component to stopping the spread of HIV. When people know they are HIV+, they can learn how to keep themselves healthy and learn how to protect others from becoming infected.

## What's so bad about mandatory testing?

For the following reasons, mandatory HIV testing should not be imposed as either part of the pre-hiring medical exam or at any time during the course of employment:

**Unnecessary Cost:** Testing is expensive in terms of financial and human resources and may unnecessarily limit the number of qualified people available;

**Performance:** Testing is an inappropriate way to judge present or future performance because a person who is HIV-positive may be well and capable of performing their tasks for many years. HIV positive employees can be healthy and productive members of the workforce just like every other employee.

**Inaccuracy:** Testing only reveals a "snapshot" profile of a person's HIV status at any one time and cannot accurately determine the HIV status of all employees at any one time.

**Bad standard:** Testing provides an unwelcome precedent for the testing for other diseases or conditions which employers believe may impair work performance now, or in the future.

**Irrelevance:** In most workplace environments it is highly unlikely that testing for HIV is a reasonable requirement for employment. People who are HIV positive are not a risk to other employees.

**Discrimination:** Mandatory testing should also be avoided because it is coercive and infringes a person's constitutional rights.

## If I do get an HIV test at work, what happens to my test result?

If you have HIV and choose to disclose your status to your employer or if you choose to take a blood test at work, your medical information (including test results) should be kept confidential.

## Does the law protect my confidentiality?

### (a) Common Law

Where a 'special relationship' exists, there is a common law duty to protect a persons' privacy. The employer – employee relationship is a type of relationship that falls into this category. The employer also owes the employee a duty of mutual trust and confidence. This means that the employer must keep medical information about employees in confidence. Medical doctors who are hired by employers to conduct medical exams also have a duty of confidentiality that arises from the doctor-patient relationship. If they breach this duty, an employee/patient can complain to the disciplinary committee which regulates the health profession. It may also be possible to sue the doctor for professional negligence.

### (b) Your right to Privacy For more information contact:

PIAF Legal and Human Rights Task Force Email: [lhrtf@pacificaidso.org](mailto:lhrtf@pacificaidso.org)  
[www.pacificaidso.org/rights](http://www.pacificaidso.org/rights)

## Congratulations to the Post Courier for the “hefty penalty” headline May 26th 2009 and Tabubil Magistrate Patrick Monouluk for the positive headline of the year!

See page one of the Post Courier 26th May 2009 to read about what we believe to be the first conviction of its kind under the HAMP Act 2003. Congratulation to Tabubil Magistrate Patrick Monouluk who said "whether or not she was found to be positive or negative is a matter entirely within the confidence of her and those at the hospital," when fining a man for “unlawfully stigmatising” a woman. Download a copy of the HAMP Act 2003 at [www.baha.com.pg](http://www.baha.com.pg)

## Experience from Africa...

*“Our workplace programmes in South Africa began in 2004 with prevalence, knowledge, attitudes and practices surveys. A cost-benefit analysis was undertaken, which estimated that the cost of ‘doing nothing’ to address HIV and AIDS amongst our workforce would add approximately 3%–6% to the annual wage bill. This analysis supported the business case for rapid intervention and voluntary counselling, testing and treatment (VCT) programmes were rolled out shortly afterwards. VCT programmes are run by an external partner, ReAction!, to ensure employee confidentiality and anonymity and encourage take-up. VCT is also provided to employees’ partners and family members free of charge, and to the community, through our public-private partnership and the Breyten health clinic”* Read more at <http://www.xstrata.com/sustainabilityreport/2006/>



[www.baha.com.pg](http://www.baha.com.pg)