HIV/AIDS PREVENTION PROGRAMME FOR MIGRANTS AND MOBILE POPULATIONS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The printing of this publication is supported through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP BiH), within the programme implemented by IOM - “HIV/AIDS National Capacity Building and Awareness Raising Activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Mobile Populations” funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM).
Introduction

This booklet is intended for mobile populations and migrants who, due to the nature of their work, frequently travel and work outside of their place of residence. Its aim is to improve knowledge about HIV/AIDS, and about living, working, and protecting oneself against the risk of HIV/AIDS.

Migration alone does not represent a risk of HIV/AIDS. However, vulnerability to HIV infection is increased by the situations to which migrants are exposed when travelling and working while being separated from their families, partners and the accepted social norms for extended periods of time. The term migrant encompasses internal migrants, immigrants, migrant workers, displaced persons, refugees, asylum seekers, illegal migrants, returnees, international students, and victims of exploitation and abuse.

Most migrant workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are construction and seasonal workers, merchants, military personnel, and truck and bus drivers on international roads.

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Read the Brochure, refresh your memory, and remove any dilemmas. For more information, please contact the health staff at any of the Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing (VCCT) centres provided on the last page of this booklet.

Programme: “HIV/AIDS National Capacity Building and Awareness Raising Activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Mobile Populations”
**Global HIV/AIDS epidemic image**

Population living with HIV  
33.3 mil (34.4 million - 35.3 million)  
Newly HIV-infected in 2009  
2.6 mil (2.3 million - 2.8 million)  
Died of AIDS in 2009  
1.8 mil (1.6 million - 2.1 million)  
Total: 33.3 million (31.4 million - 35.3 million)

**WHAT IS HIV/AIDS?**

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HIV is an acronym for HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS. When it enters the body, HIV damages the immune (defence) system that normally protects us from infections. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.

**WHAT IS AIDS?**

AIDS is the late and most advanced stage of HIV infection, or a group of diseases resulting from a severe damage to the immune system.

AIDS is an English acronym for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

A stands for "acquired".  
I stands for "immune" and refers to the body’s immune or defence system.  
D stands for "deficiency“ and means lack or shortage.  
S stands for "syndrome" and represents a set of typical conditions and signs of a disease.  
SIDA is a French acronym with the same meaning.

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How can we become infected with HIV?

HIV is present in blood, seminal fluid (ejaculate), vaginal secretions and other bodily fluids with a blood component.

There are three main ways of HIV transmission:

1. Unprotected sex (vaginal, anal or oral) with an infected person

HIV is transmitted during sexual intercourse when the mucous membrane (of the vagina, penis, rectum, or oral cavity) comes into contact with secretions (seminal, vaginal) or blood of an infected person (e.g. through menstrual blood or mucous membrane damage).

The more people with whom you have unprotected sex, the higher the risk to encounter an HIV infected person and contract the infection. The same rule applies to your partner.

Some sexual relations impose higher risk than others. Those are:

- unprotected anal sexual intercourse, and
- unprotected vaginal sexual penetration

2. Importing infected blood or blood products into the system

The infection can occur if sharing unclean needles or syringes, or through a transfusion of infected blood. There is also a risk if the skin damaged with sharp items (razors, tattoo needles, piercing guns) comes in contact with infected blood.

3. From an infected pregnant woman to her unborn child

A woman living with HIV may transfer the virus to her unborn child during pregnancy, while giving birth, or breastfeeding.
HIV cannot be transmitted from person to person by:

- wearing other people’s clothes
- residing or sleeping in the same room with someone living with HIV/AIDS
- hugging or playing with an infant, child, or adult who has HIV/AIDS
- swimming in a pool, sea or river together with a person who has HIV/AIDS
- travelling in overcrowded vehicles together with persons with HIV/AIDS
- a person with HIV/AIDS coughing at you
- sharing food, dishes or utensils with a person with HIV/AIDS
- usual contacts: handshake, hugging, kissing on the cheek or lips someone who has HIV/AIDS
- insect stings

How does HIV weaken our body's defence system?

Our defence (immune) system contains white blood cells (leukocytes). The leukocytes not only have the ability to recognise and destroy invading aliens (e.g. viruses, bacteria, or malignant cells) in our system, but they also memorise these alien bodies so that they can be destroyed more quickly if they re-enter the body. When HIV virus attacks our immune system, it begins destroying the special type of white blood cells called lymphocytes helpers (CD4 lymphocytes).

HIV can remain in the body for a prolonged period of time, sometimes even for a few years, without making us ill. However, since more and more white blood cells are being destroyed, the body eventually ceases to be able to resist various causes of infectious diseases which normally exist within the body and which do not affect us as long as the immune system works properly. With the weakening of the defence system, infections which the body can no longer resist, grow stronger.
**What are HIV-infection symptoms?**

There are no specific symptoms of HIV infection. A person can be infected with HIV and still remain symptom-free for years, look and feel completely healthy, and be unaware of being infected. **HIV testing** is the only certain way of establishing whether we are infected.

**Acute HIV infection** occurs 2 to 4 weeks after HIV enters the body, and can have transient symptoms resembling virosis, flu or infectious mononucleosis (high temperature, swollen lymph nodes, sore throat, muscle and joint pain, rash). On average, it takes 10 years to develop AIDS from the initial HIV infection.

**AIDS** is the late stage of HIV infection; it is the name for a group of diseases caused by a gradual weakening of the defence system. At this point, various infections, which do not represent significant threats to healthy people, attack the body. In time, nervous system damage symptoms start showing.

AIDS is diagnosed on the basis of the CD4 lymphocyte count, specific infections and malignant diseases developing during HIV infection.

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**Some of the AIDS symptoms are:**

- swollen lymph glands (usually painless)
- weight loss of over 10% of total body weight
- increased temperature over a protracted period (for over a month and for an unknown cause)
- excessive night sweats
- persistent exhaustion
- diarrhoea lasting more than a month
- persistent cough for more than a month (reoccurring pneumonia, tuberculosis)
- frequent fungal infections of the lips or vagina
- aphthae in the oral cavity
- frequent skin rash or skin infections (e.g. herpes zoster, impetigo)
How can we protect ourselves from HIV?

We cannot determine whether a person is infected with HIV or not merely based on their appearance. An HIV-infected person usually does not feel sick and may not have any symptoms for years. However, the person who is unaware of being infected can still transmit the virus to others.

HIV infection through sex can be avoided by:

- abstaining from sexual intercourse
- maintaining sexual contact with only one, uninfected partner who does not have sex with anyone else
- consistent and proper use of condoms

HIV infection through blood can be avoided by:

- provisioning mandatory HIV testing of donors of blood and plasma for blood transfusion and blood products
- using only new and/or sterile needles and syringes (for each injection)
- using the basic protective measures and equipment (gloves) while handling blood or bodily secretions and checking the first aid kit content on a regular basis (However, first aid or urgent assistance should not be denied under any circumstances even if protective measures and equipment are not available, as the risk of getting infected this way is too low to endanger the lives of those in need.)
- increased caution: never use other person’s sharp items for personal use (razors, scissors, knives, nail clippers, etc.) (If you decide to get a piercing or a tattoo, make sure that the equipment has been sterilised.)
Can HIV infection or AIDS be treated?

At the present time, there is no efficient vaccine or drug that can protect from HIV. It is still not possible to eliminate the HIV virus from the body, and therefore the HIV infection is still considered non-curable.

A very efficient Antiretroviral treatment (HAART) suppresses HIV replication in the system, strengthens the weakened defence system, prevents the diseases which set off the development of AIDS, and considerably prolongs life.

There are also drugs for prevention and treatment of some specific infections to which persons living with HIV are susceptible. Additionally, treatment of pregnant women infected with HIV can prevent the infection of their unborn children.

Regular use of medicines can result in non-measurable (very small) amount of the HIV virus in the blood.

It is presumed that it is now possible to reach close-to-normal old age even when living with HIV.

What is the HIV test?

The HIV test detects the presence of antibodies to the HIV virus in the blood. These antibodies usually appear within 12 weeks of the contact with the virus.

A negative HIV test result shows that there are no antibodies to HIV in the blood, hence the person does not have the HIV infection. REMEMBER that the test can be negative at an early stage of the infection. In order to be reliable, the test should be administered at least 12 weeks after the possible time of infection. Before testing, it is necessary to consult a professional about the need for testing.

A positive HIV test result shows that there are antibodies to HIV in the blood and that the person is infected with HIV. However, the HIV infection is not an indicator that the person has AIDS.

To find out where anonymous and free-of-charge HIV testing is available in Bosnia and Herzegovina, please see useful information at the end of this booklet.

What are the benefits of HIV testing?

- Early detection of the HIV infection which enables early treatment and preventative therapy
- Becoming aware of how important it is to protect your sexual partner and yourself
- Knowing your status and reducing stress by facing your fears and releasing them if the test result is negative
What are downsides of HIV testing?

- potential increased stress
- the burden of keeping the secret if one chooses not to reveal the result to others
- potential difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships
- potential social stigma and discrimination
- potential limitations, such as:
  - if migrating to the countries requiring HIV testing
  - if seeking certain types of employment (some foreign companies require testing prior to offering employment)

Mandatory HIV testing for the purpose of employment is against the principles of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Bosnia and Herzegovina is a member of ILO.

What are sexually transmitted infections (STI)?

Sexually transmitted infections (STI) are infections transmitted from an infected to a healthy individual through sexual contact. HIV infection is one of the STIs. Other sexually transmitted infections are recognised as risk indicators of getting infected with HIV.

The most common sexually transmitted bacterial infection is Chlamydia. Bacterial STIs also include Gonorrhoea (the Clap, the Drip), and Syphilis. Viral STIs include Genital Herpes, and Human Papiloma Virus (HPV).

Some of the important causes of these infections are Mycoplasma, Trichomonas Vaginalis and the virus of Hepatitis B and C.

At the beginning of the infections, it is common that symptoms do not exist or are very mild.
If either you or your partner have any of the following symptoms, you should immediately contact a physician:

- in genital area:
  - secretion
  - burning, soreness
  - itching
  - pain
  - redness
  - sores, warts, bumps, growths or any other changes
- difficulty urinating
- painful intercourse

How can we protect ourselves from sexually transmitted infections?

The best way of preventing sexually transmitted infections is to avoid sexual contact. However, if you decide to be sexually active, you can reduce the risk of contracting sexually transmittable infections by:

- having a mutually exclusive sexual relationship with one uninfected partner
- consistent and proper use of condoms
- regular visits to your physician to test for possible sexually transmitted infections even if you have no symptoms, and especially if you have had sex with a new partner
- learning to recognise symptoms of sexually transmitted infections

If you have a sexually transmitted infection, you should:

- inform all of your recent sexual partners and encourage them to visit a physician
- protect yourself and your partner by proper use of condoms
- follow the treatment options carefully
- not interrupt the treatment (completing the full treatment even when the symptoms are gone)
- if you are pregnant, consult the physician about the risks of transmitting the infection to your unborn child
Proper use of condoms

Use a new condom for every intercourse (vaginal, anal or oral). The condom should be put on before, not during sexual contact.

- Only use condoms made of latex or polyurethane, as they provide better protection.
- Never use a condom that has already been used.
- Always have condoms handy, but keep them in a cool, dry place, away from direct sunlight or other sources of heat.
- Do not use a condom after its expiration date, or if damaged in any way.

How to use a condom:

Condoms made of latex or polyurethane are very efficient in preventing the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

In order to provide a maximum protection, condoms must be used consistently and properly.

Consistent use of condoms implies that a condom is used from the beginning to the end of sexual intercourse.

NEVER REUSE CONDOMS!
• Apply the condom to an erect penis before sexual contact. Press the tip of the condom to remove air from it.
• The rolled-up end of the condom must face outside.
• Leave some space at the tip of the condom for the ejaculate (sperm or seminal fluid), but make sure there is no air trapped in this part.
• Unroll the condom all the way down to the base of the erect penis.
• Lubricate the outside of the condom if it is not already lubricated. Use only water-based lubricants (e.g. glycerine). Oil-based lubricants, such as Vaseline, paraffin, petroleum-based gel, balm, baby oil or massage oil, butter, etc., increase the risk of condom rupture and should not be used.
• The penis should be pulled out while still erect, firmly holding the condom so that it does not slip off.
• Dispose of the used condom in a garbage can.
• Should the condom rupture during the intercourse, the penis must be pulled out and a new condom should be used. If the rupture occurs immediately before ejaculation, the use of spermicide is recommended. The use of spermicidal condoms provides additional protection from sexually transmitted infections.
HIV/AIDS and workplace

More than 33 million people in the world live with HIV. HIV/AIDS threatens the lives of many workers and their dependants (families) as well as the communities in which they reside. From 1986, when the first case of HIV infection was registered in BiH, until the end of 2010, in this country 170 persons were diagnosed and registered with HIV infection. This is why BiH is still considered a country with low HIV incidence rate. International migration is recognised as an important factor in increasing the exposure to the HIV infection. The risk of infection is not increased by migration itself, but by the exposure of migrants to risky situations in unfamiliar environments whilst separated from friends and families. There is as yet no cure for HIV/AIDS, but undertaking measures to prevent the exposure to the HIV infection is of critical importance.

Stigma* and discrimination** of persons living with HIV threaten the fundamental principles of the right to employment adversely affecting the HIV epidemic.

Let’s talk about HIV!

*BStigma is a negative branding of a person in a group which causes the person to feel ashamed, guilty and isolated and thus increasing the possibility of his/her risky behaviour.

**Discrimination takes place when a person is placed in an unequal or unfavourable position because of alleged or actual affiliation to a certain group.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which has adopted the following ten key principles on HIV/AIDS and the world of work:

Code of ETHICS

1. Recognise the importance of HIV/AIDS for workplace

- HIV/AIDS is a workplace issue because:
  - it affects both employers and employees.
  - it reduces labour (up to 30% in the most affected countries).
  - it increases labour costs.
  - it decreases productivity.
  - the workplace plays an important role in limiting the spread and effects of the HIV infection.

2. Non-discrimination

- There should be no discrimination or social stigma against workers on the basis of real or perceived HIV status.
- Discrimination and fear of discrimination significantly contribute to the spread of the virus:
  - Owing to their fear of being discriminated against, people less frequently check their status. This increases the possibility of transmitting the virus to others.
  - The opportunity to get an early treatment is also reduced which can cause AIDS to develop sooner, consequently leading to premature death.
3. **Gender equality**
- Women are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS due to a number of biological and socio-cultural reasons.
- Discrimination against women is one of the key socio-cultural factors which can contribute to the spread of the epidemics.
- The prevalence of women in HIV infected individuals is growing.

4. **Healthy work environment**
- The work environment should be healthy and safe, adapted to health conditions and capabilities of employees.
- Employers must ensure HIV education and prevention measures.
- Adequate legal aid should be provided in workplace.
- Employers have no right to impose testing of employees on HIV, as social contact at work presents no risk for HIV transmission.

5. **Social dialogue**
- Each policy related to workplace should be made in cooperation between the government, employers, and employees.

6. **Screening for purposes of exclusion from employment**
- HIV testing should not be required for the purpose of employment.
  It is an impractical and unnecessary measure, as persons with HIV may remain healthy and fit to work for many years after being infected.

7. **Confidentiality**
- There is no justification for asking job applicants or workers to disclose their HIV status.
- Access to personal information on a worker’s HIV status should be strictly confidential.

8. **Continuation of employment**
- HIV infection should not be a cause for termination of employment.
- Persons infected with HIV should be encouraged to work as long as their medical condition allows it.
- Persons with diseases caused by the advanced HIV infection should be able to work for as long as they are medically fit in an available, appropriate work.

9. **Prevention**
- HIV infection is preventable.
- An adequate positive environment for prevention should be promoted.
- Access to education, information, treatment and confidential HIV counselling and testing should be available.

10. **Care and support**
- Solidarity, care and support should guide the response to HIV/AIDS in the world of work.
**The fundamental issue**

**ARE THESE PRINCIPLES RESPECTED AT YOUR WORKPLACE?**

**USEFUL INFORMATION**

People employed at the centres for HIV counselling and testing are experts who work with the beneficiaries to help them find solutions to each individual HIV infection risk.

Services of such centres are **free of charge, anonymous and voluntary.**

**CENTRES FOR VOLUNTARY CONFIDENTIAL COUNSELLING AND TESTING (VCCT)**

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<td>Public Health Institute, Trg domovinskog rata 5, Livno</td>
<td>Tel: +387 031 711 905</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Prijedor</strong></td>
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<td>Tel: +387 052 238 422</td>
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<td><strong>Orašje</strong></td>
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<td>Tel: +387 031 711 905</td>
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<td>Tel: +387 038 224 174</td>
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