



**Asia Pacific Leadership Forum  
on HIV / AIDS and Development**



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JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS

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## **Press Release**

*Suva, Fiji* The involvement of the leaders of the private sector in the fight against the spread of HIV, ignorance and discrimination is absolutely essential according to Steven Vete, UNAIDS Asia Pacific Leadership Forum on HIV and Development (APLF) Sub regional Coordinator.

Mr. Vete made the comment at the signing of a partnership agreement between the Fiji Australia Business Council and UNAIDS to work together to form a Fiji Business Coalition on HIV and AIDS and strengthen the response of the private sector.

“The signing of the agreement to form the Fiji Business Coalition on AIDS (FBCA) is important because HIV prevention programmes at the work place will help to improve the welfare of the workers and their families. Employees spend a lot of time at the work place. They can learn a lot about issues such as HIV and AIDS, and pass the knowledge on to their families and communities.

“The involvement of private sector leaders is crucial if we are to succeed in reversing the tide of HIV in the Pacific,” said Mr. Vete. It is crucial for a number of reasons: At the global level, nine out of ten people living with HIV are adults in their most productive years. Two out of three people living with HIV go to work everyday. In the Pacific the majority of the people infected with HIV are between 15 and 44, meaning the loss of a breadwinner is devastating for the family and community.

Loss of workers in their prime is not only a cost to employers (who have to replace them) but also to Governments and the country (who invested in their education), and the personal cost to their loved ones.

UNAIDS has provided assistance to TPAF (Training Productivity Authority of Fiji) to develop a training course to offer businesses. The ILO is working with Fiji’s Tripartite Forum on implementing the Employment Relation Promulgation which makes it compulsory for employers to implement HIV-work place programmes.

Private sector leaders such as the members of the Fiji Australia Business Council increasingly recognize that the talent, resources, experience and commitment of business, must play a central role in designing, implementing and promoting effective responses to AIDS.

“We in the UNAIDS Pacific Office look forward to helping business people in the Fiji Australia Business Coalition to develop an education, care and prevention programme for the business community including employees and their families, said Mr. Vete. The involvement of the private sector/business leaders in HIV prevention and care efforts in general and the Fiji Australia Business Council in particular, will go a long way to helping the efforts of the Government, regional and international organizations.

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