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## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

# Labor Unions in Mozambique Join the National Response to HIV

**Unions assert rights and negotiate HIV workplace policies into annual collective bargaining agreements.**



Collaboration between CONSILMO representatives and the Health Policy Initiative. PHOTO CREDIT: OMAR J. ROBLES.

*“Partnership can yield many results. However, in our work with the Health Policy Initiative, the product is a tool that is benefiting workers’ rights and establishing HIV policies in the workplace.”*

—CONSILMO Representative, Maputo

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It is estimated that 1.6 million women, men, and children in Mozambique are living with HIV and that 400 more will become infected every day.

To meet the challenges of the epidemic, the Government of Mozambique seeks to engage all sectors, public and private. A number of laws and high-level policies have been adopted, including Law 5/2002 of February 2002, which prohibits discrimination in hiring, retention, training, and promotion of employees on the basis of their HIV status and encourages employers to provide HIV prevention information and services. These provisions have been subsequently endorsed in the revised Labor Law of 2007 and the HIV Law of 2009.

Considerable attention has been paid to encouraging private employers to adopt and implement HIV workplace policies and programs. Less attention has been paid to engaging organized labor to advocate for HIV interventions in the workplace.

Mozambique’s Constitution guarantees workers the right to organize into labor unions. Nearly two-thirds of formal sector workers belong to a labor union. Collaborating with labor unions complements working with employers to facilitate the private sector response to HIV.

In September 2008, the USAID | Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1, began a partnership with the National Confederation of Free and Independent Labor Unions of Mozambique (CONSILMO). CONSILMO represents 106,000 members in four affiliated labor unions across Mozambique. Each year, the provincial secretaries of the affiliated unions assist the union committees at each workplace to negotiate a new contract with the employer, specifying wages and benefits and other working conditions. The aim of the partnership is to encourage CONSILMO negotiators to include HIV workplace policies and programs as a standard demand in their collective bargaining framework.

With Health Policy Initiative assistance, CONSILMO developed and approved the *Guidelines for Collective Workplace Bargaining, Labor Conflicts and HIV and AIDS (Guião para Negociação Colectiva de Trabalho, Conflito Laborais e o HIV e SIDA)*. During the first half of 2009, the Health Policy Initiative and CONSILMO leaders trained local leadership—the provincial

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The National Confederation of Free and Independent Labor Unions of Mozambique (CONSILMO) comprises four labor unions: SINTICIM, SINTIHOTS, SINTRAVESP, and SINTRAT. These unions represent labor working in construction, mining, and forestry; the hotel industry; private security sector; and ground transportation, respectively.

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secretaries and workplace union committees—throughout the country to use the *Guidelines* in negotiating new contracts.

The 28-page *Guidelines* document is a pragmatic resource that:

**Outlines key steps in the collective bargaining process:** The *Guidelines* describe the foundational principles of sound collective bargaining techniques, including conflict resolution strategies.

**Provides a step-by-step description of how to integrate HIV workplace policies into collective bargaining negotiations:** The *Guidelines* describe Law 5/2002 and select international conventions, including recommendations from the International Labor Organization (ILO). This section outlines Mozambican workers' rights and helps inform representatives from both negotiating parties.

**Includes a checklist to collect baseline data:** To inform the negotiation process, the *Guidelines* present a checklist to assess employers' knowledge, policies, and programs related to HIV and AIDS.

CONSILMO has applied the *Guidelines* during collective bargaining negotiations with 136 companies. To date, the *Guidelines* and collaborative technical assistance from the Health Policy Initiative have resulted in the signing of five collective bargaining agreements that reference HIV workplace policies, programs, and legal statutes. These agreements are legally binding documents that will protect workers' rights and promote HIV information, prevention, and services in the workplace.