

# TANZANIA SICKLE CELL WARRIORS ORGANISATION

**(TASIWA)**



## TASIWA HIV/AIDS POLICY

**2021**

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**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this TASIWA HIV/AIDS Policy Manual approved by the Board of Directors during its Meeting held on.....and signed on its behalf by:

Chair of the Board of Directors

TASIWA *Official Stamp*

.....

Date.....

## 1.0 Introduction

Tanzania Sickle Cell Warriors Organization is known by its abbreviated form as TASIWA. It is a Non-Government Organization, based in Mwanza, Tanzania. It was established and registered in August 2019 under the NGO Act No: 24 of 2002, as amended in 2005, with Registration Number 00NGO/R/0435 to operate in Tanzania Mainland. It is working to promote education and awareness on Sickle Cell Disease, and provides new hopes to the families affected by Sickle Cell Disease and creates forums to air the problems of sickle cell disease.

TASIWA believes in promotion of the sickle cell awareness and understanding through education on various channels, with the aim of improving patient care, eradicating misconception and social stigma as well as supporting economically families suffering from the disease directly or indirectly.

**1.1 Vision:** The community and the Government cooperating to overcome Sickle cell disease and its negative impacts to social and economic wellbeing of the country.

**1.2 Mission Statement:** To promote the Sickle cell awareness and understanding through education on various channels, with the aim of improving patient care, eradicating misconception and social stigma as well as supporting economically families suffering from the disease directly or indirectly

**1.2 Core Values:** TASIWA has developed core values that are committed to live by:

- i) *Respect for Human Rights and Dignity:* We respect the inherent inalienable rights of all human being in all the dealings of the organization while upholding high moral principles in conducting our duties.
- ii) *Transparency and Accountability:* We are stewards of resources entrusted to us by our stakeholders, and use them in performing our duties in a rational manner and taking responsibility for all our actions, by conducting our services in a transparent manner.
- iii) *Culture of Excellence:* We strive to set challenging goals, excel in all our endeavors and innovations so as to deliver the best outcomes possible.
- iv) *Integrity:* We are fair, honest and open in all matters related to affairs of the Council.

- v) *Gender Equality*: We stand against all situations that deny women right to decisions, power sharing and equal access to resources between men and women.
- vi) *Voluntarism*: We generate among the members and the society the spirit of participation and team work in carrying out social and economic engagement based on free will for the common good.

## **2.0 Organizational Objectives**

- i) To conduct various campaigns to bring awareness and understanding of sickle cell disease to the community.
- ii) To mobilize the community on the importance of genotype test on Sickle cell.
- iii) To foster cooperation among Sickle cell patients, parents/families living with sickle cell patients, caregivers, Government branches and religious organizations, in the struggle against the disease.
- iv) To conduct advocacy campaigns focused on breaking down stigmas associated with Sickle cell disease.
- v) To enable and support Sickle Cell patients to access required medical services.
- vi) To support parents/ families affected with Sickle Cell to manage treatment and other care cost through various economic empowerment measures.

## **3.0 Overview of the Policy**

We believe that TASIWA response to the AIDS epidemic is a significant contribution to the sustainability of organization. TASIWA believes in non-discrimination, as well as consultation, inclusivity and encouraging full participation of all stakeholders are key principles, which underpin its HIV/AIDS responses. This TASIWA HIV/AIDS policy is based upon a human rights foundation, which we believe is fundamental to an effective HIV/AIDS response and supports the key responses to the epidemic, namely: elimination of stigma and discrimination on the basis of real or perceived HIV status; prevention of new infections; care, support and treatment for employees and their dependents who are infected/ affected by HIV/AIDS; community social investments; and management and mitigation of the impact of HIV/AIDS.

## **4.0 Elimination of Stigmas and Discrimination**

**4.1 Confidentiality:** An employee who is/becomes HIV infected has the right to confidentiality and privacy, as is the case with any employee that has experienced or is experiencing any other medical or psychosocial related incident. HIV infected employees are not obliged to inform management, or any other person in their organization, of their HIV status. There is no justification for asking job applicants to disclose HIV-related personal information. Nor are employees obliged to reveal such personal information to fellow employees. All reasonable precautions are taken to ensure that information regarding individual HIV status, voluntarily provided to anyone in the organization, or ascertained through a medical consultation, via an HIV test or disclosure of known HIV positive status, is maintained in strict confidence. Such information is not disclosed to any other person in or outside the organization without the individual's express written consent. Organization summary statistics, concerning group HIV infection rates and/or other HIV/AIDS outcomes and HIV/AIDS-related risk behaviors, compiled from individual HIV testing, and/or knowledge, attitude and practice surveys, may be shared with employees while respecting and maintaining the confidentiality of individual responses and results. These statistics are scientifically and ethically derived and only provided to external stakeholders once appropriate attempts have been made to share these with employees and their representatives.

**4.2 Non-discrimination:** TASIWA does not tolerate any form of unfair discrimination against those infected with HIV and takes all reasonable steps to respect their dignity and their individual human rights. All employees, supervisors, managers, and staffs who know (or think they know) an individual's HIV status are made aware of the requirements and responsibilities of disclosing this information to a third party, and the consequences that could arise if this responsibility were disregarded.

TASIWA recognizes that it takes courage for individuals to disclose their HIV positive status, and that such disclosure challenges the stigma associated with the epidemic. The Group encourages employees to be open about their HIV or AIDS status if they so wish and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that such employees are not unfairly discriminated against or stigmatized and that they have access to appropriate counseling and support.

**4.3 Gender Equality:** TASIWA recognizes that women are more likely to become infected and are more often adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic than men due to biological, socio-cultural and economic reasons. TASIWA strives to equalize gender relations, recognizing that the empowerment of women is vital to successfully prevent the spread of HIV infection and enable women to cope with HIV/AIDS.

**4.3 Social Dialogue:** The successful implementation of an HIV/AIDS policy and programmer requires cooperation and trust between employers, employees and their representatives, and government with the active involvement of employees infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. TASIWA strives to form alliances and build partnerships in order to develop a common vision and shared strategy with all stakeholders.

**4.4 Employment:** Applicants for employment, for any occupation or position, are required to pass a standard pre-placement examination. This does not include an HIV test, or indirect screening methods, such as questions in verbal or written form about previous HIV tests and/or questions related to the assessment of HIV risk behavior. The only health-related criterion for employing an individual is the person's fitness to perform the work offered. If a person makes his/her HIV/AIDS status known voluntarily, it shall not be a basis for refusing to conclude, continue or renew an employment contract. Employees with HIV/AIDS are governed by the same contractual obligations as all other employees. Employees who become HIV positive will continue to be employed unless or until they become medically unfit to work. An employee's HIV status is not considered grounds for any other employee refusing to work with him/her. Working with an HIV positive person does not put an employee at risk of becoming infected in the course of normal working contact. TASIWA's policy includes all ill-health retirements irrespective of the cause, and no special conditions exist for persons with HIV/AIDS which might place them at a disadvantage relative to others. HIV infected employees and those suffering from AIDS are entitled to the same sick leave, disability, pension, medical and death benefits as all other employees.

**4.5 HIV Counseling and Testing:** TASIWA encourages all employees, particularly those living in countries with a high burden of HIV infection, to undergo counseling and voluntary HIV testing. We believe that counseling and testing for HIV is a critical intervention that helps to link

care and support for those with HIV infection to our broader prevention programmers aimed at turning the tide of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. No employee is forced or coerced to undergo HIV testing. TASIWA supports the principle of provider initiated HIV Access to appropriate support and counseling services, at no cost to employees, and adapted to the different needs and circumstances of men and women, is available to HIV infected and affected employees and their dependents. Where these services are not offered on site, employers will seek to arrange for counseling and testing to be provided by approved HIV/AIDS counseling and testing Centers/agencies, including self-help groups and services within the local community. Counseling is provided before and after HIV testing. TASIWA extends HIV counseling and testing services to long term contractors on the same basis as provided to employees. HIV testing requires informed consent. This implies that the individual knows and understands what the test is, why it is necessary, the benefits, risks, alternatives and any possible social or economic implications of the outcome. Counseling provides information, education, and psychological and emotional support in order to maintain optimal health and well-being and the capacity to be effective employees and members of society for as long as possible. Counseling services inform employees of their rights and benefits in relation to statutory social security programs and medical and other employee benefits as well as any life skills programs, which may help employees cope with HIV/AIDS. Counseling services are also linked to programs of direct care and support for employees and their dependents with HIV/AIDS. Employees are encouraged to motivate sexual partners and their dependents to avail themselves of counseling and testing services offered by the organization as well as those in the community.

## **5.0 Prevention of HIV/AIDS**

Information and education programs on HIV/AIDS should be made available to all employees and must be appropriately sustained, coordinated and focused. The programs must be conducted in a manner that takes into account levels of education and literacy and the need to be situated in an appropriate cultural context. Educational strategies are based on consultation between employers and employees and their representatives and the methods used should be as interactive and participatory as possible. We strive to ensure that our information and education programs are sensitive, accurate and current. The programs will aim to:

- i) Communicate basic knowledge about the disease and its prevention.
- ii) Build community acceptance of persons living with HIV/AIDS to avoid feelings of rejection and isolation.
- iii) Provide information to employees about voluntary counseling and testing within the organization, about wellness programs testing as an important way to scale up testing in countries with a high burden of HIV disease and medication available, about coping with work performance and what happens when employees are too sick to work, and about employee benefits on medical incapacity termination of services.
- iv) Inform employees about protection measures for anyone potentially exposed to HIV in the course of their duties. These prevention programs are available to all levels of employees.

TASIWA Organization is encouraged to extend prevention programs to families of employees and to communities associated with their operations, in partnership with governments, trade unions, other NGOs and donor agencies.

## **6.0 Care, Support and Treatment**

There is clear evidence that early care, support and treatment improve the quality and length of life of people living with HIV/AIDS. Medical assistance will be provided by the organization for HIV positive employees and their dependents, including through existing medical benefit arrangements pertaining from time to time. TASIWA organization will endeavor to:

- i) Keep HIV positive employees and their families healthy and productive for as long as possible, through early participation in HIV Disease Management Programs.
- ii) Prevent opportunistic infections that account for most of the morbidity and mortality associated with AIDS, particularly TB.
- iii) Eliminate Mother to Child Transmission (MTCT) of HIV with appropriate antiretroviral therapy (ART).
- iv) Arrange for alternative treatment support for employees receiving ART who leave the organization for any reason, as well as for their dependents.
- v) Arrange access to appropriate care, support and treatment for any long-term contractor diagnosed with HIV infection through organization testing programs.

- vi) Ensure that HIV care and support programs are extended into the community through existing public and private health service providers and through partners NGOs.
- vii) Provide management advice to community based HIV/AIDS programs and facilitate their access to donor funding.
- viii) Facilitate the establishment of self-help groups within the enterprise or the referral of employees and their dependents affected by HIV/AIDS to self-help groups and support organizations in the local community.

## **7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation**

TASIWA organization will monitor and evaluate the evolving AIDS epidemic, taking into account national and international trends, and will develop appropriate strategies to respond to the impact of HIV/AIDS on their operations and associated communities. Impact assessment depends on accurate information on the prevalence and incidence of HIV infection in the workplace and in associated communities. Particular care is taken to ensure that no individual or group of individuals is prejudiced in any way by HIV prevalence or incidence surveys and that TASIWA's policy applying to the elimination of stigma and discrimination is observed and maintained at all times. The information derived from HIV management will be used to communicate the nature and extent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic to employees and other stakeholders and to plan appropriate mitigation responses in terms of prevention, care, support and treatment.