



Swedish Minister of Trade to present prize to Kenyan workplace

On 6th December, Raffia Bags Kenya will be presented with an award by the Swedish Minister for Trade, Dr. Ewa Björling, in recognition of its successful and sustainable workplace programme on HIV and AIDS. The Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS Programme Achievement Award 2011 goes to the company.

Raffia Bags Kenya, which is owned by Swedfund, has over several years implemented a successful programme responding to HIV and AIDS at its workplace through its participation in the Swedish Workplace HIV/AIDS programme (SWHAP). Raffia Bags has supported employees that are HIV positive and has prevented more from acquiring the virus. Due to concerted efforts as well as high participation of all staff, a profound impact has been achieved. Raffia has extended their programme to spouses, giving serious attention to gender issues, and has also gradually expanded from internal activities to external outreach.

"It is a great honour to receive the prize but let us not forget that while 3 people will actually receive it, there are so many other people who are working tirelessly in tackling this huge challenge. The Raffia model has been a great success and it should be rolled out to other companies." Pieter Nel, MD, Raffia Bags

Raffia's Peer Educators have proactively reached out to the community by physically being involved in awareness creation among the community schools and churches as well as raising awareness among neighbouring companies. One customer, several times bigger than Raffia, has been assisted by Raffia to even set up their own structured programme.

Addressing HIV and AIDS at the workplace level has increasingly become important for companies in countries with a higher prevalence of HIV. Not only is the workplace severely affected by the spread of HIV, it also happens to be an important arena to address the issue, something Raffia Bags Kenya is an excellent example of. The success of the programme is premised on workers-management collaboration.

Swedish Workplace HIV/AIDS Programme (SWHAP) is a long-term initiative to address HIV and AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. SWHAP currently supports some 90 workplace programmes on HIV in ten countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was jointly initiated in 2004 by the International Council of Swedish Industry (NIR) and the Industrial and Metal Workers' Union of Sweden (IF Metall). The main aim of SWHAP is supporting companies and employees to prevent further spread of HIV and reduce the effects of the pandemic at Swedish related workplaces. SWHAP is funded by Sida and Norad.

The SWHAP Achievement Award has been given out since 2008. In 2011 the four categories for the award are Most Comprehensive Workplace Programme; Best Progress in Workplace Programming; Peer Educator Achievement Award; and Most Innovative Intervention. The assessment for the Most Comprehensive Programme Award was carried out through an extensive questionnaire of 17 questions and 68 benchmarks. For more information on the award, please contact info@swhap.org. For more information on Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS Programme, please visit www.swhap.org.

Raffia Bags is the largest manufacturer of woven polypropylene bags in East Africa. It has offices in Kenya and Tanzania. The company is owned by Swedfund. For more information on Raffia Bags please visit: www.raffiabags.com and for Swedfund: www.swedfund.se