



Prevention and VCT at TauTona – Progress made in 2006

Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) and wellness clinic attendance at TauTona were among the best at AngloGold Ashanti's South Africa operations in 2006: 4,848 VCT attendances, more than double the target and 769 wellness clinic registrations, were recorded. In addition, TauTona now has among the highest number of employees receiving anti-retroviral therapy (ART) since the roll-out of the ART programme.

A three-phase approach has been developed to control the spread of HIV and AIDS among employees at TauTona. This approach, which is in line with corporate strategy, focuses clearly on the ultimate aim of maximising the health and longevity of the mine's workforce. The three phases of this approach are:

- education and awareness;
- VCT; and
- wellness and treatment.

While the three phases were initially introduced sequentially, today they form an overlapping integrated whole, with increasing emphasis on the latter two phases given that the condition of an infected person can only ultimately improve with treatment.

After some 10 years of education and awareness campaigns, the existence of the disease is now widely acknowledged. However, many misconceptions and misunderstandings continue to exist, and the need for education and maintaining awareness remains. VCT initiatives were revitalised about two years ago against a background of the perceived stigmatising of known HIV/AIDS sufferers. By ensuring strict anonymity, trust among employees has grown and with it the acceptability of VCT. At the same time, the stigmatisation of those who are HIV-positive has become less prevalent.

Private knowledge of an individual's own HIV status is in itself emotionally traumatic. However, participation in a wellness programme could potentially make the individual's condition more widely known. It is this fear which has to be overcome to ensure that all those infected request treatment. Participation in this phase is now receiving greater attention, and particular attention is being given to maintaining anonymity.

Employees at TauTona have access to one permanent wellness clinic counsellor but efforts are made to arrange events at which testing is 'taken to the people', making it easily accessible to all employees.

These events included the very successful Mine Overseers' Safety Days held in May 2006 during which the full section was on surface and VCT counsellors were available for mass testing. Feedback on the results of these tests was presented the following day, in private and confidential counselling sessions. These days were a marked success and responsible for the surge in VCT attendance in the second quarter – 3,127 as compared to between 500 and 600 – and more such days are scheduled for February 2007.

In addition, the use of peer educators is beginning to bear fruit. Peer educators, often people who are HIV-positive, talk to and advise mine employees about HIV/AIDS. They promote awareness of the disease, educate and inform, answer questions and encourage people to attend VCT. Peer educators have been trained and are fully committed to what they do. They have also played and continue to play a significant role in encouraging people to attend the wellness clinics and receive treatment.

Although no further mass campaigns have been conducted at TauTona during the year, monthly participation continued to exceed target, largely owing to the work done by peer educators, which built on that of the Mine Overseers' Safety Days.

