

## Case Study 7.2

# The South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union: Worker Health Programme

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This case study is an example of how sexual rights and reproductive health can be addressed through occupational safety and health initiatives. The innovative SACTWU programme provides a good model for organizations designing sexual rights and reproductive health programmes as part of gender-based violence programmes at production points in global supply chains. It also has key relevance to understanding how occupational safety and health programmes can cover women's health, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence.

*“We call on all our members to make a special pledge and commitment to fight all forms of violence and abuse against women and children.” (The South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union)*

The South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU) organizes clothing, textile, leather, footwear and retail workers in South Africa. Two-thirds of the union's members are women. In 1998, because of the increase in HIV/AIDS related deaths, SACTWU set-up a worker HIV/AIDS health project, one of the first to be established by a trade union.

SACTWU and the employers have jointly agreed statements on the importance of combating HIV/AIDS. SACTWU demonstrated that the most effective way to combat HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence in the workplace was to build partnerships with employers and government. Union/employer joint statements and Bargaining Council Agreements were two important ways in which SACTWU became an internationally recognized leader in HIV and TB workplace implementation programmes. (See SACTWU website for Bargaining Council at [www.nbc.org.za](http://www.nbc.org.za))

On World AIDS Day 2013, members of SACTWU gave a «face» to the HIV and gender violence pandemic that has affected the lives of so many South Africans. Each factory was asked to create a doll that told “their story” about HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence. It was a “safe place” for people to voice their feelings, to give outsiders an opportunity to gain some insight into other people's lives and to learn from their experiences. The dolls were initially exhibited at regional union offices and then in galleries and museums across the country. (Solidar, 2012)