

## THE EXAMPLE OF SCANIA: SUCCESSFUL HEALTH PROGRAMME IN THE SPIRIT OF THE GLOBAL DEAL

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One of the first companies to join the Global Deal was the bus and lorry manufacturer Scania. The company has a long tradition of good relations with its staff in the more than 100 countries where it is active.

One example is South Africa, where Scania has been participating for several years in the Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS Programme (SWHAP). The programme primarily focuses on HIV/AIDS prevention and other health issues, and is always conducted in close cooperation with the employees and their organisations. This means that it is also possible to achieve a better and inclusive social dialogue.

She stresses that one of the success factors is that they do not use a top-down approach; instead, management and employees work together.

The programme was initiated in 2004 with South Africa as the first country. HIV was very prevalent at that time and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) decided to provide financial support. The programme is run jointly by the International Council of Swedish Industry and the trade union IF Metall. It covers more than 360 workplaces in a total of 116 companies in 11 countries in southern Africa. Several Swedish corporations participate and in many cases they continue even after Sida's initial support has come to an end. Through these efforts, it has been possible to reach 32 000 employees and in addition several thousand family members.

The programme is based on a shared basic model with initiatives in the area of HIV/AIDS. These might involve voluntary testing, advisory services, education, treatment and more. Over time, this has been developed into a broader 'wellness programme'.



Flags outside Scania in Johannesburg, South Africa.

SWHAP has been around for much longer than the Global Deal, but Mary Kgole, Country Coordinator for South Africa and Namibia, says that the model it uses fits in very well with the focus of the Global Deal.

"This programme has definitely improved the social dialogue on all levels in those companies," she says.

**We have both quantitative results and qualitative results, such as behavioural change that makes people live longer.**

says Mary Kgole.

"The quantitative results speak for themselves. The main activity is to create access to testing for HIV and also other diseases. The number of people tested increases every year and the stigma now has been minimised."

With staff becoming healthier and sickness absence decreasing, productivity has increased. This has led to better economic growth for these companies. Moreover, awareness of health issues in general has increased, views of gender equality have been affected and the dialogue between the company and its staff has found new forms.

Mary Kgole stresses that the trade unions and the employees' representatives have played a critical role in achieving these results. It has been a prerequisite in the programme that it should not be management-driven.



Mary Kgole, SWHAP Country Coordinator for South Africa and Namibia.

"We make sure that there are shop stewards represented in the committees, mainly because we understand the capability that the shop stewards have vis-à-vis the masses on the floor. Sometimes when you talk about management and workers' representatives it is like water on paraffin. They don't mix and there is often a hostile environment when they meet. But here they can sit around the same table and discuss a common goal which is good for all. It is in the best interest of the employer and it is also in the best interest of the labour unions and the employees," says Mary Kgole.

Scania has been involved in SWHAP for over ten years. At the time, the prevalence of HIV among employees was low at around 2–3 per cent. Today it is even lower, as HR Manager Gail Roberts points

out – people who test positively are now also correctly managed.

Gail Roberts is the Area HR Manager for Scania in five countries in southern Africa, with a total of over 800 employees – 650 in South Africa and approximately 220 here at the factory in Aeroton on the outskirts of Johannesburg. She says that it did not take long for them to start examining and treating other health factors too, such as BMI, blood pressure, sugar, cholesterol and so on. Activities are often organised to involve as many people as possible, such as theatre or a roadshow.

In recent years, Scania has also included the psychosocial work environment and offers psychological support to employees. Gail Roberts describes stress as a 'silent killer'.

"The psychosocial side of things has grown considerably and is at the moment one of our main focus areas. Some of our people have been on the brink of suicide and by providing quick intervention we have been able to assist them in seeking the right help and turn them around," she says.

What are the major achievements of taking part in this programme?

"Looking at it from an overall company perspective, it is having healthy employees and having people know that they are important to us as people and not just as employees. And from an HR perspective, I think it is that you can bring someone back from being suicidal to being a healthy contributor to the company and to a better personal life as well. That brings value to the programme."

Another value for the company must be the economic effect from reduced absenteeism and increased productivity?

**Yes, happy people produce more.**

says Gail Roberts.

There is no trade union at Scania in Johannesburg, but the employees have still been represented in the programme. The reason appears to be that very

few of the employees are members of a union. It is hard to say why this is the case, but Gail Roberts thinks that part of the answer is that there are good relations within the company and the employees' wages and other perks are better than at most other companies.

We also meet some employees and none of them contradict their HR manager. Simo Ngema, who works as a commission trainer at Scania Academy, says:

**“I don't like my job, I love my job. And the reason is that I love human development and Scania has given me that opportunity.”**

Simo Ngema has taken the long route. He started on the production line when he came to the company ten years ago. After a few years he became responsible for work environment issues there and was elected to the SWHAP committee. He eventually became a peer educator within the programme. He has seen how many employees with problems ranging from illness and drug abuse to financial problems have managed to change their lifestyle thanks to the programme's initiatives.

He has also experienced this personally following a family tragedy a few years back.

“Scania took me to a therapist that helped me through this hard time in my life,”  
Simo Ngema says.

## Social dialogue is worthwhile, says Scania

When Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven launched the Global Deal at UN Headquarters in New York on 21 September 2016, the management of Scania were present to support the initiative.

“Supporting the Global Deal comes naturally to us. Scania has a unique corporate culture where one of our company's core values is ‘respect for the individual’,” says Kent Conradson, Executive Vice President, Human Resources at Scania.

Scania is a global employer with 46 000 employees in more than 100 countries. The main office is in Södertälje, just outside Stockholm.

But how come Scania was involved as early as during the launch?

“We were invited as we have a reputation as a good employer and we showed interest at an early stage in being involved in this work. I am convinced that a good dialogue with our employees is part of the explanation of why we are a successful company,” says Sofia Vahlne, Head of Labour Affairs at Scania.

However, she is aware that this approach does not apply in other companies in large parts of the world.

“That is why we want to take the opportunity to work in as many arenas as possible and point out that good social dialogue does not stand in the way of being a profitable company – on the contrary. For me it's about human rights,” she says.

## FACTS ON SWHAP

The Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS Programme is run jointly by the International Council of Swedish Industry and the Swedish trade union IF Metall in over one hundred companies in 11 countries in southern Africa. It is mainly financed through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The programme has been under way for over ten years and has been very successful. Over time it has developed into a broader ‘wellness programme’ which is designed jointly by the company management and staff representatives. The programme has also contributed to increased awareness and better social dialogue.

## TWO VOICES FROM SCANIA

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Charles Dibakwane, IT products manager:

“This has been a life-changing programme for many employees. It has helped me through a divorce. I felt stress and couldn’t concentrate, then I was encouraged to attend a wellness programme. I have also been involved in personal financial management. They assist you in how to do a budget and how to spend your money. Scania has helped me to balance my life which I was not doing before.”



Makgabo Mamabolo, coordinator at training department:

“The fact that this programme is offered in the company prevents a lot of people from being sick. It is a way to get happier employees. I am personally an example of that. Before I felt like a dark person and I wasn’t open to speaking to people. So I started to see a psychologist and now I am much happier. If I have a problem I can always go to my boss, I don’t see the need for a workers’ representative by my side.”