



Launch of VCT campaign, Iduapriem, Ghana

Iduapriem launches VCT programme

Iduapriem mine in Ghana successfully launched a Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) programme in August 2007 for employees, contractors and dependents. So successful was the initial launch programme that the mine ran out of state-supplied test kits in the first month and had to borrow some from sister miner Obuasi so that the testing could continue.

While the mine had an HIV/AIDS programme in place for a number of years, there was a need to add impetus to the programme, says occupational health nurse Grace Ansah. That impetus came when Grace was selected to participate in government-sponsored VCT training course in Accra in mid-2007 and when she returned, the mine-based occupational health centre was certified as an official VCT facility.

Iduapriem had previously collaborated with Gold Fields' Tarkwa mine in setting up an HIV/AIDS centre at the Tarkwa hospital, in partnership with the Ghanaian health authorities and this centre continues to operate in this nearby town.

While it was initially assumed that mineworkers would prefer to be tested in the district hospital centre for confidentiality reasons, the mine was pleasantly surprised by the uptake of the mine-based testing. In the first month after the launch of the VCT programme, 461 employees, contractors and community members were tested. The VCT initiative was launched through a highly-visible "float" – see photographs – led by MD David Renner, along with VCT testing by the MD and the entire management team. In anticipation of the launch the centre also identified and trained 38 peer educators (13 from the community and 25 employees) and equipped them with the necessary material to perform their jobs.

Based on the VCT testing done to date, approximately 2% of those tested were HIV-positive.

Ongoing monitoring of those individuals who are HIV-positive is undertaken jointly between the centre and the district hospital, including regular CD4 analysis. Mine-referred patients are currently receiving anti-retroviral therapy (ART) from the district hospital.

