



Improving International/ Regional Advocacy through Collaboration among Networks

DESCRIPTION

From 2006 through 2007, was centered around International and Regional Dialogues to build up a broad consensus.

- HIV/AIDS needs to be addressed from a framework that integrates human rights, gender power and sexuality. Activists agreed on the need to put issues of **Power and Sexuality back on the HIV/AIDS agenda** and to recognize the fact that sexuality is also about human desire and pleasure.
- To move away from the concept of "risk groups" toward diversity and multiplicity of roles because everyone is open to risk.
- To **adopt a comprehensive approach to prevention and treatment**, that includes the underlying sexual and gender power relations that make women vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and that incorporates the voices of WLWHA as critical actors.
- To promote consensus among networks leading to a common framework and base ground to build collaboration and improve the international advocacy work.
- To **eliminate barriers such as sexuality taboos and restrictions to sexuality education to adolescents and young people**.
- To eliminate approaches to HIV prevention like only abstinence sexuality education and **opposition to compulsory HIV testing considering its human rights implications**.
- To facilitate access to funding, especially for SRHR and HIV.
- To influence policy makers to address the intersections between gender based violence and HIV/AIDS for women, girls, GLBT and IDU's.
- The need to support sex workers rights and to use harm reduction approaches, as well as to **eliminate the association of prostitution to trafficking**.
- **The need to decriminalize abortion** to improve women's health rights particularly to those leaving with HIV.

Participants have had face to face meetings and later on virtual communications through an e-group. Through these dialogues issues continue to be debated reinforcing the consensus and the capacity building of a better understanding of the differences.



Strategies from the South: Building Synergies in HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Rights is an innovative initiative rooted in the two principals of 1) **cross-movement collaboration building** and 2) **international joint advocacy**.

This initiative has been developed since 2006, arising from international joint advocacy among both international and regional Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and HIV/AIDS activist networks, including women, youth, PLWA, GLBT, sex workers and drug users networks from Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Nowadays 34 regional and international networks are involved in this initiative.

LESSONS LEARNED

Networks recognized the need to develop and strengthen south-south cooperation because the three regions face similar problems and constraints.

Religions and cultural norms limit the recognition of consensus about sexuality and sexual options disregarding human rights. The debates help to recognize this and to find out how to solve them working together made possible to develop sharp statements and have better impact as happened with a community rapport developed jointly at 8th Asia-Pacific AIDS Congress (August 07).

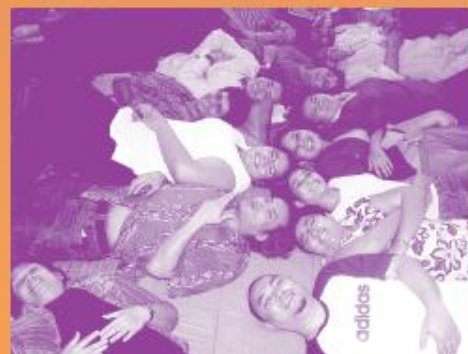
"As an African I am torn between two worlds. Religion strongly prohibits same sex relationships, while at the same time I appreciate people must enjoy their human rights" (An African Network participant).

"...beyond the fact that we have our own identities, we have different stories and different flags, but we see the need to put aside the flags for a while and work together, which is not easy" (A Latin American and the Caribbean Network participant).

"A South to South platform is necessary because south countries face same problems, limited access to sexuality education, unemployment, threat of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies" (an Asia Youth Network participant).

"(Earlier on) alliances were built to put out fires, and not because we had visions or principles in common. And that make relationships become points of dispute for representation. Also, governments and multi-lateral agencies have taken advantage of networks' political weakness" (Participant from Latin America Reproductive Rights Network).

NEXT STEPS



For the UNGASS Review last June 2008 despite the diverse areas of advocacy and priorities the group came to an agreement on main advocacy issues and formulated a joint advocacy paper "From Words to Action". This was a common advocacy tool used to advocate countries not only from the three regions involved but also from northern countries: European Union, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and others. The same will be carried out at the Regional AIDS Conferences in Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean as well as at the ICPD (Cairo) +15 process.

