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# Tonga Men's Sexual Health/HIV/MSM Consultation

- ❑ **Tonga responded to HIV and AIDS earlier than most other Pacific Island countries**
  - ❑ **The response to HIV and AIDS first concentrated on two vulnerable groups; sex workers and on the gay population**
  - ❑ **In the early 1990s more stakeholders joined the Tongan government in its response to HIV and AIDS**
  - ❑ **The donor countries influenced the Tongan response to change from more focused group response to a population approach till today.**
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- ❑ So most activities that are targeted towards gay and sex workers became diluted in the population approach
  - ❑ MoH became unpopular in its approach and NGOs became popular
  - ❑ 1985-1995; no sex worker or gay people were infected
  - ❑ 14 cases of HIV and AIDS today
  - ❑ Gay and sex workers were willing to go for HIV test in the mid 80s to early 90s but this has changed now since the approach has changed
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- Gay are more sensitized on the issue of HIV and AIDS and this resulted in them carrying condoms, however, usage rate is unknown
  - National Strategic Plan 2001-2005 is currently being reviewed and new Plan will commence after the review
  - Child sexual abuse, particularly young male abuse is going on but under reported
  - Rising incidence of STI which has the same mode of transmission with HIV
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- ❑ Health workers lack the skills to counsel patients and do a more comprehensive, sensitive and confidential patient interview
  - ❑ 2 out of the 14 reported cases of HIV and AIDS are still alive today.
  - ❑ Sexual activities occur between leitis and “straight men”
  - ❑ Sexual activities also occur between and amongst “straight men”
  - ❑ Sexual activities occur between married men and unmarried men (straight men and leiti);
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- ❑ Young and unmarried men have girlfriends as well as “buddies”
  - ❑ Alcohol and to some extent drugs plays a major part in MSM to happen in any form as outlined above
  - ❑ Sex between men in any form occur with or without the availability of the opposite sex
  - ❑ Readily available of leitis is also a predisposing factor to sex happening between two men.
  - ❑ Sex between upper secondary school boys and out of school leitis also happens to some extent
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- ❑ Sex is only sold for pleasure
  - ❑ Older gay men who reside abroad and migrate later to the country pay for sex, especially to young men
  - ❑ Defence forces personnel and policed are major consumers of leitis services
  - ❑ In Nukualofa most people prefer to access condoms from NGOs rather than the hospital and health centers
  - ❑ Straight guys can fall in love with gay men
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- ❑ Sexual activities and behaviors that occur in the urban areas also occur at the rural level
  - ❑ Some gay men prefer to engage in what is perceived as culturally correct and acceptable by involving themselves with activities that is usually the role of a (straight) men. But does this mean that they do not engage themselves on sexual activities with other men? NO! In fact it facilitates it!
  - ❑ Miss Galaxy is a way for leitis to celebrate their sexuality and contribution to Tongan society
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- ❑ Men preferred some sexual acts that are provided by other men which their wives do not provide
  - ❑ Married men seek other men for sex to release marriage frustrations
  - ❑ Most gay men were sexually abused during their early years
  - ❑ Most leitis contribute to society, especially during social and churchy functions, doing voluntary work for charitable organizations etc
  - ❑ Leitis were quite acceptable in the Tongan society until the emergence of HIV and AIDS
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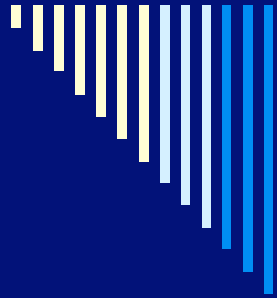
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- ❑ HIV awareness is part of Police recruitment training as well as specialized training
  - ❑ Police are now working on a workplace policy and have submitted their submissions to the Employment Relations Bill
  - ❑ Seafarers engage in same sex activities as their work requires them to be away from home for long periods of time
  - ❑ Most people agree that a more comprehensive and in-depth research/study to be carried out to substantiate the preliminary findings of this consultation meeting
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# **Tonga Men's Sexual Health/HIV/MSM Consultation**

**Thank you for your time**

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