



Risks | Responsibilities

Male Sexual Health and HIV
in Asia and The Pacific
International Consultation

New Delhi, India, 23-26 September 2006



Towards Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for Men who have Sex with Men and Transgender People

“Principles of Good Practice”

Noting the worsening HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI) epidemics among men who have sex with men and transgender people in the Asia and Pacific countries;

Bearing in mind the many agreements made by governments to abide by a range of international human rights commitments, and other United Nations declarations, policies and guidelines addressing those affected, infected and vulnerable to HIV and AIDS, including men who have sex with men and transgender people;

Convinced of the urgent need for coordinated and sustained responses to the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Asia and the Pacific as it affects men who have sex with men and transgender people, and

Mindful of the broad range of cultural diversity within communities and networks of men who have sex with men and transgender people across Asia and the Pacific, we recognise that a massive scale up of programmes that address HIV and other sexually transmitted infections for men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people is now urgently needed that also includes the cross-cutting issues of injecting drug use and sex work, we, the participants of the Male Sexual Health in Asia and the Pacific International Consultation: “Risks and Responsibilities,” have called upon the tripartite of governments, civil society/community and international donors/multilateral institutions throughout Asia and the Pacific, to come together in a spirit of partnership and collaboration to work together in “The Delhi Declaration of Collaboration” of 26th September 2006.

We, the participants in the Male Sexual Health and HIV in Asia and Pacific International Consultation: “Risks and Responsibilities,” New Delhi, September 23-26, 2006, hereby agree on and accept the following Principles of Good Practice towards Universal Access to Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for men who have sex with men, and transgender people:

Bridging the knowledge gap

In order to develop strategic and effective responses to the HIV prevention, treatment, care and support needs of men who have sex with men and transgender people, anthropological, sociological, behavioural and epidemiological research are essential, and need to be undertaken in partnership with the affected populations, understanding dynamics of male-to-male and transgender sexuality, including the multiplicity of

frameworks, gender identities, behavioural practices within national and local socio-cultural contexts.

Governments and donors can and must play a pivotal role in undertaking and supporting such participatory assessments and research concerning the prevention, treatment, care and support needs of men who have sex with men and transgender populations for the development of comprehensive programmes that will be informed by evidence as well as implementing policy support for these interventions. In addition, there is a need to undertake participatory community oriented size estimations of men who have sex with men and transgender populations in order to advocate for and ensure adequate levels of resources for programmes of scale, for the reduction of risk and vulnerability of these marginalised sexualities.

Focused participatory interventions

For any HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support intervention to be effective within networks and communities of men who have sex with men and transgender people, these marginalised sexualities must be actively and substantively involved in planning, designing and implementation of such interventions. This includes participation in problem identification, needs assessments, programme design, monitoring and evaluation. Participation is essential in areas related to the development of legal frameworks and laws, policy, advocacy, education and programme design and implementation. Participation must include and reflect the full cultural and sexual diversity of men who have sex with men and transgender people.

Further, HIV positive people from these diverse networks, communities, groups and organisations need to be fully involved, with the GIPA (Greater involvement of people living with HIV) principles meaningfully implemented.

Promoting ownership and an enabling environment

Governments and states can and must enhance efficacy of policy and programme interventions by ensuring that representative ownership is key in all legal, policy and programme efforts aimed at stemming the spread of HIV among men who have sex with men and transgender people's networks, groups and communities. Supportive legal, policy and programme environments are instrumental in helping men who have sex with men and transgender people to acknowledge their own risk and responsibilities in stemming the spread of HIV. For building enabling environments, governments must enact legal and policy guidelines and structures that respect and protect the right of all its citizens to good quality prevention, treatment, care and support services. To ensure moving towards true universal access, actions must include the de-criminalisation of sexual acts between consenting men who have sex with men and transgender people, as well as addressing legal issues relating to sex work. Governments, states and donors must play an active role in helping men who have sex with men and transgender people understand their rights and empower them to respond to discrimination and harassment.

Organisational development and strengthening

To ensure that good quality HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services are provided and accessed, organisations that include and represent men who have sex with men and transgender networks, groups and communities should be fostered and supported. This includes supporting the development of representative service organisations. Where this is not possible because of legal/social constraints, other implementing NGOs/INGOs could act as 'shelter' agencies providing technical, operational, management and other capacity building support. This process recognises the need for empowerment and personal decision-making, along with peer processes for promoting safer sex practices. Safe-spaces (i.e. drop-in centres) where meetings, social gatherings and other community activities can be held should also be supported.

Access to appropriate and affordable STI diagnostic and treatment services

Many men who have sex with men and transgender people living with HIV are not only stigmatised by their HIV positive status, but also by the route of infection and issues related to their sexual and gender identities. Treatment, care and support programmes need to be competent to address these different frameworks and address them appropriately. All health care providers providing STI prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care services must therefore be professionally competent in addressing specific sexual health needs of men who have sex with men and transgender people. This includes providing STI prevention and management in regard to anal STI and other pathologies that could be a result of anal and/or oral sex. Such services, as all other medical services, must be confidential. This, not only regards STI but also pertains to overall professional conduct and attitudes in providing comprehensive health care related to consenting adults' sexual and gender preferences and choices. As much as possible these services should be provided to men who have sex with men and transgender people within locally accepted community-based project structures, i.e. as a part of drop-in services. At the same time however, sexual health clinics for the general male population must also address male-male and transgender sexual behaviours and possible related health issues.

Access to appropriate HIV voluntary testing and counselling

Governments, and CBOs need to provide and donors must support pre- and post-testing counselling services for HIV and other STI that are confidential, non-judgemental and empathic to the needs of men who have sex with men and transgender people. As much as possible these services should be provided to men who have sex with men and transgender people within locally accepted community-based project structures, i.e. as a part of drop-in services. Post-test support services must include counselling on the meaning of an HIV diagnosis and referrals to men who have sex with men or transgender-competent prevention, treatment, care and support programmes and services.

Access to affordable condoms (including “female condoms”) and water-based lubricants

Reducing the primary risk of infection with HIV and other STI must be central to all HIV prevention programmes. Governments, CBOs and donors must support population-specific, free or affordable distribution of condoms along with social marketing campaigns to promote consistent use of condoms, as an essential component of risk reduction strategies for men who have sex with men and transgender people. In addition, governments, CBOs and donors must ensure ready access to appropriately packaged water-based lubricants that enhance the efficacy of condoms used for protection in anal sex, by men who have sex with men and transgender people.

Access to specific information through appropriate communication

Research consistently shows that HIV prevention information that is communicated to the general population is insufficient to generate sustained protective behaviour among men who have sex with men and transgender people. Governments, NGOs, CBOs and donors must support the development and dissemination of information by and for men who have sex with men and transgender people, addressing their concerns, in languages, terminology and imagery that is realistic, life-affirming, meaningful, understandable, acceptable and engaging. Men who have sex with men and transgender and transgender people must not be passive recipients of such information but as the producers of their own information, education and methodologies of communication.

Long-term technical and financial support

Governments, national and international donors, multilateral institutions and international NGOs must commit and provide sustained technical and financial support to build the capacity of individuals and service organisations by and for men who have sex with men and transgender people working in the areas of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. This, in order to enhance core capacities such as HIV competence and other technical HIV-related knowledge and skills, as well as programmatic and managerial governance and monitoring expertise. It is crucial that skills and opportunities in networking, community-building, advocacy and policy development and monitoring are also supported. Successful pilots and programmes must be documented and taken to scale in a manner that ensures sustainability, quality, and community ownership.

Advocacy on legal, judicial and social impediments to effective HIV and other STI prevention and sexual health for men who have sex with men and transgender people

Governments, international donors, multilateral institutions and international NGOs must assist in developing the capacity of men who have sex with men and transgender people for advocating and effecting change on legal, judicial and social impediments

that hinder HIV and other STI prevention, treatment, care and support programmes for individuals or networks, groups and communities of these marginalised sexualities.

Laws that criminalise consensual sex between adult males and transgender sex continue to drive the spread of HIV by impeding the development, implementation and access to essential prevention, treatment, care, and support programmes. Donors, multilateral institutions and international non-governmental organisations must therefore support and governments must react progressively to advocacy efforts directed toward law reform and address social stigmatisation that increases HIV vulnerability among men who have sex with men and transgender people.

Broadening the education and awareness agenda

Unprotected anal sex is not as uncommon as many may assume, and is not restricted to self-identified men who have sex with men, and transgender people, but includes males in an array of different situations as well as between males and females. Community-based organisations working with men who have sex with men and transgender people in the area of HIV may not be able to reach such non-identified males easily. By ensuring that all HIV and STI prevention materials, programmes, and services include information pertaining to the risks of unprotected anal sex as part of broader sexual and reproductive public health awareness efforts, governments, academic institutions and international donors and international NGOs must ensure that this life-saving information reaches and is understood by the general population; male and female alike.

Transparent governance and accountability to communities and constituencies of males who have sex with males and transgender people

Governments, donors and multi-lateral agencies must practice transparent governance and have clear written policies and implementation guidelines on HIV prevention amongst men who have sex with men and transgender communities in a sensitive and supportive manner. Furthermore, non-government and community-based implementing partners must be selected in a transparent and objective manner. Finally, governments, donors, multilateral institutions and international non-governmental organisations must ensure that their own organisational environments are non-discriminatory and stigmatising towards men who have sex with men and transgender people.