



Background to “The Delhi Declaration of Collaboration” 26th September 2006

The 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS adopted by all UN Member States emphasised the importance of “addressing the needs of those at greatest risk of, and most vulnerable to, new infection as indicated by such factors as [...] sexual practices.” At the 2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS, the Member States and civil society members reiterated the commitment, underlining the need for “full and active participation of vulnerable groups [...] and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against them [...] while respecting their privacy and confidentiality”ⁱ.

Numerous country and regional consultations have confirmed that the stigma, discrimination and criminalisation faced by men who have sex with menⁱⁱ, gay men and transgenderⁱⁱⁱ people are major barriers to the movement towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support that has been committed to by all UN Member States at the 2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS.

At the same time, recent studies have confirmed major HIV epidemics among men who have sex with men and transgender people in several countries in Asia and the Pacific and rapidly increasing HIV rates in many other countries in the region.

The Male Sexual Health and HIV in Asia and the Pacific International Consultation “Risks and Responsibilities” brought together a ‘tripartite’ of representatives from governments, along with donors, international and in-country non-government agencies as well as community-based organisations working with men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people, in the areas of HIV [and in many cases STI] prevention, treatment, care and support, in a tripartite to explore knowledge gaps, obstacles and challenges, and discuss opportunities for moving forward towards universal access to these services for these marginalised sexualities.

For more information and to participate in the moderated “RR” Bulletin Board discussion, visit the Consultation website, at www.risksandresponsibilities.org

ⁱ Paragraph 64 of the 2001 “UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS” and Paragraphs 20 and 29 of the 2006 High Level Meeting on AIDS Uniting the world against AIDS, “Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.”

ⁱⁱ While we use the term ‘men who have sex with men’ here it is within the context of understanding that the word ‘man’/‘men’ is socially constructed. Nor does it use imply that it is an identity term referring to an identifiable community that can be segregated and so labelled. Within the framework of male-to-male sex, there are a range of masculinities, along with diverse sexual and gender identities, communities, networks, and collectives, as well as just behaviours without any sense of affiliation to an identity or community. This “Declaration of Collaboration” addresses the concerns of all these diversities within the framework of *men who have sex with men*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Broadly speaking, transgender people are individuals whose gender expression and/or gender identity differs from conventional expectations based on the physical sex they were born into. The word transgender is an umbrella term which is often used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, including: female-to-male and male-to-female sexual reassigned persons, cross-dressers, drag queens, drag kings, gender queers, and many more. [In the Asia and Pacific region this would include hijras, some kothis, zenanas and metis, kathoey, waria, bakla, fa’fa’finis, etc.] Because transgender is an umbrella term, it is often thought to be an imprecise term that does not adequately describe the particularities of specific identities and experiences. (For example, the identity/experience of a post-operative female to male transsexual will probably be very different from that of a female-identified drag king who performs on weekends, but both are often lumped together under the term “transgender people.”) web.mit.edu/hudson/www/terminology.html



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Noting the worsening HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI) epidemics among men who have sex with men, gay 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, gay 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, gay men and transgender people; and

Mindful of the broad range of cultural diversity within communities and networks of men who have sex with men, gay 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,” therefore call 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 for:

- Significantly increasing financial investment for the provision of appropriate HIV and other sexually transmitted infections prevention, treatment, care and support services for men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people within a framework of universal access for all;
- Rapidly increasing the level of coverage in the number and quality of the prevention, treatment, care and support services for men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people across Asia and the Pacific;
- Acknowledging men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people in Asia and the Pacific as equal partners in the country and regional responses to HIV and other STI, and actively provide institutional, financial and technical support to enhance the capacity of men who have sex with men, and transgender people to be meaningfully involved in decision making, policy development and programme planning;

- Realising the unique value and strengths of HIV-positive persons' roles in prevention, care and outreach responses;
- Providing technical support and skills building to support community-based responses which are driven by meaningful involvement of men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people, including people living with HIV, from the networks, groups and organisations of men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people;
- Recognising that fear-based approaches to prevention can intensify fear and stigmatisation of HIV-positive people within their communities and networks and undermine effective prevention;
- Addressing the legal, judicial, socio-cultural and policy impediments to effective and appropriate HIV and other sexually transmitted infections prevention, treatment, care and support programmes for men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people in Asia and the Pacific, removing stigmatising and discriminatory practices, whether governments, bilateral or multilateral agencies, or service providers;
- Confronting the pervasive realities of stigma, discrimination, violence and abuse that often face men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people, and those living with HIV, increasing their vulnerability and risk to HIV infection and disempowering them from accessing HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services, we urge governments, international donors, multilateral institutions, and civil society, especially communities of men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people, to pursue the following strategies and actions:

Governments, to:

- Recognize the potential for significant increases in HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people in their country;
- Incorporate men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people as priority populations in their National Plans and Targets for Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Care, Support and Treatment;
- Fully involve men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people in the government led joint reviews and revisions of their National HIV Plans;
- Ensure that comprehensive HIV and other sexually transmitted infections prevention programmes for men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people are instituted in their country that are scientifically proven to be effective and on a sufficiently large scale and intensity to prevent HIV infections among these marginalised populations;
- Take all measures possible to enable HIV and other STI programmes for men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people will be delivered effectively and with the active engagement of these populations along with the meaningful involvement of those living with HIV;

- Ensure men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people living with HIV have access to good quality HIV and other sexually transmitted infections prevention, care, support and treatment programmes, equitable with all others living with HIV in their country;
- Encourage regional and sub-regional organisations of which they are a member to adopt a similar priority approach for men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people in their regional HIV and other STI work;
- Accept and take on the responsibility to address violence, abuse, and harassment by both state and non-state actors against men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people along with staff from organisations addressing their HIV and other STI prevention, treatment, care and support needs;
- Meaningfully implementation of the principles of the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV (GIPA) within the context of men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people who are HIV positive.

International Donors and Multilateral Institutions, to:

- Recognise the potential for epidemics of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people in all Asian and Pacific countries;
- In consultation with partner governments and civil society encourage the development of HIV and other STI programmes with and for men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people in the Asia and the Pacific countries;
- Support scientifically sound ethical HIV and AIDS-related operational research that positively impacts on men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people;
- Provide assistance as bi-lateral donors to governments to scale up efforts towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, in addition to building the capacity in partner countries to report on and monitor these efforts;
- Encourage national governments in the medium to long term to play a critical role in financially sustainable HIV and other STI responses.

Civil society, especially communities of men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people, to:

- Ensure that organisational policies and values of civil society organisations are inclusive and empower men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people in terms of staff representation on governing bodies that reflects the diversity of the men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender networks and communities;
- Support interventions that effectively empower and protect men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people by working in partnership with affected and at-risk men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender networks and communities;

- Deliver good quality programmes that promote access to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections prevention, treatment, care and support for men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people;
- Foster the development of community-based organisations and programmes by and for men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people so that their own mobilisation helps them work for the health and other rights of all men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people and protection for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections;
- Accept and take on the responsibility to work for the health and other rights of all men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people so as to ensure for them their basic dignity, social justice and equality and enable them to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.;
- Address in real and effective ways , the stigma and discrimination experienced by HIV positive men who have sex with men and gay men, and HIV-positive transgender people, including from within organisations and networks that provide services to the wider communities of men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people;
- Enable full and equal participation of HIV positive men who have sex with men HIV positive gay men and HIV positive transgender people in community prevention, care, support and advocacy initiatives, supporting their freedom of sexual expression;
- Act rigorously in their personal lives to prevent HIV transmission and other sexually transmitted infections, and encourage similar behaviour with their sexual partners and their social contacts;
- Work with the wider community to increase awareness about men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people, along with the realisation that many men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people also have sex with women.

In pursuit of these strategies and actions, the participants of the Male Sexual Health and HIV in Asia and the Pacific International Consultation “Risks and Responsibilities,” have agreed to work in ‘tripartite’ partnership through “Principles of Good Practice” and towards the formation of an “Asia and the Pacific Coalition on HIV and STI” for and by men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people, to ensure moving towards universal access of HIV and STI prevention, treatment, care and support services for men who have sex with men, gay men and transgender people.

(Note: The final version of these “Principles” and the terms of reference of the “Coalition” will be shared shortly)

New Delhi, India
26th September 2006