

# IMPROVING JOINT ADVOCACY BETWEEN SEXUAL RIGHTS AND HIV/AIDS MOVEMENTS

STRATEGIES  
FROM THE SOUTH



Building Synergies in HIV/AIDS  
and Sexual and Reproductive  
Health and Rights

## What:

Traditionally, the Sexual and Reproductive Rights movement, including Human Rights and women's rights and youth activist networks, has not been associated with the AIDS movement, which includes networks of NGOs/CBOs of PLWHA, LGBTT, sex workers and people who use drugs. Each one develops advocacy separately, and this has become an obstacle for making an effective impact on the HIV/AIDS response.

## How:

Based on the hypothesis that joint advocacy will improve results, in 2006 a project began in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean as South-South Cooperation: "STRATEGIES FROM THE SOUTH".

In May '06, 18 international/regional Sexual and Reproductive Rights (SRR) and HIV/AIDS networks held their first face-to-face meeting. Due to the specificities of each region, the second stage consisted of regional face-to-face meetings, incorporating a larger number and greater diversity of regional networks: 34 networks participated.

The growth and diversification of the members enriches the group with the perspective of each one and helped bring the project's attention to certain diversity issues, such as sexual diversity, as well as rights issues, particularly sexual rights.

In 2008-2010, the group increased from 34 to 43 networks, including, for example, a girl child's rights network: **Girl Child Network Worldwide**; a Human Rights network from Africa specialized in HIV: **ARASA**; as well as other new regional and international networks, such as **WINPUD**-Women in the International Network of People who Use Drugs.

## We did joint advocacy at:

Members of both groups of networks participated in international and/or regional forums:

- \* **UNGASS on HIV/AIDS** 2006 and 2008
- \* **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**, 2008, 2009 and 2010
- \* **AWID International Forum on the Rights of Women and Development**, 2008
- \* 42nd Session of the **Commission on Population and Development (CPD)**, 2009
- \* **Millennium Development Goals Civil Society Hearing**, June 2010

## Our voices:

*"Although the sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and HIV groups have been acknowledging the need to work together for many years, it is only now that we are beginning to see signs that the rhetoric is being translated into action at the programmes and services levels with better integration of health services. However, it is at the international advocacy level that the challenge remains as the HIV and SRHR movements continue to work in silos and in different spaces."*  
(Member from Asia Pacific)

*"We are facing much complex fundamentalist forces. However we are also helping to increase the visibility of the human rights agenda. We have to strengthen our advocacy on those rights to make them a reality... Unfortunately, sexual rights and reproductive rights of women are always the least important. But we must not give up. We will continue insisting..."* (Member from LAC)

*"Due to the cultural settings of my country, most people in the government are non corporative with the NGO community that deal with sexuality or strategies that enlightens youth about their sexuality."*  
(Member from Africa)

## Lessons learned:

The experiences allowed the networks to learn:

- \* **Consensus can be reached even on the most controversial issues**, including cultural and religious issues affecting the HIV/AIDS response. For example, in Africa members overcame their differences on religious principles allowing for joint positions to be established on homosexuality and sexuality education for adolescents and young people.
- \* The need to **strengthen south-south cooperation** because they face similar problems and constraints. Groups learned to better understand each other's interests and look for ways to put their interests together. For example, in Asia they made joint denunciations of programs like "100% condoms", and Anti-Trafficking laws which violate the human rights of sex workers.
- \* Joint advocacy encourages **both movements to recognize the integration of HIV/AIDS and SRHR**. For example, the International Commission on Population and Development-ICPD+15 preparatory process and joint advocacy helped improve knowledge and acceptance of the ICPD Program of Action among the HIV/AIDS movement. It also helped incorporate HIV/AIDS issues and other vulnerable groups into more traditional agenda's of the SRHR movement and overcome misunderstandings between both movements.
- \* **Advocacy documents are useful references for drafting language suggestions** to give to delegates, particularly around integration of SRHR and HIV/AIDS. For example, the ICPD+15 advocacy paper helped to incorporate language around sexual health and rights in the final resolution of the CPD (Commission on Population and Development), especially pushing to extend sexual rights to all people regardless of their sexual identity.
- \* Regional and international **joint advocacy between SRHR and HIV/AIDS movements strengthens the demands of both and increases the impact of their advocacy**. For example, at UNGASS on HIV/AIDS (2008), 56 women's civil society networks from both movements created the women's declaration holding leaders accountable for their promises to women and girls in the AIDS response. At ICPD+15 (2009), networks from both movements promoted the incorporation of HIV/AIDS into the international SRHR agenda, and HIV/AIDS issues were successfully incorporated into the final resolution.

## Next steps:

1. Strengthen advocacy to integrate SRHR and HIV/AIDS.
2. Broaden and link the achievements and obstacles of MDG 5 (Improve maternal health) and MDG 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases) and link them to MDG 3 (Promote gender equality and empower women).
3. Train young members of the networks to effectively engage in international advocacy at the UN.

This will be developed at the international as well as regional and country levels in our advocacy for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit in New York in September 2010 and for the Review of the UNGASS Commitments and Declaration on HIV/AIDS in 2011.

## We are:

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