

MEETING REPORT

Funding the Trans* HIV Response Meeting of Trans* Activists, Donors, and other Key Stakeholders

Background

Both the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM)** and the **United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)** have recently introduced new funding mechanisms involving country-level dialogue and strategy processes that aim to increase targeted HIV interventions to key populations, including transgender people. As the two largest HIV donors, GFATM and PEPFAR could have significant impact in reducing the incredibly high HIV burden experienced by transgender populations in many parts of the world. However, potential barriers exist that could prevent transgender organizations and communities from accessing these funding mechanisms.

On July 23, 2014, a side event was hosted by **amfAR**, the **Foundation for AIDS Research, Global Action for Trans* Equality (GATE)**, the **International Reference Group on Trans* and Gender Variant Communities and HIV/AIDS (ITRG)**, and the **Open Society Foundations (OSF)**, in conjunction with the International AIDS Conference 2014 in Melbourne. The meeting fostered dialogue between trans* activists and representatives from the GFATM and PEPFAR on effective and concrete ways for trans* organizations and communities to engage in the new GFATM and PEPFAR funding processes, with a particular emphasis on country-level funding mechanisms. The meeting was facilitated by **Abhina Aher** of the India HIV/AIDS Alliance.

Objectives for the meeting included:

- Highlighting existing data on the state of the trans* movement and the level of current investments by GFATM, PEPFAR, and other funders for HIV-focused trans* service delivery, advocacy, and research efforts at the local and national levels.
- Identifying opportunities and barriers for trans* organizations and communities participation in the country dialogue process of GFATM's and PEPFAR's country operational plans Strategizing about short-term and medium-term concrete actions that trans* activists, GFATM and PEPFAR representatives, and other stakeholders can take to increase trans* engagement in GFATM and PEPFAR funding processes
- Establishing mechanisms for ongoing dialogue between trans* activists and representatives from GFATM and PEPFAR.

Meeting Proceedings Summary

Addressing Gaps in Trans*-Focused Funding

After introductory remarks from **Amitava Sarkar** and **Joanne Keatley**, co-chairs of the ITRG, **Justus Eisfeld**, co-director of GATE, shared recent data from a GATE/American Jewish World Service study of 340 trans* and intersex organizations. The survey showed that most trans* organizations throughout the world operate with limited budgets and staff, which limits their capacity to address issues facing their community and to access the resources needed to do so. Summary data from the GATE/AJWS report presented included:

- 44% of organizations surveyed were trans*-led, 3% intersex-led, 12% were a mix of trans* and intersex-led, 9% were not trans*-led, and 32% provided no specific information on leadership.

- 54% of trans*-led organizations operated on less than 10K per year.
- 55% of organizations have no paid staff.
- The intersex movement is in a developing stage, and there are fewer resources available than for the trans* movement.
- Organizations where decisions about the trans* work are not made by trans* people get significantly more money than trans*-led organizations.
- HIV prevention services are a small part of what the trans* community needs. Most pressing is addressing root causes and social determinants of health (employment, education, poverty).
- A priority for trans* organizations is to expand into providing social services, trans*-friendly comprehensive healthcare, and access skills building activities.
- Many trans*-led organizations have limited financial management experience; however, when trained (which is a priority for most), trans* organizations are capable of managing larger grants.

Trans* Funding at PEPFAR

Following the survey results, **Cameron Wolf** of USAID/PEPFAR offered thoughts on current USAID/ PEPFAR policies and programming for trans* populations:

- PEPFAR is in a transition period, which presents an opportunity to improve and increase trans*-specific programming supported by the U.S. government. There is a new emphasis from PEPFAR leadership to make engaging more fully in human rights-based efforts a key focus.
- Over the next one to two years, all PEPFAR country teams will receive in-house gender and sexual diversity training, being coordinated by the Health Policy Project (HPP).
- PEPFAR and USAID recently announced *LINKAGES*—a US\$73 million, 5-year HIV initiative to support a comprehensive package of services for key populations, including trans* individuals. The project is led by FHI360, with sub-contracting partners IntraHealth International, PACT and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Over the next nine months, PEPFAR and the UN Family will be working with various constituents to develop global guidelines and best practices for trans*-specific programs. The Transgender Implementation Tool (TRANSIT) will use

community input to incorporate the guidelines in a useful document. PEPFAR/USAID has budgeted to include community consultations in the process.

- PEPFAR plans to be proactive (vs. reactionary) to legal issues experienced by key populations including trans* people across the globe. PEPFAR will be developing guidance for working on human rights in hostile settings and for monitoring human rights environment in these settings.
 - USAID Forward, a relatively new approach increasingly supports funding community-based organizations (CBOs) directly and providing capacity building assistance; this is another opportunity for trans*-specific organizations in the near future.
 - USAID is working to improve and measure civil society participation in decision making and planning.
 - Systems for monitoring violence and for ensuring that data monitoring doesn't increase risks for violence need improvement and are a focus for the future. A specific plan to address and ultimately end violence towards trans* communities is critical.
 - Country buy-in and ownership may cause risks for trans* activists, as well causing many other issues for trans* programming (especially in countries where trans* rights are severely restrained). PEPFAR's work with the UN family can be an asset in addressing the risks and violence.
 - In order to support trans* organizations, PEPFAR could offer more capacity building in financial management and other organizational development through mechanisms for funding lower capacity community organizations.
- ### *Concrete Actions with PEPFAR/USAID (Moving Forward)*
- Discuss guidance offered by the meeting attendees with the TRANSIT Steering Committee.
 - Work with PEPFAR partners in sharing innovation and best practices and continue to develop and explore sub-awards that link directly to services' impact on HIV.
 - PEPFAR/USAID to request that FHI 360 engage trans* activists in the development and implementation of the LINKAGES program.

Trans* Funding at the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFTAM)

Following Cameron's presentation, **Kate Thomson** from GFATM offered the following thoughts about trans* funding and programming:

The GFTAM is focused on investing in "impact", which will be impossible if trans*-led programming is not a component of their funding, including in from the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation activities. To date, trans*-specific programming has not been prioritized in GFTAM grants or in national programs. However, there have been some successes in GFTAM trans* programming that have all shown some promise for improving trans* programs, including community systems strengthening activities in Peru and Uruguay and a country dialogue process in El Salvador.

Opportunities with the new Global Fund Model:

Kate offered the following thoughts about the new funding model at the GFATM:

- The GFATM is adding new mechanisms for greater community dialogue within the national process. The Country Dialogue will be a way for civil society, including trans* activists, to work in coalition to have greater input into funding plans. Incidence and prevalence data will be used at a much greater rate to shape programming. There will also be new eligibility for funding requirements that CCMs have representatives from key populations.
- GFTAM is planning to invest US\$15 million over three years for a special initiative on Community, Rights and Gender, to provide technical assistance and capacity building to key populations and civil society networks; to ensure that technically sound interventions to address human rights barriers to accessing health services, gender equality and community system strengthening (CSS) are included in concept notes; to ensure that key populations are meaningfully engaged in Country Dialogues.
- GFATM leadership (Mark Dybul) has shown a clear commitment to LGBT programming. GFATM has dedicated staff specializing in sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) issues. However, GFTAM recognizes that legal and policy barriers are high and has prioritized supporting activities that challenge those barriers. As well, a Community, Rights and Gender Advisory Group has been formed to provide a critical mechanism for the Secretariat to remain informed by the priorities of all constituencies including trans* individuals.
- GFATM has developed a new template to improve investment tracking.
- GFATM is launching a Key Populations Action Plan.
- The GFATM secretariat is not responsible for CCM composition. Trans* activists need to advocate at the national level with the CCM and work with other communities to ensure meaningful representation on CCMs. The Global Fund Board also includes three opportunities for engagement from the trans* community; the communities delegation, and the two NGO delegations to the board.

Following Kate's presentation, several colleagues voiced concern about GFATM's practices:

- Various participants were doubtful that a trans* person would be the key population representative on the CCM, highlighting the importance of trans* activists working in coalition with other key population activists. Additionally, one participant mentioned that trans* people have been left out of CCM decision-making processes for so long that they are skeptical about a new process. All were in agreement that the CCM must become more open to trans* activists' participation.
- There is concern about the GFATM recent collaboration with Robert Carr Network Fund to assist with the Special Initiative on Community, Rights and Gender. Since most trans* networks are not part of the Robert Carr funding, they may miss out on such opportunities.
- Various participants recommended that the GFATM support trans*-specific projects that are not grouped with MSM.

Case Studies

Following the discussions with PEPFAR and GFATM representatives, colleagues from two community-based organizations, the Thai Transgender Alliance and Red Trans Peru, offered their experiences in partnering with PEPFAR (Thailand) and the GFATM (Peru):

A: Thailand (Nada Chaityajit and Nicha Rongram – Thai Transgender Alliance)

PEPFAR supported a trans-specific HIV testing and psychosocial support program, Sisters, in Pattaya, Thailand. Over a three year period, HIV testing among trans* individuals increased by 25%. Thanks to capacity-strengthening activities from PSI, the program has strong monitoring and evaluation systems.

Case Studies continued

In terms of recommendations, Nada and Nicha suggested that:

- Many trans* individuals in Thailand seek information and social support via the Internet, hence PEPFAR/USAID and GFATM need to increase support for communication technology approaches to HIV prevention and treatment access.
- To date, most PEPFAR/USAID and GFATM programs have focused on HIV epidemiology and biomedical prevention methods. A better way to reach trans* individuals would be to also focus on structural issues, such as legal reform and access to hormone therapy, which will have greater impact of trans* individuals' lives.
- Trans* organizations and activists have limited opportunities to meet and dialogue with funders.
- There need to be stronger links between country level organizing and regional coalitions.

B: Peru (Jana Villayzan – Red Trans Peru)

Under the new funding model, GFATM supported a trans-specific civil society participation program aimed at fostering greater involvement of trans individuals in the CCM process and other public policy arenas. Trainings were offered to trans* women, who can now better understand and articulate their needs regarding the CCM process. Trans* women activists trained through the program are advocating for stronger legislation for gender identity and human rights issues and for more systematic documentation of violence and abuse against them. Red Trans Peru next is planning to use communication technology to increase the reach of their HIV prevention programming for trans* women. This GFATM supported pilot project has been viewed as quite successful and is being considered for replication in other countries.

Final Recommendations

Following the case studies, participants offered the following recommendations regarding commitments for trans* HIV funding.

- Trans* communities and activists are quite talented and know what they want and what their communities need; however, they need to have their organizational capacity-strengthened to be able to manage larger budgets. Technical assistance should be offered from all donors related to financial management and evaluation.
- More sharing of best practices among trans* networks and activists at the national and international level is needed. Such sharing will strengthen programming.
- Donors need to invest in mapping and population estimates of trans* individuals. Such issues are vital to increased support from donors such as PEPFAR/USAID and GFATM.
- Existing tools used by other key populations for healthcare access and advocacy can be adopted to create trans* specific resources. UHAL, the East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative will be releasing size estimation data for East Africa.
- At the 2016 International AIDS Conference in Durban, a trans*-specific pre-conference is warranted.
- Donors should prioritize the creation of mechanisms and structures that do not require trans* organizations to work under fiscal agents to receive funding. Helping trans* organizations to formally register is a good first step.
- Accountability from donors is very important. In the past, funds have been misappropriated, which is as much the fault of the organizations and individuals who abuse their power as it is of the donors who did not hold them accountable.
- Trans* organizations need funding to hire staff. Salaries and stipends for trans* individuals is vital, and donors need to recognize this fact.
- Opportunities need to be created for trans* organizations to formally meet with PEPFAR/USAID, GFATM, and UN national level leaders and staff. By building personal relationships, greater resources and support will flow.