

Exchange and Learning Workshop for Field Workers in HIV Prevention Projects for Men having Sex with Men in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

Venue: Vientiane, Lao PDR

Date: 5-7 September 2006

Organisers: The Center for HIV/AIDS and STIs, The Ministry of Public Health, Lao PDR, The Burnet Institute and UNESCO Bangkok

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Introduction

Recently, several donors and international organizations (including FHI, CDC, PSI, USAID, TREAT, POLICY, UNESCO and UNAIDS) have started working together to better integrate and share lessons learned in responses to the HIV epidemic among Men having Sex with Men (MSM) in the region. A standardized 'comprehensive package of interventions' was developed and agreed upon, a regional strategy paper and work plan were developed and a regional Secretariat was established. To date these efforts have focused on the programmatic and 'strategic' level. Complementary to these immensely valuable efforts, UNESCO would like to conduct a workshop bringing together field-level volunteers, peer educators and outreach workers to explore what they can learn from each other, and to provide some additional training, if needed.

This workshop aims to bring together the men making MSM interventions 'tick' - those who personally reach MSM at risk of HIV/STI or caring for MSM already infected.

The workshop is an initiative of UNESCO. It is in line with the two-year vision developed during the CDC/FHI/USAID regional MSM workshop, in which UNESCO played a major role. It will be held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, and will be logistically supported and organized by the Burnet Institute. Funding support is provided by CDC and UNAIDS.

Objectives

- To share lessons learned, identify obstacles and propose solutions in the work of field workers in MSM programs
- To discuss the issue of 'AIDS fatigue' and brainstorm about ways to 'repackage' messages related to HIV prevention, promotion of VCT and related to ART treatment
- To provide training and an update of the latest developments in HIV/AIDS (including epidemiology in the region and new knowledge about treatment and vaccine research, an update about theories of behavior change supporting peer education and implications for the field, different types of intervention, etc)
- To field-test a standardized set of test questions, which UNESCO is now developing, that will be used as an examination tool for future outreach workers and peer educators.

Geographical scope

The workshop will invite 10 peer/outreach workers from each of the following 4 countries: Thailand, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Cambodia . It is expected that there will be 2 lead facilitators, and a maximum of 5 observers, bringing the total number of participants to 47.

Translation

The language of communication is English. Since it is expected that most participants will have limited English, translation facilities will need to be available (Vietnamese, Khmer, Thai and Lao).