



MEETING REPORT

“Moving from Intentions to Action”

**Second International Expert Meeting on HIV Prevention for Men who have sex with Men (MSM), Women who have sex with Women (WSW), and Transgenders (TG)
Amsterdam, 5-6 November 2009**

Contents

Preface	3
I. Executive Summary	4
Background	6
II. Meeting deliberations	6
1. Welcome	6
a. Welcome statements	6
2. Opening Speech	7
3. Main meeting themes	8
a. Time of opportunity	9
b. Moving from intentions to actions and expecting results	10
c. Importance of the human rights approach	10
d. Need for cultural sensitivity in working with sexual minorities	10
e. Continued ignorance about and invisibility of WSW and TG issues	11
f. Best practices, novel approaches and scaling up	11
g. Value added of a better dialogue between donors and grantees	12
h. Importance of research	13
4. Workshops and panel discussions	14
a. Round 1: workshops on implications for policies and implementation in terms of epidemiological facts, variances and absence of data, decriminalisation and destigmatisation in a hostile environment, and gender identities and sexual variances	14
b. Round 2: workshops on policy and prevention-programme development and implementation: effects and opportunities for organisations and specific target groups	15
c. Round 3: workshops on recommendations for policy, implementation, research and funding, and opportunities and challenges for increased cooperation and partnership building	16
5. Expert Meeting conclusions and recommendations	17
6. Panel discussion on the outcomes of the Expert Meeting	20

Preface

Dear reader,

Proudly we present to you the report of the Hivos-Schorer Expert Meeting on HIV Prevention for MSM, WSW, and TG, which was held in Amsterdam on 5 and 6 November. Looking back, we can say that we are pleased with the outcomes and results of the meeting. The two meeting days were full of presentations, discussions and debates, and we were extremely happy to see so many participants in the meeting. We could welcome 130 participants from all around the globe, almost twice as much as in the last expert meeting in 2007.

The Expert Meeting showed that there is a great need for meetings like this to learn from each other, and to discuss and formulate recommendations for future research, policies and implementing programmes on MSM/WSW/TG and HIV prevention.

As said, the meeting produced a good set of conclusions and recommendations, but now the challenge is to put these into action. We cannot simply afford to wait another two years for a next expert meeting to put in practice what we recommend. We surely hope that all the readers will take up a part of the work that lies before us. Only together and with joint efforts we can improve the situation of MSM/WSW and TGs. We have to ensure they are visible in research, can participate in prevention programmes, have access to care and services, are able to exercise their rights, and will have an improved overall well-being. The momentum to work towards lasting changes for these groups is now. Let us move indeed from intentions to actions... now!

Manuela Monteiro
Executive Director
Hivos

Ferdinand Strijthagen
Executive Director
Schorer

I. Executive Summary

“Among sexual minorities you can not address HIV with lube and condoms unless you also address issues such as low self esteem and self worth due to stigmatisation and marginalisation.”

Shivananda Khan, NAZ Foundation International

The Second International Expert Meeting on HIV Prevention for Men who have sex with Men (MSM), Women who have sex with Women (WSW), and Transgenders (TG) brought together 130 activist, community representatives and experts from the areas of policy, research, funding, and implementation of programmes. The format of the Expert Meeting was a mixture of expert presentations on a wide variety of issues concerning sexual minorities, such as decriminalization and destigmatisation; best practices and novel approaches in prevention, or knowledge gaps in social, behavioural and epidemiological research; workshops to discuss and produce recommendations on policy and research issues; and expert panel discussions.

The Second Expert Meeting took place in a different, overall more enabling environment than the First Expert Meeting on HIV Prevention for MSM and WSW (September 2007). Over the last two years, a series of positive developments have created a **window of opportunity** for action in favour of sexual minorities. Among those favourable changes are the repeal of the sodomy stipulation from the Indian penal code by the High Court of India in the summer of 2009, the publication of policies on sexual minorities by major global actors, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), UNAIDS and UNDP (2008/2009); and the repeal of anti-homosexuality legislation in most remaining Latin American countries in which they still existed (2008).

Among the main themes that emerged during the meeting were:

a) Continued validity of the human rights based approach

The human rights based approach, i.e. to **embed the work on sexual minorities firmly in a human rights context**, continues to be crucial. Human rights violations against MSM, WSW and TGs continue around the world on a daily basis. The human rights based approach - which underlines that sexual minority rights are human rights - can help build the case for improving the lives of sexual minorities towards policy makers, politicians and other decision makers at the national, regional and international level.

b) Importance of research

The Expert Meeting made clear that there are **major gaps in research and data availability around sexual minorities**. The meeting participants called for an increased effort to close those gaps, in particular for WSW and TG issues, in order to improve programming for sexual minorities.

c) Value added of a closer dialogue between donors and grantees
Meeting participants representing sexual minority organisations unanimously expressed **the desire for donor funding to become more focused on long term sustainability** and to actively support capacity building of MSM, WSW and TG service and human rights organisations. Donor organisation representatives, on the other hand, stressed the desire for recipient organisations to “know their donors” and cultivate long-term relationships built on trust¹.

The **Expert Meeting recommendations**² were issued in four technical areas, i.e. research, funding, policy and implementation. With regard to research, among the recommendations were the need to better integrate research and the latest research findings into the continuum of HIV programming; for research to be appropriate to the research context and implemented with valid research tools; to acknowledge the ever changing and evolving environment in which research takes place; and to pursue an interdisciplinary approach.

As to funding, the Expert Meeting recommended, among others, a continuous dialogue between funders and grantees; more space for research in donor funding; and stepped up capacity building for MSM, WSW and TG service organisations.

With regard to implementation, the participants recommended a better integration of TG with MSM and WSW activities and organisations; a drastic increase of knowledge generation on transgender issues through action research; and the reclassification of transgenderism from a mental health disorder to a medical condition.

Lastly, in the area of policy, the recommendations centred around a critical review of the policies of all major actors in the area of sexual minorities and for policies to be community-led and informed.

With the themes and recommendations identified, the Expert Meeting provided a future framework for action at a time when it is opportune to begin expecting positive results and changes in the lives of sexual minorities around the globe.

¹ For a complete overview of the Expert Meeting themes, please refer to Section 3.

² For a complete overview of the Expert Meeting recommendations, please refer to Section 4d.

Background

Since 2007, much has happened in the field of MSM/WSW/TG and HIV prevention. Their issues have been put on the international HIV agenda, to a more or lesser extent. They have become more visible and outspoken. There are more services delivered, but still.... in many parts of the world this not happening. Especially in the countries of the Global South and East, the situation for MSM/WSW and TG in regard to HIV prevention is problematic. Many things are unknown, there is taboo and stigma, criminalisation and violence, hiding away and ignorance.

The first Expert Meeting in 2007 formulated recommendations and we can report on progress, but much more needs to be done. Reason enough for Hivos and Schorer to organise a second Expert Meeting with the aim to bring together activists, programme implementers, policy makers, researchers and donors and work together on new recommendations. Especially on WSW and TGs, recommendations needed to be formulated and therefore time in the meeting was specifically dedicated to the issues of these two groups.

But with the meeting we aimed as well to move a step further...from intentions to action in order to see if we can get clear commitments from participants to take some of the recommendations further into action. That was our starting point for organising the meeting.

II. Meeting deliberations

1. Welcome

a. Welcome statements

"We have come a long way, had our successes and set backs, but there remains much more we need to learn in the area of HIV prevention for sexual minorities."

Manuela Monteiro, Executive Director, (Hivos)

In her opening statement, **Manuela Monteiro, Executive Director, (Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries-Hivos)**, emphasised that Hivos' involvement with HIV prevention for MSM and WSW and TGs dates back to 1991 when a first policy on issues regarding these populations was developed. She said that even though Hivos has learned a lot throughout the years, there remains much more that Hivos and partners need to learn. In particular, she noted the need for increased research and to translate the results of this research into effective programming. Mrs. Monteiro added that it was crucial for the Second International Expert Meeting to include transgender issues. Mrs. Monteiro expressed hope that the Expert Meeting would lead to real commitments and agreements, and to the engagement of new actors in the area of HIV prevention for MSM, WSW and TGs.

In his opening remarks, **Ferdinand Strijthagen, Executive Director, Schorer Foundation**, said that the September 2007 Expert Meeting on HIV Prevention for MSM and WSW laid a solid foundation for working with sexual minorities. The time has come to move from intention to action. As an encouraging sign, Mr. Strijthagen pointed out that MSM issues have become more prominent in HIV prevention since 2007. Organisations such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Fund now have policies in place addressing the issues of sexual minorities. However, there is still a lack of sufficient visibility of this population and not enough programmatic support.

Mr. Strijthagen added that the Expert Meeting had two goals, first to discuss gaps between policy and actual implementation and second to deliberate and propose more adequate approaches for HIV prevention among MSM, WSW and TGs. He ended by extending a warm thank you to the sponsors of the Expert Meeting, i.e. UNAIDS, UNDP, AIDS Fonds, Sidaction, and the International AIDS Alliance.

Expert Meeting objectives

- Discuss gaps between policy and actual implementation
- Propose more adequate approaches for HIV prevention among MSM, WSW and TGs

2. Opening Speech

“Sexual minorities continue to be ignored, underfunded and underserved.”

Marijke Wijnroks, Dutch AIDS Ambassador

In her opening speech, Marijke Wijnroks, AIDS Ambassador for the Netherlands, provided a broad overview of issues with regard to MSM, WSW and TGs and HIV prevention. She noted the dearth of data in this area, which means that MSM, WSW and TGs are marginalised even when it comes to statistics. If data exist, they are largely on MSM, despite strong indications of the vulnerability of TGs. Outright discrimination against sexual minorities continues in large parts of the world, with 77 countries and three territories around the world still criminalising sexual relations between men, for example. She also highlighted the insufficient participation of sexual minorities in programme design and implementation, in the Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) and at the political level.

At the same time, Ms. Wijnroks highlighted a series of positive developments in the last years, such as the recent policy guidance on sexual minorities from UNAIDS, UNDP and the Global Fund, increased attention to sexual minority issues in country coordinated proposals to the Global Fund, and open discussion of same-sex issues at the national level in Malawi.

In terms of what should be done to improve the situation, she emphasised the need for the strengthening and empowerment of groups representing sexual minorities. She stressed the continuous support of the government of the Netherlands to sexual minorities in its development assistance, with the priority issues being HIV prevention and the promotion of human rights.

In concluding, Ms. Wijnroks said there continues to be a large unmet need among sexual minorities for services and programming, but that presently there is a window of opportunity for action. The present financial crisis might be an opportunity for sexual minorities programming as prevention programming needs to become more focused and even better based on the principle of “Know your epidemic.”

“Know your epidemic”

For every two persons accessing HIV treatment, another five are newly infected with the virus. Given the gap, there is broad agreement among scientific, government and civil society communities on the need to intensify HIV prevention efforts. UNAIDS promotes HIV prevention responses based on the concept of “Know your epidemic,” i.e. that are tailored to local contexts and are evidence-informed through epidemiological analysis, behavioural data and an understanding of social and gender norms.

In practical terms this means that HIV programming for sexual minorities is always indicated when the epidemiological situation (e.g. high prevalence and/or incidence among these groups) warrants it. On the other hand, this concept stresses the need to tailor programming to the specific local context.

See: http://www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/Resources/FeatureStories/archive/2009/20090105_Know_your_Epi.asp

3. Main meeting themes

“Renewal and innovation are quite important in our work but we need to pay homage to those heroes who paved the way for sexual minorities, such as Simon Nkoli.”

Michael Bartos, UNAIDS

The main themes that emerged during the meeting deliberations, presentations and contributions by participants were as follows:

a. Time of opportunity

Meeting participants stressed that the situation of MSM, WSW and TGs around the world continues to present a mixed picture. On the one hand, recently there have been considerable positive developments, for instance the striking down of the sodomy stipulation from the Indian penal code by the High Court of India in 2009, or the development of policies on sexual minorities by major global actors, such as the Global Fund³, and UNAIDS and UNDP⁴.

On the other hand, the last year has seen an increase in violence and criminalisation of sexual minorities in countries such as Burundi, Lithuania, Moldova and Uganda. The current global economic downturn and financial distress have led to growing fundamentalism and populism. Also, infection rates among MSM are still unacceptably high. For example, in all Western European countries and the United States, MSM account for approximately 50% of all new HIV infections.⁵

Overall, however, meeting participants agreed that **the situation has dramatically changed over the last two years in favour of sexual minority issues**. Currently, there is a **window of opportunity** to expand activities for MSM, WSW and TGs and to strive for concrete improvements in the living conditions of MSM, WSW and TGs.

Recent positive developments for sexual minorities

- Striking down of the sodomy stipulation from the Indian penal code by the High Court of India in the summer of 2009
- Development of policies on sexual minorities by major global actors, such as the Global Fund, UNAIDS and UNDP (2008/2009)
- Recent leadership of UNDP – within the UN system – in the area of MSM⁶
- Increased number of countries reporting on MSM services in the UNGASS reports
- Repeal of anti-homosexuality legislation in all remaining Latin American countries in which they still existed (2008)
- First UN declaration ever on sexual orientation and gender identity (18 December 2008)
- Existence of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organisations and activism in almost all African countries nowadays

³ See http://www.msmandhiv.org/documents/GT_INT_GFATM_SOGIstrategy_PRES_000.pdf

⁴ See http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2009/jc1720_action_framework_msm_en.pdf

⁵ http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2008/jc1510_2008_global_report_pp29_62_en.pdf,

⁶ In April 2008, UNDP was designated lead agency, among the co-sponsors of UNAIDS, for MSM issues.

b. Moving from intentions to actions and expecting results

Based and building on the currently enabling environment, the Expert Meeting participants expressed the desire for a paradigm change in working on MSM, WSW and TG issues. While it was necessary and sufficient formerly to mainly point out and build awareness about sexual minority issues, currently it is opportune to begin to **identify concrete barriers to the full enjoyment of human rights by MSM, WSW and TGs and to tackle those obstacles**. In other words, it is the right time to move from intentions to actions, and to expect concrete results and improvements in the living conditions of sexual minorities.

c. Importance of the human rights approach

The Expert Meeting underlined the continued importance of the human rights based approach, i.e. to **embed work on sexual minorities firmly in a human rights context**. Global human rights violations against MSM, WSW and TGs continue on a daily basis. The human rights approach - which makes it clear that sexual minority rights are human rights - can help build the case for improving living conditions for sexual minorities towards policy makers, politicians and other decision makers at the national, regional and international level. It has become clear over the last years that there is a positive correlation between an enabling legal and social environment and the ability to reach sexual minorities with services and programming activities.

“On political will: (1) Homosexuality has become a good distraction. It keeps people from discussing the real issues affecting their countries. (2) There is no strong political will to change the state of things at the global level despite the movement at the UN to decriminalize consenting same-sex behaviour”

Joel Nana, AMSHER

That said, meeting participants pointed out that a supportive legal environment in itself is not sufficient to improve the actual situation of sexual minorities at the country level. As an example, South Africa was noted, as it continues to have serious human rights issues and violations towards its sexual minorities despite having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world with regard to the rights and legal status of sexual minorities.

d. Need for cultural sensitivity in working with sexual minorities

Meeting participants from all over the world expressed a **need for cultural sensitivity in the work with sexual minorities**. They stressed, for instance, that terminology plays a great role in the ability to reach target populations and added that Western-based, complicated or technical sounding terminology, jargon or abbreviations, such as MSM or WSW, frequently do not resonate in local contexts where these concepts are not native or where there are differing and diverse concepts of sexual identity.

Reflecting this was an appeal by various meeting participants to move from a perceived focus on sexual *identity* to a greater focus on sexual *behaviour(s)* in order to better target vulnerable populations with programming and services. We need to take into account that the world cannot be classified in binary systems (male/female), as in the western world is often used. In South Asia, we must use trinary concepts (male/not-male/female) and systems of thinking. Failing to do so, will leave out many groups from current HIV prevention programmes. This counts specifically for those, who identify themselves in the third gender

e. Continued ignorance about and invisibility of WSW and TG issues

WSW and TGs and their issues continue to be more ignored and marginalised than the issues of MSM. The Expert Meeting made clear that there is a need to move from the conventional perception that WSW are at a very low risk of HIV infection. WSW often, apart from their sexual relations with women, also have relations with men. They furthermore face issues of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), drug use, (sexual) violence, and alcoholism. There is a blatant gap in the research data on WSW and TG.

Further, TGs seem to get less attention in existing programmes and there is little acknowledgement on the different issues and needs between male-to-female TGs (MtF) and female-to-male TGs (FtM). The first group is seen as a high risk population in regard to HIV, the second not. While they do have MSM contacts and should be seen and included in MSM programmes as well.

Altogether, more attention needs to be directed – within sexual minority work – to WSW and TG issues. Experts in the field of sexual minorities need to become more aware of the specific situations and needs of the different groups instead of lumping MSM, WSW and TGs together as a group with seemingly similar issues.

f. Best practices, novel approaches and scaling up

“Sometimes, programming may open the way for greater space, sometimes we should focus on creating the space first”

Alan Brotherton, International Aids Alliance

On best practices in HIV prevention, it was made clear that preventing HIV involves change in individuals, families and communities. But the ability to change is not always fully in our own hands. It is influenced by context, laws, culture, policies. In practical terms, this means comprehensive programs working to bring about change at all four levels, directed by or in collaboration with those most affected. We need to address risk reduction, but also vulnerability reduction and be realistic about risk and pleasure.

On novel approaches, the UNAIDS Action Framework for Men who have Sex with Men and Transgender People specifically want to increase the human rights situation. It tries to reach the objectives by developing partnerships with human rights movements, support political action, deliver emergency responses and undertake efforts to build evidence on the public health impact of human rights violations. On the other hand, UNDP sees new opportunities and roles for itself in scaling up the responses, for example by providing advisory support for countries to address MSM and trans issues, or through acting as a broker between the Global Fund, MSM & Trans community organisations and governments.

“There are new opportunities with the Global Fund SOGI Strategy. The UNDP is the PR for more than 60 grants in 26 countries, and plays a major role in supporting Global Fund grants”

Dr. Cheikh Traoré, UNDP

g. Value added of a better dialogue between donors and grantees

Meeting participants representing sexual minority organisations unanimously expressed **the desire for donor funding to become more focused on long term sustainability** and to actively support the capacity building of MSM, WSW and TG services and human rights organisations. They welcomed a continuous dialogue with donors and expressed that donor funding priorities should reflect the needs and realities on the ground, at the grassroots level.

On the other hand, donor representatives explained that the current funding environment stresses the need for donor money to produce concrete results and to demonstrate the positive effect of these results. They also made clear that funding can not always be long term and that donors’ system are not always equipped to respond to stand-alone, emergency requests for funding. Lastly donors emphasised the concept of “Know your donor,” i.e. for potential donor recipients to make themselves knowledgeable about different donors’ priorities, funding processes and mechanisms, and for current recipients to actively seek a beneficial and continuous relationship with the donor.

Both donor and grantee representatives welcomed suggestions to improve their dialogue and concrete activities, such as a Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)-led bilateral LGBT dialogue, scheduled for the spring of 2010 in Stockholm, Sweden.

SIDA's priorities and approaches in supporting sexual minorities

In her presentation to the Expert Meeting, Pia Engstrand (SIDA), outlined SIDA's priorities and approaches in supporting sexual minorities. She explained that Sweden's international efforts on HIV and AIDS rest firmly on two principles: strengthened respect for human rights and greater gender equality. She said that SIDA's work with sexual minorities focus *on the rights and empowerment of LGBT- communities* because SIDA considers human rights as the fundamental basis for access to health care and HIV services.

According to Engstrand, SIDA's development cooperation also rests on the notion that all human rights are universal, interrelated and interdependent and that every individual is entitled to them. In that sense, the protection of LGBT rights is basic to universal rights protection. LGBT-issues have been identified as a key priority for SIDA and an area that is clearly underfunded. SIDA's ambition, therefore, is to scale up rather than scale down efforts to support sexual minorities, despite overall cuts to the Swedish development budget in 2010.

Pia Engstrand said that SIDA as a development partner also has a role to play at the policy and dialogue level. Sweden has, together with other like minded countries in the EU, on several occasions, condemned the Ugandan government's non-willingness to protect the human rights of LGBT-people in the country.

h. Importance of research

The Expert Meeting made abundantly clear that there are major gaps in research and data availability around sexual minorities. Both presentations by Mrs. Laetita Rispel and Mr. Carlos Cáceres stressed the issues. The knowledge of epidemic is variable per context and region. Legal restrictions, religious and cultural taboos concerning homosexuality are important hindrances in doing research and getting data.

For transgenders the risk of HIV infection tends to be very high compared to MSM and the general population, but there is little concrete data and the group is difficult to access. There is a clear need to disaggregate transgenders from MSM and do specific needs assessments and surveillance. On WSW, it is important to recognise that many WSW have (or have had) (forced) sex with men and are therefore not immune to HIV infections, but again there are few concrete data.

Meeting participants expressed that one possible way of alleviating this problem would be for donors to actively build research into their funding and to increase efforts to disseminate research findings. Community representatives appealed for a greater dialogue between researchers and community representatives and to always ensure sensitivity of research to the local context.

i. Need for partnerships and alliances: increased cooperation, networking and stronger leadership

In her presentation, Mrs. Fikile Vilakazi stressed the importance of developing partnerships. She started with the statement that many of us are affected by HIV/AIDS, regardless our sexual orientation and gender identity. This must create a sense of collective urgency in addressing the HIV pandemic. We have to work all together as a collective. There are enough opportunities, as long we respect each other's values and principles in the process of partnership and movement building. Key issues in building partnerships are a consultative and participatory approach, collective decision making (which includes all stakeholders), the establishment of shared principles from the beginning of the partnership and the creation of an environment that is based on trust and transparency.

4. Workshops and panel discussions

In a series of workshops, the Expert Meeting participants discussed issues of sexual minorities in different technical areas. The recommendations, opportunities and challenges identified by the working groups are multiple. In the annex, you will find all the results from the workshops. For the reader, we will present some of the highlights here:

a. Round 1: workshops on implications for policies and implementation in terms of epidemiological facts, variances and absence of data, decriminalisation and destigmatisation in a hostile environment, and gender identities and sexual variances

MSM:

1. Need for more data and increased funding for community centred research, but also the dissemination of existing data in an easily understandable way
2. Linking with human rights agenda: not only in contexts with oppressive laws, but also in situations where enabling laws exist
3. Linking with existing national frameworks
4. Linking agendas and issues with WSW and TG and embrace the complexity and diversity as there is a communality of purpose and issues.

WSW:

1. Need for more research and data
2. Empowerment of women to represent their communities
3. Linking with (mainstream) women's groups

TG:

1. Invest in basic needs of TG
2. Linking with MSM and WSW issues
3. Destigmatisation: information about TG issues to the general public, for example through media (demystification of TG)

General:

1. Use existing networks and programmes to disseminate information aimed at MSM, WSW and TG.
2. MSM, WSW and TGs should build partnerships and alliances with other human rights organisations

b. Round 2: workshops on policy and prevention-programme development and implementation: effects and opportunities for organisations and specific target groups

Capacity building:

1. Importance of Community Centered Research
2. Systematic investment in capacity building (as part of HIV/AIDS funding, i.e. flexibility in using the funds)
3. Investment in systematization of best practices as basis for up-scaling

Youth:

1. Empowerment of youth (for example: creation of youth platforms)
2. Creation of youth friendly counselling services and safe places: important in coming out processes
3. Attention to drug and alcohol (ab)use

PLHIV:

1. Linking MSM and PLHIV agendas
2. More attention for secondary prevention: treatment
3. Importance of positive health, dignity and prevention

Sex work and drug use:

1. More data needed on risk behaviour and substance abuse
2. Attention to the differences between female and male sex work

c. Round 3: workshops on recommendations for policy, implementation, research and funding, and opportunities and challenges for increased cooperation and partnership building

Research:

1. Community capacity building (as well for the implementation of community oriented research as for understanding scientific research)
2. Action oriented research, which leads to implementation

Partnerships:

1. Focus on key issues
2. Create opportunities for broader partnerships
3. Develop (work)plans for strategic partnerships (documentation of agreements)

Funding:

1. Make long term funding possible
2. Include the possibility for funding for capacity building
3. Make funds available for all regions

Global Fund:

1. Necessity for investment in Global Fund proposals
2. Manage the process well in a way that it strengthens and does not damage the community (responsibility for both: Global Fund money should not divide the community, community groups should not compete among each other but be complementary)

5. Expert Meeting conclusions and recommendations

A panel of experts presented the conclusions and recommendations, based on the plenary presentations and discussions in the different workshops on both days. The conclusions and recommendations were given on four areas: research, funding, implementation and policy. The recommendations were as follows:

i. Research

- ***Integration of research and programming:*** There is a need to better integrate research and latest research findings into the continuum of HIV programming, from needs assessment, to policies, strategies, and actual implementation. There needs to be a coherent chain of research and implementation and a structural application of research. The importance of research should also be recognised by the donors.
- ***Validity of research:*** Research needs to be appropriate to the research context and implemented with valid research tools. It needs to ask the right questions reflecting an understanding of the community, the cultural context and psycho-social issues. And needs to be based on community needs. The dialogue between researchers and communities needs to be improved to better understand the realities of communities.

- ***Evolving environment:*** Research and researchers need to acknowledge that research takes place in an ever changing and evolving environment. The introduction of ARVs, for example, has led to a myriad of changes, for instance in the way people think about, react to and behave around HIV. Researchers need to be aware of these changes and adapt accordingly.
- ***Interdisciplinary approach:*** Research should pursue, wherever possible, an interdisciplinary approach.
- ***Subjects:*** There is a great need for more research on sexual practices, sexual violence, substance abuse and sex work. The issues of WSW and TGs specifically need strong attention of researchers.

ii. Funding

- ***Donor dialogue and coordination:*** Donor dialogue is important both among donors themselves to improve donor coordination, and between donors and grantees to enhance the donors' understanding of sexual minority and community issues. Do not follow a top-down approach, listen to local voices.
- ***Continuity of donor dialogue:*** Donor dialogue with grantees should be continuous and integrated throughout the funding process. This could significantly support the skills building process of grantees.
- ***Space for research:*** Donor funding should provide space for research to be built into and integrated with programming. This could improve the identification and sharing of best practices.
- ***Capacity building:*** Funding should be focused on building the long term capacity of organisations representing sexual minorities. Capacity building activities should – as a matter of standard practice - explicitly be built into programme funding.
- ***Sustainable funding:*** There should be more *sustainable* funding available for sexual minority organisations. In addition, funders are requested to fill the gap between small scale funding on the one hand and long term, large scale funding on the other. Funding should aim at fostering the leadership role of civil society on issues of sexual minorities.

iii. Implementation

- **Transgenders and HIV:** There is a need to address the high infection rates among TGs.
- **Integration of TGs with MSM and WSW activities and organisations:** There is a low level of consciousness about TG needs within the MSM and WSW communities. TGs are part of other groups, such as gays, lesbians, MSM, WSW and heterosexuals. Other sexual minorities should increase their efforts to understand and better integrate TGs into their communities. Accordingly, there should be the opportunity for female to male TGs to participate in MSM activities, and for male to female TGs to participate in WSW activities.
- **Drastically increase knowledge generation on TG issues through action research:** There is a great need to invest time and funds in research to increase the knowledge on TG issues, in, among other, the areas of:
 - Legal status of TGs
 - Access to health services
 - Employment opportunities
- **Reclassification of transgenderism:** Gender identity variance (“transgenderism”) should be reclassified from its current classification as a mental health disorder in the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) and the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) International Classification Of Diseases (ICD). Instead it should be classified as a medical condition. This would provide a diagnostic category in the ICD that would accommodate the needs of those gender identity variant people who require medical care for their condition, but without the stigma attached to mental disorder.
- **Implementation emphasis needs shift:** In implementation of programmes a shift is needed with greater focus on sexual behaviours and less on identity. As well as implementers need to consider culture, religion and history in working with sexual minorities. In general, the implementation needs to be simplified.

iv. Policy

- **Broad approach to policy making:** There should be a broad definition of policy. Institutional policies of a wide range of players in society and international development should be critically looked at, including the major global players in sexual minority issues. There is also a need to take a critical look at the “politics of research,” .i.e. who funds whom why, how is monitoring and evaluation done and its insights used, and are there attempts at creating real partnerships?
- **Community-led policy development:** Policy development has to be community led. The standard should be “with us and by us”, not “for us and about us.” Policy development should include youth and all different populations across the sexual minority spectrum. The challenge is how communities can be better involved in policy dialogues and development.
- **Work across countries and regions:** Efforts should be stepped up to work in a more coordinated fashion across countries and regions and to overcome language barriers. This could enhance regional mobilisation and collaboration.
- **Use of information and communication technologies:** Inexpensive new information technologies should be used more systematically for the benefit of sexual minority issues, for instance through the use of skype and mobile telephone technology for advocacy purposes.
- **Inclusion and stronger attention for implementation of policies:** WSW and TGs need to be actively included in policy development and implementation. If policies aim for decriminalisation, it needs to be accompanied / followed by destigmatisation programmes. Policies alone are not enough! The real challenge comes with inclusion and implementation.

6. Panel discussion on the outcomes of the Expert Meeting

In a final plenary discussion, a panel of experts presented their thoughts on the outcomes of the Expert Meeting as well as further suggestions for the future course of action for sexual minorities in the four areas of research, policy, implementation and funding.

i. Research

With regard to the area of research, Mr. Theo Sandfort, Columbia University, concluded that the Expert Meeting made clear what the gaps in research are and how important research for the agenda of sexual minorities is. Research should always be implemented in a way that understands and takes into account local circumstances and culture.

He said that it was time to begin using research data about sexual minorities and actually put them into practice. He stressed that the invisibility of WSW issues in research needs to be tackled and suggested as a pressing research issue a better understanding of the impact and implications of homophobia and the development of effective approaches to counter homophobia.

He added the following issues as crucial:

- Research should be community based and collaborative
- Research findings need to be disseminated widely
- Policy makers need support to interpret findings of research
- Need for more impact studies and good practice studies
- Strengthen and promote evidence-based knowledge production

Suggestions for concrete action in the area of research

- *Session dedicated to research on sexual minority issues at AIDS 2010 – The XVIII International AIDS Conference to be held in Vienna, from 18-23 July 2010:*

A session solely dedicated to MSM, WSW and TG research issues should be held at the AIDS 2010. This session could focus, for instance, on research priorities for the coming years, how to achieve improved community involvement in research, and present the latest research findings. It could be organized as part of the MSM AIDS 2010 Pre-Conference.

- *Research workshop for activists at the AIDS 2010 – The XVIII International AIDS Conference to be held in Vienna, from 18-23 July 2010:*

Research findings can be confusing and difficult to access for lay person. A workshop at the Vienna AIDS 2010 could address this issue.

- *Creation of a sexual minority knowledge hub*

To improve the dissemination of and access to knowledge about sexual minorities, the existing information should be consolidated into an easily accessible knowledge hub.

ii. Funding

Ms. Anne Skjelmerud, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), reiterated that the priorities of the Nordic international development donors continue to be around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender and HIV prevention with a focus on the rights based access to health. In today's funding environment, there is a great focus on the need to demonstrate results through funding. Conversely, there is a need to present projects to donors that are designed to produce tangible results and are able to demonstrate and document those.

With regard to the Netherlands, Ms. Monique Middelhoff, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, stressed that sexual and reproductive health and rights, including efforts to tackle HIV/AIDS, continue to be among the Netherlands' policy priorities for international cooperation, as expressed in a new policy published in August 2009⁷. However, there is a new funding system being discussed currently in which the number of funded organisations will be decreased to 30. Organisations eligible for funding need to be based in the Netherlands.⁸

On behalf of the Global Fund, Mr. Andy Seale reiterated the Global Fund's commitment to the promotion of gender and sexual minority issues. He said that the Fund was in "advocacy mode" regarding these issues and would continue to build on its intense dialogue with donors, communities and technical partners. A report on lessons learned with regard to the results of the Round 9 funding decision can be expected in January 2010.

"The virtuous cycle of donor funding" - Recommendations

- Listen
- Be flexible
- Support research & data collection
- Invest in capacity building
- Challenge the funders!

All donor representatives appealed to funding applicants to make themselves familiar with the parameters of donor funding and to cultivate continuous and good relationships with donors.

iii. Policy

With regard to policy issues, Mr. Christoforos Mallouris, Global Network of People living with HIV (GNP+), appealed for better collaboration and a linkage between PLHIV networks and MSM/WSW/TG networks. He said that presently PLHIV networks are not necessarily safe and enabling environments for MSM/WSW/TGs and that PLHIV often face discrimination from MSM/WSW/TG groups. He said that this mutual stigmatising behaviour should be eliminated and the competition for funding halted.

⁷ See <http://www.minbuza.nl/dsresource?objectid=buzabeheer:82302&type=org>

⁸ For further information, please refer to www.buza.nl/en

Speaking on behalf of GNP+, he presented the following areas for policy improvements to be implemented by GNP+ in the near future:

- Consultations and closer collaboration between GNP+ and the Global Forum on MSM and HIV (MSMGF)
- Possible application of the present criminalisation of HIV methodologies⁹ and activities to decriminalisation of sexual minorities
- Possible application of Stigma Index methodology¹⁰ to issues of sexual minorities
- Joint PLHIV/sexual minorities activities at the Vienna 2010 XVIII International AIDS Conference
- Revision of the current version of the CCM Handbook¹¹ to include issues of sexual minorities and injecting drug users (IDUs)

Mr. Mallouris further proposed the idea of engaging like-minded countries at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and lobbying them to further support the issue of sexual orientation at the UN General Assembly.

iv. Implementation

In terms of implementation, the panel highlighted the following issues:

- There continues to be a need for more data, but it is the right time to strengthen the implementation of activities for sexual minorities
- Definitions and (Western) terminology can cause difficulties in HIV prevention and language needs to be used carefully and in a culturally sensitive fashion
- In many cultural contexts, there should be more focus on talk about behaviour and risks involved instead of sexual orientation
- Culture, religion, and history always need to be considered when implementing programmes and projects for sexual minorities
- Let us simplify what we want to achieve and take action!

⁹ See <http://www.gnpplus.net/content/blogcategory/19/44/> .

¹⁰ See <http://www.gnpplus.net/content/blogcategory/264/103/> .

¹¹ See http://www.gnpplus.net/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,38/Itemid,116/ .