

# The Node *... where a leaf arises from a stem*



The Node is a bilingual publication dedicated to global HIV/AIDS issues by Red Ribbon Centre, the UNAIDS Collaborating Centre for Technical Support

## PRESS STATEMENT

# UNAIDS calls for zero discrimination and ensuring rights to health, dignity and security on Human Rights Day

**GENEVA, 10 December 2012** — On the occasion of Human Rights Day, there is evidence that global solidarity and shared responsibility are expanding people's right to health across the world. More than half the people in need of antiretroviral treatment are now receiving it, far fewer people are dying from AIDS-related illnesses, 25 countries have reduced new HIV infections by more than 50% and new HIV treatment and prevention science promise yet more results.

But AIDS is far from over and there are still major challenges to reaching people with life-saving HIV services. People living with HIV have fought for and gained impressive recognition of their right to non-discrimination. However zero discrimination in the response to HIV is far from being achieved. HIV-related discrimination continues to impact the lives of many people living with HIV, and still prevents millions of people from coming forward to test for HIV and access prevention and treatment services.

Effective programmes and protective laws can overcome discrimination and marginalization in the context of HIV. But many of the people most affected by the epidemic remain marginalized and criminalized—sex workers, people who use drugs,

men who have sex with men and transgender people. They are unable to benefit from their rights to health, non-discrimination and freedom from violence. As the world strives to achieve zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths, efforts must be doubled to realize the rights of all people affected by HIV.

This International Human Rights Day is dedicated to the principle of inclusion and the right to participate in public life. We need to work to ensure that all members of society have the opportunity to fully realize their rights to health, dignity and security in a world with HIV.

Key elements to ensuring a rights-based approach to HIV include:

- Strong and supportive links to care and treatment must be included in HIV testing programmes;
- Efforts to expand treatment must ensure access to the right medicines at the right time, including second line medicines that in many places remain prohibitively expensive;

- Health systems need to be strengthened to become places of care and support, not denial and discrimination;
- Communities and civil society also need to be strengthened and resourced to work in synergy with health services;
- A wide range of HIV prevention services must be made available, especially to young people who are often denied their rights to information and services about HIV and sexuality;
- Women living with HIV must be able to fully exercise their reproductive and sexual health rights;
- And punitive laws must be replaced by protective ones.

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## UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.

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# Singapore AIDS Conference 2012

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The 8<sup>th</sup> Singapore AIDS Conference, a biennial event, was held on 17 November 2012. The theme for this year is “Getting to Zero: Zero New HIV Infections, Zero AIDS-related Deaths, Zero Discrimination”, taking into account of the UNAIDS’s current vision. In accordance, the conference sessions were organized towards these 3 ZERO targets. Three sessions reflecting Zero New

HIV Infections were: Early-testing and Linkage to Care; Biomedical Strategies for Prevention; Traditional Prevention Strategies and Human Impact of AIDS. The three sessions on Zero AIDS-related Deaths were: Access to Treatment; Non HIV-Related Complications; Care and Support while Zero Discrimination was a cross cutting theme for all the sessions.

Dr Amy Khor, the Minister of State for Health, Singapore gave an opening remark for the Conference. She briefed audience on the current HIV epidemic and progress of AIDS programmes, as well as the continual commitment of Singapore government to tackle the challenge. This was followed by sharing of Hong Kong’s experience on HIV prevention, care and control by Dr KH Wong, Department of Health, Hong Kong and address on AIDS advocacy and community mobilization in Asia by Mr Laurindo Garcia, B-Change Foundation, Philippines.

The parallel symposia were delivered by both local and overseas faculties. Dr Arlene Chua, Head of the largest

HIV clinical service at Communicable Disease Centre of Tan Tock Seng Hospital, talked on access to HIV treatment in Singapore. It is remarkable that Singapore has negotiated with the drug companies for a significant price reduction by over 3-folds that many more in-need people were put on antiretroviral therapy in the last 2 years. As of July 2012, over 1100 patients were on treatment from Medifund or Medisave scheme. On the theme of Zero HIV-related deaths, the important subjects of ageing with HIV, hepatitis B/C coinfections and sexually transmitted infections in HIV were covered. Clearly biomedical prevention of HIV was a recent hot topic in the field. It was learnt that Thailand is actively

pursuing studies and projects to inform the Region on a variety of new approaches.

One other deliverable of the Conference is for the participants to sign a declaration on supporting Getting to zero, and to move towards ending HIV/AIDS in Singapore. The Meeting is a fruitful one embracing multiple aspects of the latest development and aspirations on HIV/AIDS. Not only Singapore happenings and perspectives were shared, a glimpse of the bigger picture of regional situation was also presented. Participants would look forward to the work in the coming two years leading to the next Conference.



## **Organization Development to create CHANGE for effective sustainable community HIV response in China - Strategic CBO workshop in Hong Kong, 14 -18 January 2013**

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With the retreat of overseas funding and organizations on HIV/AIDS from the Mainland China, the National Government is striving to step up the existing response. In this connection, the China Office of International HIV/AIDS Alliance and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) have jointly identified 10 strategic Community-based Organizations (CBO) which have established services for people living with HIV (PLHIV), men who have sex with men and injecting drug users for developing their organization capacity to better work with government.

The selected CBO were asked to complete a self-assessment tool for identifying potential organizational changes required, send senior management to attend a 5-day workshop, implement change using small grants made available after the workshop and report back of changes that have occurred before the second quarter of 2013.

Over 20 participants from various CBO in Mainland China took part in the workshop from 14 to 18 January 2013 in Hong Kong. The workshop aims to empower the participating organizations to create change for effective sustainable community HIV response.



Leaders from 10 organizations in Hong Kong were also lined up to share experience and exchange with the participants.

The workshop had an intensive programme, touching on the latest HIV epidemiology, development of AIDS CBO in China, strategic planning, organization governance, financial and risk management, advocacy and resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation, and operational models of non-government organizations in Hong Kong. In response to the changing environment and learning in the workshop, the participants were encouraged to institutionalize change in their organizations and reflect on the collaboration with the government at policy and implementation level.

During the workshop, it was noted that the investment on HIV/AIDS in China kept increasing over the last decade. Coverage of antiretroviral therapy (ART) among PLHIV was increasing and mortality decreasing. New HIV infections arising from maternal to child and injecting drug use were coming down. Yet, the rapid growth of PLHIV especially in cities coupled with the strategy of treatment as prevention means that increasingly more of the expenditure would be spent on



treatment and less may become available for other HIV prevention interventions.

Significant gaps exist in meeting specific targets of national HIV/AIDS strategies, especially on escalating the proportion of target populations who know the result of HIV test, use condom and access ART. With retreat of overseas support which is the primary financial resource for many CBO, further increase in ART coverage, declining priority of HIV/AIDS among the agenda of donors for China and unclear management of the government towards outsourcing contracting CBO in HIV response, there was uncertainty on the development of CBO. On the other hand, these represent opportunities for CBO to make necessary change so that they would prepare for the new environment.

4 The development milestones of CBO in mainland China was revisited through group discussion and review by all the participants. The review aimed to stimulate thought for enhancement of existing initiatives and systems for better development of CBO in China as a whole. It was noted that grass root AIDS CBO had been established in early to mid 1990s. They networked with each other and assumed a more active role in advocacy over time, particularly after 2004 when support from overseas agencies and UNAIDS stepped in. Lately, there were more official recognition and commissioning of CBO.

Internal reviews of participating CBO, using the Alliance's organization capacity self-assessment tool, indicated that 70% of them had board of governance and constitution; 60% of the board had a role to make decision; 80% of CBO had set out strategies in 3 to 5 years; 95% had common values on promotion of human rights; almost all organizations had programmes that were oriented towards community needs, community participation and evidence-based; supervision and project management were conducted through monitoring of timely data and reports by all CBO; all CBO had mapped out the strategic partners and 80% of them were involved in advocacy work; all CBO reported that they had established financial system and retention of records, with 95% of them had strategies which include mobilization of resources; However, none reported systems or policies on human resources and risk management.

Regarding strategies formulation, participants generally agreed that a good process should have repeated discussion at different levels (or by different stakeholders) to increase ownership and realize democracy. Independent facilitator may help in reaching consensus or making final decision. Setting priority against available resources and capacity, breaking targets by phases and setting out action plan by those who are responsible for its execution would ease review and implementation of strategies.

A whole day was spent on reviewing the community response to AIDS in Hong Kong. There was active discussion between the participants and representatives of organizations in Hong Kong. It was noted that CBO in Hong Kong had been taking an active role in the AIDS programme development through participation in advisory committees of the government, public education and mobilization, advocacy and service provision. In addition, networks of CBO collaboration, ease of CBO registration, training and registration system of social workers, scope of CBO services, designated funding (e.g. AIDS Trust Fund), open attitude of the government towards CBO, contribution of CBO in assuring quality and overall effectiveness of HIV prevention efforts, partnership with stakeholders, fundraising models, human resources and financial management systems in Hong Kong were shared during the day. Comprehensive regulatory frameworks for CBO and professional social workers, corporate governance, integrity as a societal core value, broad community participation and media scrutiny were identified as some of the successful factors for the vibrant development of CBO as a whole. It was recognized that the active participation of CBO and the current supportive environment in Hong Kong had come a long way and made possible through organized and strategic advocacy efforts. Evaluation of the workshop revealed that the participants were most satisfied with the discussion on experience of CBO in Hong Kong, and showed interest to further exchanges between CBO in Mainland and Hong Kong.

On the last day of the workshop, each CBO put up a proposed change plan which would bring about strategic change within a short time frame. The plans include enhancement of financial management system, set up of resource management framework, development of short or medium-term strategic plan, registration as officially recognized CBO, planning for diversification of funding and training of staff or volunteers.

All the best to the sustainable evolvement of mainland CBO in the future!

