

THE CARIBBEAN AT AIDS 2018

Updates from the 22nd International AIDS Conference by UNAIDS Caribbean and PANCAP

#CbeanAIDS2018

July 25, 2018

Innovation for human rights and treatment



SCLAN Vice-Chair Sandra Granger

Spouses of Caribbean Leaders Action Network (SCLAN) Vice-Chair and Guyana's First Lady, Sandra Granger, gave the welcome address at the session "Realizing rights in the HIV response" yesterday. She acknowledged long-standing challenges facing key populations while pointing to the increasingly complex regional situation around migration and human trafficking

The session examined human rights concerns affecting the HIV response and explored strategies for protecting and promoting human rights including litigation and law reform advocacy.

[Click to view this session](#)

Earlier today Mrs. Granger chaired the plenary session, "Building bridges from Scientific Innovation to Implementation". She noted that the response to HIV has evolved rapidly over the past 30 years so that today anyone on treatment can live a normal, healthy life. The First Lady stressed that these advances must continue until there is a vaccine.

The session focused on innovative approaches in the search for a cure for HIV, the use of integrase inhibitors as antiretrovirals, and approaches to HIV prevention that are needed to reduce the numbers of new HIV infections.

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"You can live and love after HIV" - Erika Castellanos



"I do not need allies," Erika Castellanos ventured at a session on delivering stigma-free services for key populations. "I need accomplices."

Castellanos, a transgender woman born in Belize and living with HIV for the past 22 years, is making a decidedly international impact at AIDS2018. Wearing hats from both the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) and the Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE), she would have participated in a dozen sessions by the time the conference comes to a close on Friday.

Under her leadership the Collaborative Network of Persons Living with HIV (CNET+) earned a Red Ribbon Award at the last International AIDS Conference for its work improving the health and well-being of people living with HIV in Belize. Two years later, Castellanos' brand of daring advocacy is being powered by a compelling story--surviving conversion therapy, homelessness and an HIV diagnosis to become a leading voice for transgender people living with HIV globally.



Above: Sir Elton John and Erika Castellanos of GNP+ and GATE in session on delivering stigma free health services for key populations

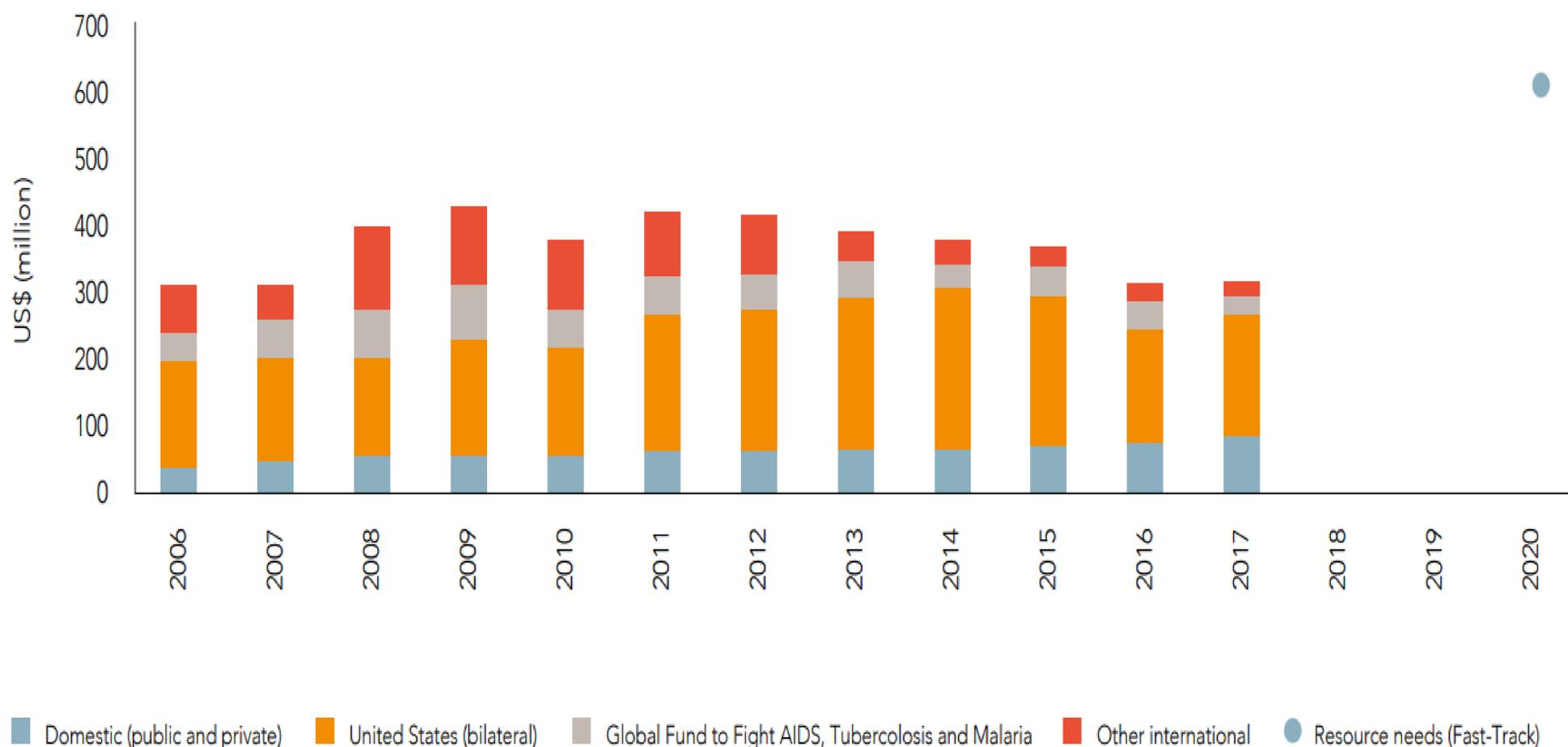
Left: Belizean transgender advocate, Erika Castellanos

"I want to tell all trans people living with HIV that it is not the last thing in life, it is not a death sentence," she told Spanish website Cadena Ser. "You can live and love after HIV, you do not have to give up."

Despite increase in domestic HIV resources, huge gap remains

Between 2006 and 2017 domestic resources for Caribbean AIDS responses more than doubled while international resources decreased by 16%. In total, approximately US\$ 315 million was available for the Caribbean's HIV programmes in 2017, considerably less than the US\$ 604 million needed to finance the achievement of Fast-Track programme coverage targets by 2020.

Fig 1: HIV resource availability by source, 2010 - 2017, and projected resource needs by 2020, Caribbean



[Learn more in the new UNAIDS report \(Caribbean chapter p. 224\)](#)

The case for civil society-supported HIV service delivery

Fig 2: Comparisons between treatment cascades for the Dominican Republic and COIN



The chart to the left tells the compelling story of how a clinic run by the civil society organization, Centro de Orientación e Investigación Integral (COIN) in the Dominican Republic, achieves viral suppression rates higher than the national average.

Speaking on behalf of the Developing Country NGO Delegation to the Global Fund Board, Carolyn Gomes offered this example when she presented at the Joep Lange Institute (JLI) pre-conference event, "Meeting the 90-90-90 targets: faster and better".

She also referenced Jamaica AIDS Support for Life which provides a mix of clinical and support services--everything from treatment to home visits. Their viral suppression rate was almost double the national average in 2016. Gomes said that the inclusion, leadership and funding of civil society were critical to bolstering prevention and treatment efforts and ensuring client-oriented services, especially for key populations.



Carolyn Gomes, Developing Country NGO Delegation, Global Fund Board

[Access JLI's report, "Ensuring efforts to scale up, strengthen and sustain HIV responses"](#)