

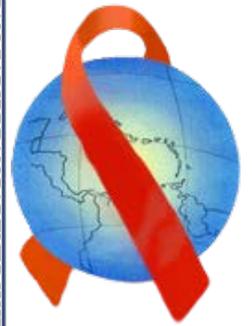
REGIONAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FORUM

**30-31 MAY 2017
KINGSTON, JAMAICA**

CONCEPT NOTE



PAN-CARIBBEAN PARTNERSHIP



AGAINST HIV & AIDS



UN
DP

*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*



CONCEPT NOTE

WHAT CAN PARLIAMENTARIANS DO TO END AIDS?

Context

The Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) proposes to host a Regional Parliamentarians Forum on the theme “*What can parliamentarians contribute to ending AIDS?*” The Forum will be held in Jamaica on **30 and 31 May 2017**.

The objectives of the Forum are to:

- Discuss the targets of the Political Declaration of June 2016 and the implications for parliaments in the Caribbean;
- Lay the foundations for increased engagement with national parliaments and national Parliamentary Committees on Health/Social Protection and on Justice especially in countries such as The Bahamas, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago – with high HIV prevalence rates;
- Assess the role of parliamentarians in promoting healthy living and well-being for all ages in the region;
- Identify the constitutional challenges posed by the criminalisation of sex between consenting adults and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation;
- Suggest strategies that parliamentarians might adopt and advocate to end AIDS by 2030.

The Forum will take into consideration the targets established in (a) the United Nations High Level Meeting Political Declaration June 2016 on ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 and (b) the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) approved by 192 nations at the United Nations (UN) in September 2015. Special attention will be given to SDG 3: Ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages and SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Background

Among adults in the Caribbean new HIV infections have been in steady decline, with the annual number of new HIV infections estimated at 9000 in 2015. While the adult HIV prevalence rate remains at 1%, prevalence is much higher among key populations including men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers (SW) and transgender persons. Prevalence for MSM in Jamaica is estimated at 32.8%. Many countries in the Caribbean do not track or report HIV prevalence among transgender persons, but a recent global study found an HIV prevalence of 18% among transgender women and 27% among transgender women involved in sex work. Guyana, which has a national prevalence rate of 1.5% has recorded an estimated prevalence of 8.4% among transgender persons.

Many Caribbean countries still criminalise same sex relations and in those countries key populations such as men who have sex with men, sex workers and transgender persons are subjected to pervasive stigma, discrimination and violence.

Eleven Caribbean countries have discriminatory laws against same-sex sexual acts. The penalty in most of these countries is imprisonment for 10 years. In Dominica, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, the penalty for same-sex sexual acts is imprisonment for up to 14 years.

Although these laws tend not to be enforced, their existence is used to harass and threaten men who have sex with men, and they contribute to a context that condones

discrimination, stigma and violence against Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI) people.

Parliamentarians have a crucial role to play to ensure the development and implementation of comprehensive legal framework designed to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of LGBTI people and key populations. To support parliamentarians, PANCAP and UNDP are engaging in a programme for parliamentarians that will build their capacities to undertake legislative, representational and oversight activities that advance the rights and inclusion of LGBTI people, and key populations, as part of national HIV responses.

Strengthening Parliamentary Action HIV and Human Rights

While the Caribbean region is diverse, the region has a well-established platform for collaboration on HIV through the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP). PANCAP will build upon the work already initiated with parliamentarians under the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS 2014-2018 (CRSF) with priorities for prevention, treatment and sustainable financing.

In 2013 PANCAP initiated the Justice For All (JFA) Roadmap based on consultations with faith leaders, civil society, youth, private sector and parliamentarians. The JFA roadmap with 15 actionable recommendations was approved by the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) in September 2014 under five broad principles:

- Enhancing family life and focusing on those in need;
- Increasing access to treatment including affordable medicines;
- Promoting prevention, focusing on access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including age appropriate education;
- Reducing gender inequality including violence against women and girls;
- Achieving legislative reforms for modifying and repealing AIDS-related discriminatory laws

These initiatives have been implemented recognising that parliament is the legitimate body for ensuring that human rights are mainstreamed across institutions of government. This background provides a launching pad for ensuring the involvement of both seasoned as well as newly elected parliamentarians at every stage of the process for taking into consideration, the economic, social and legal bases for acting to end the AIDS epidemic

Working in Partnership

There are many partners with whom PANCAP collaborates on various fronts. Among them are the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) on the science of health, HIV and development; The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) on children's health and rights; and The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on sexual and reproductive health and rights especially of women, girls and adolescents.

UNDP in collaboration with the Faculty of Law UWI Rights Advocacy Project (U-RAP) is among the major reference points on intersection of governance, human rights. This is done through focused or specialised programmes, such as promoting attention to the role of the law and legal environments in facilitating stronger HIV responses, the use of flexibilities in intellectual property law to lower the cost of drugs and diagnostics. UNDP also works to empower and include key populations who are disproportionately affected by HIV, such as sex workers, men who have sex with men, people living with HIV and transgender people. Beyond these focused efforts, UNDP plays a key role in ensuring attention to HIV and health within broader governance and rights initiatives, including support to municipal action on SDGs, sustainable responses for Health and HIV such as improving sustainability of AIDS financing, sustainable health procurement, strengthening of national human rights institutions and increasing access to justice for key populations.

Legal assessments

In preparation for the Forum, rapid assessments of laws and policies will be conducted in the focus countries (The Bahamas, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago). The legal assessments will enable parliamentarians and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to identify priority areas where legal and policy reviews and reform are required to advance human rights as a central element of HIV responses.

The rapid legal assessments will be presented during the Forum and will also serve as useful tools for sustained engagement at the national level.

Target audience: Parliamentarians from Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, selected key population leaders from the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC), Caribbean Forum for Liberation and Acceptance of Genders and Sexualities (CariFLAGS), Caribbean Sex Work Coalition (CSWC) and the Caribbean Network of People Living with HIV (CRN+).

