

**REPORT**

of

**CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE II**

**REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS  
TO REDUCE STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION**



**22-23 NOVEMBER, 2005**

# **LE MERIDIEN PEGASUS HOTEL, GEORGETOWN, GUYANA REPORT OF THE CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE II:**

**Regional Conference of FBOs to Reduce Stigma and Discrimination  
22-23 November, 2005 Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown, Guyana**

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**CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE II:**  
**Regional Conference of FBOs to Reduce Stigma and Discrimination**  
**22-23 November, 2005 Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown, Guyana**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Conference was the second in the “Champions for Change” series initiated by CARICOM/PANCAP, in recognition of the unique position Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) hold to “reduce the levels of discrimination and stigmatization against People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and build capacity to respond to the legal, ethical and human rights challenges of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean” as enunciated under Priority Area 1 of the Caribbean Regional strategic Framework on HIV/AIDS. Sponsored by DFID and supported by UNFPA and UNAIDS, the Conference was attended by 100 representatives from the Baha’i, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Rastafarian faiths, as well as PLWHAs and CARICOM Secretariat personnel.

Following the ceremonial opening of the Conference by the Prime Minister of Guyana, participants were addressed by invited distinguished Speakers, who provided background information regarding the current status of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean; the challenge the disease poses to the Region’s development; and strategies FBOs have proposed in facing the challenge. Two eloquent speakers from Africa, Rev. Canon Gideon Byamugisha (Uganda) and Rev. MacDonald Sembereka (Malawi), both HIV+ priests, also shared their perspectives and experience on how countries in that Region, notably Uganda, were able to systematically reduce the HIV/AIDS prevalence rates.

Divided into 5 Working Groups, participants examined the situation of stigma and discrimination as it existed in their organization, community and congregation and made recommendations for reducing HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination at the Regional, National, Community and Individual levels. An integral part of the group work featured specialist facilitators who teased out fears, biases, perceptions and misconceptions that group members themselves may have been grappling with or were unaware of; the testimonies of PLWHA representatives in each group were especially effective in putting an actual face to someone who could be stigmatized and discriminated against because of their HIV status and in understanding their fears and viewpoint.

The objectives of the Conference, essentially to identify the challenges, share the experiences of FBOs, identify their role and propose solutions to reduce HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination were substantially met.

The many challenges - identified initially in the speakers’ presentations – including: interpretation of doctrines; gender biases and moral, spiritual and theological issues; were candidly discussed by participants in Plenary sessions as well as in Working Groups. One of the visiting speakers from Africa pointedly challenged participants to consider whether FBOs use HIV/AIDS to control congregations or do FBOs use congregations to control HIV/AIDS.

Participants shared their experiences and offered suggestions on the way forward, such as closer collaboration among FBOs; capacity building; access to regional planning and decision making authorities; and HIV/AIDS training and sensitization both for FBOs and their

congregations. Rev. Clyde Harvey, speaking on behalf of the CCC, shared aspects of that body's "Guidelines for Caribbean FBOs in developing Policies and Action Plans to deal with HIV/AIDS" (which had been distributed). It offered a framework that could be adapted in formulating HIV/AIDS programmes. Note was taken of the HIV/AIDS training, including Voluntary Testing and Counseling being offered by the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica. Many FBOs, including, of particular mention, Hindus and Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago, were commended for their work in rising above the challenge of interpretation of doctrines.

The following were the **decisions** and **actions** taken by the Conference:

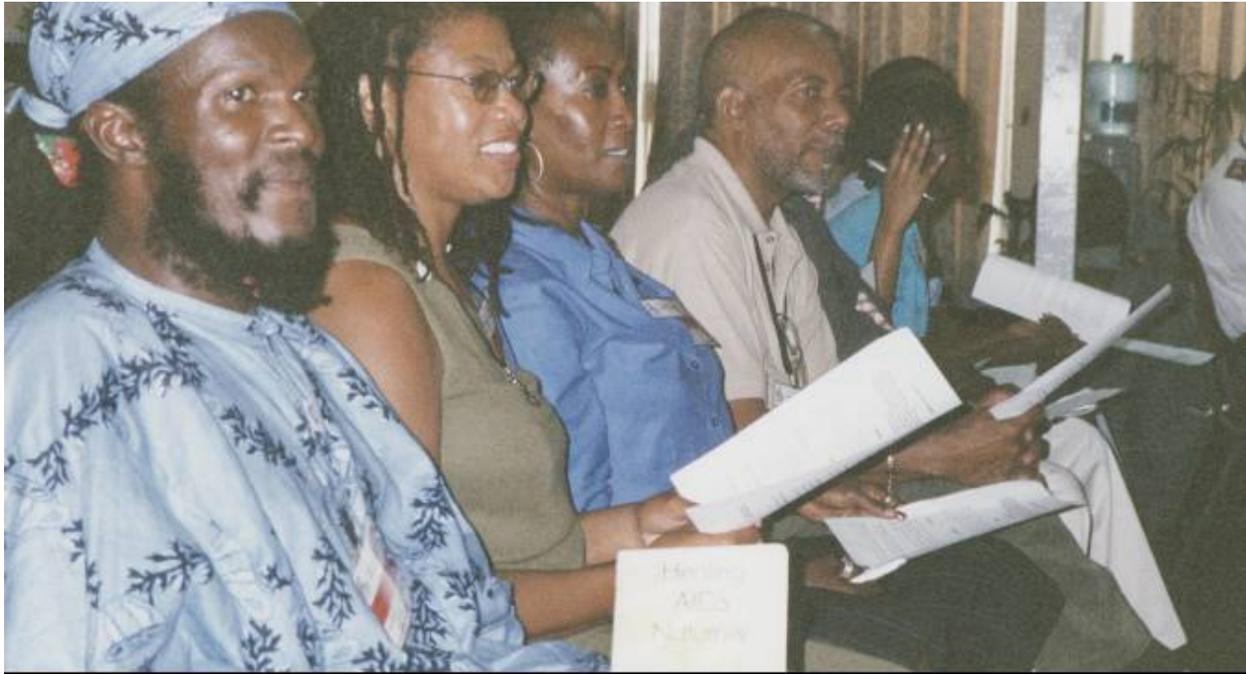
- ❖ A Declaration of Commitment was issued in which participants acknowledged the critical role they can play in affirming humankind and in adding to the quality of life in their communities and committed themselves to:
  - ✓ Lift their voices against stigma and discrimination in order to break down barriers between People and within Institutions;
  - ✓ Strengthen their response by staying informed and informing their membership about the HIV/AIDS pandemic;
  - ✓ In collaboration with PLWHAs, cooperate with and actively support governmental, non-governmental and other agencies to provide care, support and treatment to people infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS;
  - ✓ Engage emerging theological and educational developments and undertake programmes and actions which would contribute to reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS
- ❖ This Declaration would be made available across the Caribbean and its major resolutions highlighted during the period coinciding with World AIDS Day.
- ❖ An executive Committee of FBOs will be established, coordinated by the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) in collaboration with CARICOM/PANCAP to guide the implementation of short and medium term strategies contained in a Plan of Action arising out of the recommendations of the five working groups.
- ❖ Establishment of a database of advocates within FBOs.
- ❖ Participants will share information through the PANCAP monthly E-news and other publications.
- ❖ Participants made pledges to certain actions in the reduction of stigma and discrimination and will report to CARICOM/PANCAP on the status of these pledges.
- ❖ Twenty-five (25) "Champions for Change" across ten countries were nominated. These "Champions for Change" would receive their Pins at ceremonies during the period leading up to and following World AIDS Day, during which special sermons highlighting stigma and discrimination would be given.



Opening Ceremony: (at podium) Hon. Damian Greaves, Minister of Health Saint Lucia and Chairman, Conference Planning Committee, welcomes participants. (L-R) Mr. Gerard Granado, Gen. Secty. CCC, Hon. Samuel Hinds, Prime Minister, Guyana, Amb. Lolita Applewaithe, Dep. Secty. General, Caricom Secretariat, H.E. Stephen Hiscocks, British High Commissioner, Guyana and DFID, Mr. Jaime Nadal, Dep. Rep. UNFPA Office for English & Dutch Speaking Caribbean



Rapt attention....



We appreciate that point....



"We are called to be Champions for Change....." Beverly Reynolds sings the song specially written by her for the Conference

## **BACKGROUND**

In November 2005, the first “Champions for Change” Conference was held in St. Kitts, sponsored jointly by DFID and CARICOM/PANCAP, to carry forward the objectives of Priority Area 1 of the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework on HIV/AIDS which states...”reduce the levels of discrimination and stigmatization against PLWHA and build capacity to respond to the legal, ethical and human rights challenges of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean”.

The Conference sought to raise awareness of the effects of HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination and to bring about a commitment by participants to changing prevailing negative attitudes towards persons infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, establishing the concept of “Champions for Change”. Attended by a wide cross section of community leaders including politicians, sporting icons, parliamentarians and entertainers from across the Caribbean, the unique position of Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) in reaching large communities throughout the Region, was quickly recognized. Thus, following the success of the St. Kitts Conference, the decision to mount “Champions for Change II”, specifically for FBO participation, was made.

“Champions for Change II” Regional Conference of FBOs to Reduce Sigma and Discrimination was held at the Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown, Guyana during the period 22-23 November, 2005. The following is a Report of the activities leading up to and during the Conference.

### **1. Preparatory Activities**

A Planning Committee was established and held its first meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2005.

The Committee comprised the following:

Ms. Elizabeth Nicholas, Regional Programme Coordinator HIV/AIDS, Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC)

Ms. Yolanda Simon, Chief Executive Officer, Caribbean Regional Network of PLWHAs (CRN+)

Ms. Patricia Beard, National HIV/AIDS Coordinator, Anguilla, representing Caribbean Coalition of National AIDS Programme Coordinators (CCNAPC)

Ms. Jane Armstrong, Head, Caribbean Regional Unit, DFID

Professor Brendan Bain, Head, Community Health & Psychiatry, UWI, Jamaica

Hon Damian Greaves, Minister of Health, Saint Lucia

Dr. Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health, Guyana

Dr. Michel De Groulard, Country Director and Senior Advisor to PANCAP, UNAIDS Guyana

Dr. Edward Greene, Assistant Secretary-General, Human & Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat

Ms. Beverly Reynolds, Deputy Programme Manager, Health, CARICOM Secretariat

Mr. Carl Browne, Interim Coordinator, PANCAP

Ms. Volderine Hackett, Information Officer, PANCAP

Ms. Marieanne Cholmondeley, Conference Coordinator

Hon. Damian Greaves was appointed Chairman of the Committee. Ms. Beverly Reynolds was appointed Technical Coordinator of the Conference.

Draft Objectives and Outcomes of the Conference; criteria for invitees; Draft Programme, and a Road Map outlining preparatory activities were ratified. A subsequent Teleconference was held and members were regularly updated on preparation activities by the Conference Coordinator and the Technical Coordinator.

The Conference was sponsored by DFID, which approved the Budget proposed. UNFPA also sponsored some youth participation to the Conference; UNAIDS sponsored the participation of two speakers from Africa.

## **1.2 Participants**

One hundred and fifteen (115) invitations were issued as follows:

*Christian Councils and Inter Religious Organisations – 29*  
*Denominations/Individuals/NGOs – 63*  
*Hindu and Muslim Organisations – 15*  
*FBOs attending “Champions for Change 1”- 8*

Special attention was paid to the inclusion of women, youth and PLWHAs. Attached to the letter of invitation to prospective participants was an information sheet describing the objectives and expected outcomes of the Conference, along with a request that participants engage their congregation/community in a discussion using a series of questions which were enclosed; in accordance with one of the expected outcomes of the Conference, participants were asked to review and nominate a “Champion for Change” from their community and criteria for “Champions for Change” were also listed. Speakers and facilitators were also solicited and retained. 100 participants attended the Conference representing Bahai’s - 2, Christians – 80, Hindus - 3, Muslims - 4, Rastafarians - 3, as well as 10 PLWHAs and 8 CARICOM Secretariat Technical Officers. There were 39 women and 13 youth. Observer status was granted to representatives from Amnesty International, OXFAM, Catholic Relief Services and KFW. A List of actual Delegates attending the Conference was circulated to all participants.

## **1.3 Physical arrangements, Documentation**

Physical arrangements were supported by the following divisions of the CARICOM Secretariat: Administrative Services, Conference Services, Finance and PANCAP. Each participant received background documentation containing the Draft Programme (see **Attachment 1**) and supporting documents relating to each Session of the Conference, prior to the Conference. A Conference/City information brochure was provided and prayer cards used at the Opening Ceremony were distributed as mementos of the Conference. Each participant also received a copy of the book “Champions for Change: Reducing HIV/AIDS Stigma and Discrimination in the Caribbean”, resulting from the presentations at Champions for Change I.

- 1.3.1** At the end of the Conference, prior to their departure overseas participants were given documentation containing a List of Delegates, Declaration of Commitment and Presentations delivered at the Conference, as well as the musical scores for the songs which were written and sung at the Conference. This documentation was distributed to

local delegates at a later date. Immediately following the Conference, a Press Conference was held and a Press Release issued, see **Attachment 2**

## 2. Opening Ceremony

The Hon. Damian Greaves, Chairman of the Planning Committee and Minister of Health, Saint Lucia welcomed the delegates and Chaired the Opening Ceremony. The Conference was addressed by Deputy Secretary-General of CARICOM (the Secretary-General was out of the country), Ambassador Lolita Applewaite; General Secretary, Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC), Mr. Gerard Granado; H.E. Stephen Hiscock, British High Commissioner, Guyana, on behalf of UK Department for International Development (DFID); and Mr. Jaime Nadal, Deputy Representative, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Minister Greaves welcomed the representatives of the Regions FBOs, noting representation from the Baha'i, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Rastafarian faiths. He thanked the Conference's sponsors, DFID, UNFPA and UNAIDS and posited that FBOs of the Region had a 'divine mandate' to address all issues arising from the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Ambassador Applewaite, recognized the St. Kitts and Nevis Conference as a landmark event in the history of the response of the governments and people of the Caribbean to the problem of HIV/AIDS. She noted that over 75 of those participants endorsed pledges committing themselves to becoming prime advocates in a regional movement to reduce HIV/AIDS and applauded those who were fulfilling those pledges. She agreed that FBOs had an indispensable role to play in the offensive against stigma and discrimination and acknowledged the strides taken by numerous FBOs in providing spiritual comfort, psychological and material support and excellent care to those people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

H.E. Stephen Hiscock also recalled the St. Kitts and Nevis Conference, asserting that the most important aspect of that event was that those in attendance were afforded the opportunity to hear first hand from PLWHAs how the widespread stigma and discrimination in the Region impaired their everyday lives. H.E. Hiscock made reference to the vital role played by FBOs in Africa, particularly FBO groups with members who were directly affected and urged participants to take note of the FBO experiences in that Continent.

Mr. Jaime Nadal presented an official statement sent to the Conference by Mr. Harold Robinson, UNFPA Representative for the Office of the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean. Mr. Robinson suggested that discussions about sexual health which were widely regarded as taboo, particularly where adolescents were concerned, inadvertently contributed to the spread of the disease, since it buried the epidemic underground. Mr. Robinson declared that FBO traditions of speaking loudly about compassion and solidarity among people in the delivery of care and services to people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS should continue in relation to the fight against HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination.

Delegates were invited to join in the Conference's Universal Prayer which was recited in stanzas in English, Arabic and Hindi. A musical selection by Ms. Beverly Reynolds of the CARICOM Secretariat followed. It was noted that Ms. Reynolds penned both the universal prayer and the song especially for the Conference.

Prime Minister and acting President of the Republic of Guyana, Hon. Samuel Hinds, formally declared the Conference open, urging FBOs to produce a collective effort to fight the war against HIV/AIDS through increase communication and unity among themselves.

### **3. Assumption to the Chair (Agenda Item 2)**

Dr. Edward Greene, Assistant Secretary-General, Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat, chaired the Conference.

### **4. Adoption of Agenda (Agenda Item 3)**

The Agenda, as adopted by the Meeting, is attached as Attachment 1 to this Report.

### **5. Procedural Matters (Agenda Item 4)**

The Meeting fixed its hours of work.

### **6. Presentations**

Presentations were made to the Conference as follows:

- *Status of HIV/AIDS Component of the Report of the Caribbean Commission on Health and Development - Professor Karl Theodore, Commissioner and Head, Health, Economics Unit, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago*

Professor Theodore stated that HIV/AIDS is the leading health challenge facing the Caribbean and is responsible for weakening the economies of the Region. He warned that the epidemic will kill 250,000 soon, if it is not controlled. He suggested that the Report Caribbean Commission on Health and Development, approved by the Heads of Government Conference of July 2005, be used by FBOs as a framework for the recommendations resulting from the Conference. Professor Theodore posited two pillars of response to HIV/AIDS, capacity to respond and willingness to respond and suggested that Government should focus on capacity while FBOs, through National AIDS Programmes, should focus on willingness. He further pointed to two behaviour determinants, moral impulse and material impulse and recommended that FBOs should focus on moral impulse by working with National AIDS Programmes to persuade individuals to make better choices.

- *What the Church has Proposed – Guidelines for Caribbean FBOs in Developing Policies and Action Plans to deal with HIV/AIDS – Fr. Clyde Harvey, CCC Representative*

Fr. Harvey declared that there is no social group or class that remains untouched by the epidemic. He pointed to the devastating impact caused by the spread of HIV in the Region, noting that the families of a growing number of infected persons required care and support. Fr. Harvey said that the risk of transmission of the disease is aggravated by certain sexual practices such as multiple sex partners, casual sex, and commercial sex. He said that the social, economic, gender related factors driving the epidemic are inadequately addressed and said that FBOs need to remove the attitudes of condemnatory judgment towards PLWHAs. Fr. Harvey recognized that while the CCC had proposed a framework for use by FBOs in developing HIV/AIDS programmes and which was being used by FBOs in Barbados; he was of the view that in order to facilitate its greater use there is need to capitalize on the relationship with leaders and for more collaboration among the regional agencies and FBOs. Fr. Harvey suggested the need for formation of a strategic alliance of Caribbean FBOs as essential in addressing the epidemic, but cautioned that FBO leaders need training in HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Fr. Harvey pointed to VCT training for FBO leaders which could be accessed in Jamaica, through the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI).

▪ *How FBOs have faced the Challenge – Dr. Oluwakemi Linda Banks, President, CCC*

Dr. Banks described the characteristics of Stigma and Discrimination as a behaviour and an Attitude, the latter attracting moral, spiritual and theological problems. She said that Stigma and Discrimination presented challenges in the interpretation of doctrine and said these could be contained throughout theological themes including God and Creation, the Bible, Sin, covenantal justice. Unique challenges to FBOs were homosexuality, use of condoms, commercial sex workers and adolescent sexual and reproductive health. Dr. Banks shared the results of a survey she had conducted which revealed that among the services FBOs offered infected persons were: One on One Counseling, Home Visits, Support Group Meetings and Home Based Care. She pointed to the excellent work being done by Hindu and Muslim FBOs, with particular reference to Trinidad and Tobago, and the UCTWI in Jamaica where training of leaders in HIV/AIDS work was being offered. She recommended closer collaboration among FBOs and with the authorities, calling for Governments' recognition of FBOs central role in the development of communities. Dr. Banks interspersed her presentation with quotations from a PLWHA describing his reaction to his status; one of these being: "If we cannot lose or reveal our shame, sorrow, fear, love, dignity, humility and truth in public, we will not be able to stand on our feet in the world."

▪ *Culture, Gender and FBOs in relation to Stigma and Discrimination in HIV/AIDS: Cultural practices, beliefs, the vulnerability of women, children – the challenge: how it has been dealt with in Africa – Rev. Canon Gideon Byamugisha from Uganda and Rev. MacDonald Sembereka from Malawi*

The speakers brought greetings from Uganda and Malawi and the entire Continent of Africa and thanked the Champions for Change II's Planning Committee for their invitation. Rev. Sembereka shared personal experiences of how HIV/AIDS affected his personal life and public image in Africa. He said that culture and religion were the

backbone of African society and their inclusion was vital when addressing stigma and discrimination. He gave examples of issues regarding the powerful and the powerless, sex and sexuality, the place of women and children in decision-making processes, societal norms and cultural expectations which all affected HIV/AIDS in Africa. Reminding FBOs of their importance, Rev. Sembereka posed the question “Are we (FBOs) using HIV/AIDS to control our congregations or vice-versa?”

Rev. Canon Gideon Byamugisha informed the Conference that he was the first practicing priest to break the silence about his HIV+ status in Uganda and shared his personal experiences in responding to the reactions of his public. He described the work of ANERELA+, an African network of HIV+ infected and affected religious leaders which had started with a membership of two, currently standing at over fifty. Rev. Canon Gideon said that the rate of HIV+ prevalence in Uganda had been reduced from 10% to 6% by a systematic approach which was based on the following principles: (1) HIV is preventable; (ii) HIV is manageable; and (iii) Doctrinal and theological differences do not have to be resolved to form partnerships to defeat HIV/AIDS. Rev. Canon Gideon described programmes which were Multi-Sectoral, Multi-Level and Multi-Dimensional delivering Accurate Information; inculcating (Right) Attitudes; teaching (Right) Skills of Self-protection and Self-Care; providing Services (Testing, VCT etc.) and a Supporting Environment. He said it was important to differentiate between what is safe and what is lawful and risky behaviour and risk involvement/environment. Rev. Canon Gideon led delegates in a personal risk and assessment exercise which was warmly received.

- *The Sexual Offences Act: the legal context in relation to stigma and discrimination in HIV/AIDS: some suggestions for advocacy – Ms. Rosemary Benjamin Noble, Attorney at Law, Past President, Guyana Association of Women Lawyers*

This presentation was made during the Luncheon Session. Ms. Benjamin Noble said that HIV/AIDS is a new phenomenon in Regional legislation and that only a very few territories have enacted laws related to HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination. She said that while CARICOM had developed model legislation on sexual offences, there was a lack of harmonization in legislation regionally; she also pointed to the fact that many regional constitutions provided overarching protection of human rights, yet domestic rights law was highly lacking. Ms. Benjamin Noble suggested that criminalizing transmission could drive the disease underground and recommended that homosexuality should be decriminalized. Ms. Benjamin Noble noted that attitudes cannot be legislated and emphasised that FBOs should take advantage of their unique position of influence in the wide cross section of persons they reached in effecting attitudinal change.

## **7. Working Groups**

Under Guidelines which had previously been issued by the Technical Coordinator, participants divided into 5 Working Groups. The objectives of the group work were informed by the Conference outcomes; each group was charged to examine the situation of stigma and discrimination as it existed in their organization, community and congregation and to formulate elements of a Draft Plan of Action. However, the first part

of the of the group work featured specialist facilitators who teased out fears, biases, perceptions and misconceptions that group members themselves may have been grappling with or were unaware of. PLWHA representatives were present in each working group in order to provide actual experiences and help to develop strategies to combat stigma and discrimination.

- 7.1 Two groups deliberated Regional (Macro) priorities, recommending resources required, while three groups focused attention on National, Community and Individual (Micro) priorities. The outcome of these deliberations was intended to provide the foundation for the establishment of the Working Committee under the aegis of the Caribbean Conference of Churches which was mandated by the Conference.
- 7.2 Networking, capacity building and advocacy were common themes, seen as key elements which need to be addressed at all levels, and both at the Regional and National levels, the need for HIV+ persons to be involved in the effort to reduce stigma and discrimination was emphasized. The unique role and responsibilities of FBOs in reaching infected and affected persons in their societies were also recognized.
- 7.3 Groups that focused on macro imperatives called for FBO leadership to be involved in planning and devising strategies to inform the Regional Agenda and a structural relationship between FBOs and Regional decision makers and Development Partners/Donor Organisations was seen as a priority. A template for FBOs at the regional leadership level was suggested as a tool to encourage a unified response to HIV/AIDS and sustained mechanisms for collaboration among FBOs was indicated for precedence.
- 7.4 At the community level groups saw training in different aspects of HIV/AIDS as a high priority. A database of resources was suggested and the development of “best practices” information which could be shared was recommended.
- 7.5 Matrices showing the elements, priorities, activities and resources as developed by the Working Groups are attached as **Attachments 3 & 4**.
8. At the end of the day’s sessions, Hon. Dr. Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health, Guyana, hosted a Reception for delegates. The Minister, also a member of the Planning Committee, took the opportunity to welcome overseas participants to Guyana and expressed his support for the objectives of the Conference. Delegates were entertained by The Informative History Man, Rastafarian delegate from Jamaica, who sang songs he had written featuring stigma and discrimination.

## 9. Objectives and Outcomes

### 9.1 Objectives

- 9.1.1 The stated objectives of the Conference were all substantially fulfilled. Participants identified the unique challenges they face in dealing with stigma and discrimination, both in speakers presentations and the discussions which ensued. They shared their experiences and programmes which they employed offering care and support and counseling to those infected and affected in their communities. The role and responsibilities of FBOs at the national and regional levels were recognized and

concrete suggestions for overcoming negative attitudes and reducing HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination were proposed in the Working Groups.

## 9.2 Outcomes

9.2.1 The stated outcomes of the Conference were all achieved.

- ✓ Pledges were made by participants, both publicly as well as privately in the Pledge Box, to actions which they will undertake in reducing HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination. Six months hence, private pledges will be sent to those persons who made them, to ascertain whether the pledges have been fulfilled and/or whether assistance is needed in completing them.
- ✓ The proposed Plan of Action is derived from the recommendations of the Working Groups.
- ✓ The Conference proposed a Working Committee, under the aegis of the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC), to carry forward the elements of the Plan of Action.
- ✓ Outcomes such as advocacy at the Regional, National level; identification of resources; training; network mechanism are all elements advanced by the Working Groups which will be addressed by the Committee.
- ✓ “Champions for Change” were identified and recognized at the Conference. Participants agreed to highlight activities for “World AIDS Day” commemoration by holding award ceremonies at which nominees would receive their Pins. The list of Champions for Change nominated by Countries for awards on World AIDS Day is provided as **Attachment 5**.

9.2.2 Beyond the stated outcomes,

- ✓ A Champions for Change FBO Committee chaired by CCC was approved and charged with the responsibility of designing a coordinated and sustained response to HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination.
- ✓ Donor partners including DFID, KFW and UNFPA have intimated their support for the work of the Committee and for programmes resulting from the Conference.
- ✓ In the revision of the CRSF, Stigma and Discrimination will be more prominently identified as a key “prevention” strategy.
- ✓ Stigma and Discrimination and the role of FBOs have been included as a critical element in the UNAIDS/PANCAP consultations on Universal Access for Prevention, Care and Treatment in preparation for the UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS in June 2006.

## 10. Closing Ceremony

At the end of the Conference, delegates held hands in a circle, singing Bob Marley's "One Love", led by The Informative History Man and Minister Damian Greaves.

## **11. Press Conference**

A Press Conference was held immediately following the Closing Ceremony. The Declaration of Commitment was issued and questions were taken by a panel of participant representatives including, Conference Chairman Dr. Edward Greene, Chairman of the Planning Committee Minister Damian Greaves, Mr. Gerard Granado, Fr. Clyde Harvey and others.

## **12. Conclusion**

The Conference provided a forum for frank exchange of views and experiences by a wide cross section of FBOs and technical agencies involved in HIV/AIDS work in the Region. Throughout the Conference a spirit of respectful camaraderie prevailed which enabled harmonious, positive agreement on the way forward.

While many of the participants knew each other, they were able to share information about their activities and forge closer links. Many new relationships were formed; deeper appreciation of the situation in various countries was gained and the common challenge to all in reducing HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination was strongly recognized. As demonstrated in the Declaration of Commitment, participants felt imbued with a sense of impetus to action and expressed the need for closer collaboration and support at the regional level which would serve to strengthen the capacity of national and community efforts.

Although it can -and has been - noted that unconventional religious groups such as "voodoo practitioners" were not included in the Conference, the comprehensive nature of regional FBO representation provided a platform for open, constructive exchanges and actions, which when taken back to national arenas, would undoubtedly be exposed to wider groups which were not represented at the Conference.



A Working Group debates.....



A Champion for Change! Minister Damian Greaves affixes the pin on Rev. MacDonald Sembereka from Malawi



Hon. Damian Greaves affixes the Champion for Change pin on participant Michael Fox



Rev. Canon Gideon Byamugisha from Uganda (second from Rt) with Caribbean friends L-R Michael Fox (Bermuda), Ethel Pengel (Suriname), Anderson Figaro (Trinidad & Tobago), Herman Mayers (Antigua), Kayla Green (Bahamas) and Earl Waldron (Guyana)

**CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE II**

**REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS TO REDUCE  
STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION**

**P R O G R A M M E**

**22<sup>nd</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2005**

Evening of 21<sup>st</sup> and 8.30 a.m. – 8.55 a.m. on 22<sup>nd</sup> Registration

**DAY 1**

**22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2005**

**OPENING CEREMONY**

9.00 a.m.

Welcome : Chairman: Minister Damian Greaves, Chairman, Conference Planning Committee, Minister of Health, Saint Lucia

Brief Remarks: CARICOM - Deputy Secretary-General: Ambassador Lolita Applewhaite  
CCC - Mr. Gerard Granado, General Secretary  
DFID – Mr. Stephen Hiscock, British High Commissioner, Guyana  
UNFPA – Mr. Harold Robinson, Representative, Office for the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean

Universal prayer (*printed as a memento of the conference, will be recited in stanzas by each category of FBO participants (English, Arabic, Hindi); final stanza by all simultaneously*)

Song - Beverly Reynolds.

Opening of Conference: Prime Minister of the Republic of Guyana

9.45 a.m.

**BREAK**

Chairman of Conference: Dr. Edward Greene, Assistant Secretary-General, Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat

10.00 a.m.

**SESSION 1: WHERE WE ARE:**  
Status of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean

10.05 a.m.

Presentation: Status of HIV/AIDS Component of the Report of the Caribbean Commission on Health and Development: Challenges and Gaps: Professor Karl Theodore, Commissioner and Head, Health, Economics Unit, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago

Presentation: What the Church has Proposed – Guidelines for Caribbean Faith Based Organisations in Developing Policies and Action Plans to deal with HIV/AIDS: Fr. Clyde Harvey, CCC representative

Presentation: How FBOs have faced the Challenge” Dr. Oluwakemi Linda Banks, President, CCC

Open Discussion and Questions

## SESSION 2: WHAT CAN WE LEARN? LIVES THAT HAVE BEEN TOUCHED

11.00 a.m. Presentation: “Culture, Gender and Faith-based Organisations in relation to Stigma and Discrimination in HIV/AIDS – Rev. Canon Gideon Byamugisha from Uganda and Rev. Mac Donald Sembereka from Malawi (*Cultural practices, beliefs, the vulnerability of women, children - the challenge; how it has been dealt with in Africa*)

Presentation: Experiences of working in Arab States communities: the challenges in Muslim Communities – Sheikh Mohamed Hachem El Hakim, Sudan

Presentation: Participants give testimonies of how their lives have been touched by HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination

Open Discussion and Questions

12.15 p.m. LUNCHEON SESSION

Presentation: The Sexual Offences Act - Ms. Rosemary Benjamin Noble, Attorney at Law, Past President, Guyana Association of Women Lawyers Guyana (*the legal context in relation to stigma and discrimination in HIV/AIDS, some suggestions for advocacy*)

## SESSION 3

2.00 p.m. Formation into Groups – Specialist Facilitators as well as Technical Resource Persons to work with Groups to achieve overall outcomes of the Conference

6.30 p.m. RECEPTION

Hosted by Hon. Dr. Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health, Guyana

## **DAY 2**

*23rd November, 2005*

9.30 a.m.      Groups report to Plenary

10.30 a.m.      Coffee Break

10.45 a.m.      Discussion on Presentations

Plenary agree on collective measures – designate coming weekend commemoration of stigma and discrimination in HIV/AIDS in all representative places of worship. Other actions: network mechanism, etc.

11.30 a.m.      Ceremonial Handing in of Pledges – Privately (*in designated box*) or publicly. FBO groups (Christian, Hindu, Muslim etc) who have met together beforehand (at end of Working Group session), offer pledges by organization, by country.

Participants from Champion for Change I share how/if they achieved their Pledges, challenges they experienced

12.00 p.m.      Acknowledgement and appointment of Champions for Change : Statement by FBO Participants to Champions for Change I: experiences as Champions etc.

Appointment of Designated Day on which HIV/AIDS related Stigma and Discrimination will be highlighted and Champions for Change receive their Pins

12.30 p.m.              Lunch

2.00 p.m.      Presentation of Draft Declaration (based on Groups reports)

2.30 p.m.      Closing Ceremony (*as per Champions for Change I – participants form circle holding hands, singing of Bob Marley’s “One Love”*)

3.30 p.m.      Press Conference

Press release 201/2005  
(25 November 2005)

Faith-Based Organisations commit to prevent spread of HIV/AIDS

(CARICOM Secretariat, Georgetown, Guyana) Approximately 100 leaders from Faith-based Organisations (FBOs) across the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) committed themselves to cooperate with and actively support governmental, non-governmental and other agencies, and people living with HIV/AIDS in an effort to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and to provide care, support and treatment to people infected with and affected by the disease. The FBOs drawn from the Baha'i, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Rastafarian faiths made this commitment when they met at Champions for Change II: Regional Conference of FBOs, in Georgetown, Guyana on November 22-23. The Conference sponsored by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) with support from the UN agencies, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is a follow-up to the St. Kitts and Nevis Conference which involved representatives from a number of sectors in the Region and which came up with a Framework for a Plan of Action to deal with the issue of HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination in the Region.

One of the highlights of the Conference was a presentation by Canon Gideon Byamugisha of Uganda, the first practicing priest to break the silence about his HIV + status. The presentation titled "Culture, Gender and Faith-based Organisations in relation to Stigma and Discrimination in HIV/AIDS" essentially sought to establish that HIV is preventable, manageable and that FBOs did not need to resolve all doctrinal and theological differences in order to form a partnership for defeating HIV/AIDS.

One of the major sources of reference for delegates was a document produced by the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) on guidelines for Faith-based Organisations in developing policies and action plans to deal with HIV/AIDS. Another was the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework for the Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP).

It was agreed that this Conference would act as a catalyst for deepening the dialogue on HIV/AIDS within and among Faith-based Organisations, focus its follow up on educating its membership, engaging youth and other vulnerable groups, and incorporating people living with HIV/AIDS in the planning and advocacy for reducing stigma and discrimination. This includes support for model legislation and for behaviour change in the places of worship, the workplace, schools and communities.

Among the major outcomes of this conference were

A Declaration of Commitment of FBOs targeted at specific actions and aimed specifically at the reduction of stigma and discrimination within the various faith-based bodies, with outreach to the wider national and regional communities.

Making the declaration available across the Caribbean to wider audience and to highlight its major resolutions during the period coinciding with World AIDS Day.

Symbolising the connection between the Conference and the wider communities in the Caribbean by designating 25 Champions for Change during the period of

World AIDS Day across 10 countries, that were involved in a process of nomination and selection involving denominational and national consultations. Highlighting the main issues involved in reducing stigma and discrimination by special sermons during the period leading up to and following World AIDS Day.

The Development of a Plan of Action based on the recommendations of five working groups which presented priorities and activities with respect to advocacy, training, care and support, counselling, and mobilising resources.

Establishment of an Executive Committee of Faith-based Organisations coordinated by the Caribbean Council of Churches in collaboration with CARICOM/PANCAP to guide the implementation of short and medium term strategies.

Establishment of a database of advocates within Faith-based Organisations. Sharing information through the PANCAP monthly Enews and other publications.

During the meeting most delegates made pledges to contribute toward the reduction of stigma and discrimination and will report to CARICOM/PANCAP on the status of these pledges.

It was also agreed that specific timelines be established to assess the impact of the Plan of Action which would include a progress report to the Annual General Meeting of PANCAP in October 2006.

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**CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE II: THE ROLE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS IN REDUCING STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE LIVING WITH/AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS**

**DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION**

**MATRIX FOR GROUP WORK**

**MICRO – national, community, individual**

<b>ELEMENTS</b>	<b>PRIORITIES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>
<p>Education &amp; Training in VCT Sexuality/HIV/AIDS and need for a purpose filled life to start at primary school level for Leaders Caregivers Pastoral Counsellors</p> <p>Advocacy/sensitisation Inclusion of HIV+ persons in Policy/Planning Respect for HIV+ persons and constituents, e.g. prisoners Human Rights (access to Education, Jobs, Housing etc. Lack of professionalism, ethics and stigmatisation by Health Service providers Compassion – seeing</p>	<p>Providing training</p>	<p>Caribbean regional Centre of HIV+ persons who can transmit message. They can be interchanged, e.g. use Trinidadians in Barbados, Barbadians in Jamaica etc.</p> <p>Involve CRN+ at planning level</p> <p>Letter writing skills workshops</p> <p>Conscious raising sermons by FBO leaders</p>	<p>Financial – National Budget allocations (Govts need to be convinced about the work FBOs do, i.e. work without strings and accountability for resources is essential) Own Pooling Funding (challenge the rich to the needs of their brothers and sisters) Personnel – Educators Counsellors Medical Social Spiritual Volunteers</p> <p>Existing mechanisms</p> <p>Media blocks</p>

ELEMENTS	PRIORITIES	ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES
<p>God's love in each other Outreaches</p> <p>Effective use of media – accurate messages</p>			
<p>Information Dissemination/Sharing: Networking Resource Database Website Develop best practices information for sharing</p>		<p>Research –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Current</li> <li>▪ FBOs</li> <li>▪ On-going</li> </ul> <p>Use media – radios/TV – frequent presentations</p>	
<p>Legislation Human rights Workplace Age of Consent</p>	<p>Laws – change, review etc. Identifying resources</p>	<p>Lobbying – laws to guide and govern Accessing resources and information</p>	

**CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE II: THE ROLE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS IN REDUCING STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE LIVING WITH/AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS**

**DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION**

**MATRIX FOR GROUP WORK**

**MACRO GROUPS – regional level**

<b>ELEMENTS</b>	<b>PRIORITIES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>
Advocacy	Targeting/Engaging Regional-level Policy Makers	<p>Produce a template for all FBOs at the regional leadership level encouraging a unified response to HIV/AIDS</p> <p>FBOs to be involved in planning and devising strategies to inform the Regional Agenda</p> <p>FBOs to assist Regional leadership in resource mobilisation efforts targeting the donor community</p>	
	<p>Targeting FBO leaders, particularly those with a Regional reach and responsibility, as well as denominational/religious leaders</p> <p>FBOs must take ownership of HIV/AIDS as an issue for immediate</p>	<p>CARICOM to facilitate consultations at the community and national levels to feed into Regional fora such as Champions for Change II.</p>	<p>PANCAP to provide or facilitate.</p>

ELEMENTS	PRIORITIES	ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES
	<p>attention</p> <p>FBOs must address internal stigma and discrimination issues</p> <p>Advocate for gender equity in the leadership of FBOs</p>		
	<p>Leadership Training for Advocacy based on research.</p>	<p>Leaders attending Champions for Change II to convene Meeting(s) to share information and to plan appropriate actions and activities.</p>	<p>PANCAP could be asked to facilitate.</p> <p>Training materials</p>
		<p>Key agents/Champions for Change to be identified and enabled through training, resource provision, etc.</p>	
<p>Care, support and counselling and Training</p>	<p>Particular attention to HIV+ infected and affected and seek ways to build supportive environment among congregations and community</p>	<p>Develop and observe strict codes of confidentiality for infected and affected</p> <p>Education on treatment issues in partnership with National AIDS programmes</p> <p>Provide referrals to specialized agencies</p> <p>Receive and provide basic HIV/AIDS training for FBO leadership</p>	<p>Funding</p> <p>Specialized trainers</p>

ELEMENTS	PRIORITIES	ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES
Training	Voluntary Counselling and testing.	<p>Identification of appropriate groups and individuals as target group(s).</p> <p>Preparation of Manuals and other Training Materials.</p> <p>Conducting of training.</p>	PANCAP Funding.
Capacity Building	FBOs develop plan and programme for HIV/AIDS capacity building within their organisations (train the trainers module)	FBOs liaise with National AIDS Programmes to develop capacity to implement HIV related activities using the training of trainers methodology, i.e. education, counselling etc.	<p>Trainers</p> <p>Training of trainers module within each organisation</p>
Partnership Building	Sustained and structural Mechanism(s) for collaboration among FBOs.	<p>FBO Data Base to be developed.</p> <p>Appropriate personnel/activists to be identified and deployed around the Region as required.</p>	PANCAP Funds.
	Structural relationship between FBOs and Regional decision-makers and Development Partners/Donor Organisations	Engagement between FBOs representatives and Regional decision-making bodies to be facilitated.	PANCAP Funds.

ELEMENTS	PRIORITIES	ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES
	Prevention Issues.	Engaging the “informal sector” and the “guys on the block”.  Preparation of appropriate media Messages and Packages including cartoons, CDs, etc.	PANCAP resources to be tapped.
	Leadership Training for Advocacy based on research.	(SEE ADVOCACY COMPONENT)	
	Awareness/sensitisation and skills development for Leaders.	Focused Sensitisation/Awareness building exercises, Seminars and Workshops	PANCAP Funding.
	Targeting the “Captive Audience” of Educational Institutions  Counsellors Training	Identification and Engagement of appropriate training, personnel, including volunteers and other resource persons within the Community, particularly the Faith-Based Organisation Community.	PANCAP facilitated resource mobilisation.
Resource Mobilisation	Development and utilisation of NETWORK among FBOs internationally to facilitate mobilisation of resources.  Engagement with/of national and Regional decision – makers to facilitate provision of adequate	CARICOM Secretariat to be utilised to attract and apply donor resources to enable FBO’s activities and efforts.  Arranging for capacities/needs Matching exercise(s) (CNME) where FBOs can share on their	

ELEMENTS	PRIORITIES	ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES
	resources for FBO efforts in this area.	work as well as their needs.  Convening of a Resource Mobilisation Forum to benefit FBOs in their HIV/AIDS-related efforts.	
Monitoring & Evaluation		Carefully monitor progress of activities against set objectives  Identify relevant indicators to evaluate activities	Caribbean Indicators & Measurement Tools for Monitoring and Evaluating National AIDS Programmes (CIMT)  Recently completed document "Measuring HIV/AIDS Stigma"



Dr. Edward Greene, Asst. Secty. Gen. CARICOM and Conference Chairman shares a joke with L-R Pundit Bramdeo Maharaj, Bro Noble Khan and Mr. Sheikh Ali, representing the Hindu and Muslim Faiths, and the Inter Religious Organisation, Trinidad & Tobago



One Love! Participants sing Bob Marley's song at the Closing Ceremony