



PAN CARIBBEAN PARTNERSHIP



AGAINST HIV & AIDS

PAN CARIBBEAN PARTNERSHIP AGAINST HIV AND AIDS (PANCAP)

REPORT

PANCAP NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS

ON THE

ROLES OF CARIBBEAN FAITH LEADERS IN ENDING AIDS

JANUARY – JULY 2017

PANCAP GFATM PROJECT

“Removing barriers to accessing HIV and sexual and reproductive health services for key populations in the Caribbean”

23 June 2017

I. Background

The process of consultations with Faith Leaders and other stakeholders is not new to the Caribbean. However, a concerted phase of interaction among Faith Leaders commenced with the initiation of the PANCAP Justice for All (JFA) programme in September 2013, the holding of general country consultations with a range of stakeholders, and a regional consultation which brought together representatives of parliamentarians, faith leaders, civil society and the private sector; they agreed on a PANCAP Justice for All roadmap with 15 Actionable recommendations. Due to objections to the process and outcomes of the regional consultation by a group of church leaders, CARICOM Heads of Governments at their Annual Conference (July 2014) recommended that the JFA consultative process be reopened. Following the recommendations from the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) - Ministers of Health in September 2014, PANCAP presented the 15 actionable recommendations according to possibilities for their implementation in the short, medium and long term. It was also agreed that the new round of consultations beginning January 2015 would engage specific stakeholder groups. As a result, focus has been on “what can Faith Leaders contribute to ending AIDS in the Caribbean.” From national consultations held in Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, (January 2015- October 2016) emerged a consensus that a Regional Faith Leaders Forum planned by Faith Leaders and conceptualised around the same theme as the national consultations should be convened and lead to some concrete recommendations. The Regional consultation was convened on 1-2 February 2017.

Box 1: Synopsis of Recommendations from Regional Faith Leaders Consultation, 1-2 February 2017

1. *Supporting the “Fast-Track Targets” in the 2016 UN High Level Political Declaration.*
2. *Promoting healthy living of people at all ages of the life cycle, placing emphasis on plugging the Prevention.*
3. *. Facilitating best practices through leadership in the area of treatment and care.*
4. *Paying particular attention to the reduction of violence against women, girls and adolescents and the inclusion of men and boys in this venture.*
5. *Securing sustainable technical and financial resources for programmes led by religious groups in collaboration among governments, NGOs and development partners.*

**Report: PANCAP National Consultations on Roles of Caribbean Faith Leaders in Ending AIDS
January- July 2017**

6. *Exploring the short and medium actionable recommendations of the PANCAP Justice for All (JFA) to enable religious groups and organisations to effectively address the gaps in prevention and treatment interventions while continuing the dialogue on how to proceed with those elements yet to be resolved.*
7. *Establishing a Network of Religious Leaders interconnected with national focal groups to achieve a more consolidated approach to ending AIDS.*
8. *Engaging representatives of key populations including men who have sex with men, sex workers and injecting drug users and others in programmes aimed at identifying respective rights and responsibilities involved in the process toward the elimination of AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.*
9. *Noting areas of litigation that challenge religious values and harmonising principles and practices around human rights, human sexuality and human dignity.*
10. *Reaching out to and briefing FBOs who were not included in the discussion at the consultation.*

II. Caribbean Faith Leader’s Consultations supported by Round—GFATM grant

The current PANCAP GFATM grant facilitated a third round of Faith Leader engagements since the commencement of the JFA programme in September 2013. It commenced with a Regional Forum held in Trinidad and Tobago on 1-2 February 2017, that produced recommendations identified in *Box 1*. These recommendations in turn, established the parameters for consultations of the newly formed National Faith Leaders’ networks in: St Kitts/Nevis (April 12, 2017), Trinidad and Tobago (April 19, 2017), Grenada (May 23, 2017), Barbados (May 26, 2017), Belize (June 6, 2017), Haiti (June 9, 2017) and Guyana (July 11, 2017).

Resulting from the regional consultations, a Regional Consultative Steering Committee for the implementation of Recommendations to end AIDS by 2030 was formed and chaired by Canon Garth Minott, Jamaica. The Committee has held two meetings virtually and developed guidelines for information sharing and monitoring the progress toward achieving the targets agreed to in *Box 1*. In addition, each of the National Faith Networks is chaired or co-chaired by participants of the regional consultation.

III. Outcomes from National Consultations in St Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Barbados, Belize, Haiti and Guyana

The outcomes from the national consultations may be classified according to:

- 1) Common ground or agreements across all national networks.

- 2) Special circumstances that require the national network to reconsider or reject some recommendations.
- 3) Novel responses that may be considered as emerging good practices.
- 4) Challenges to be resolved or requiring special attention.

1. Common ground/ agreements across all national networks.

There was full agreement on the following:

- The scientific findings that with emphasis on the 90-90-90 targets, the AIDS epidemic could be ended by 2030.
- Advocating for Prevention for congregations to “Get tested” and know their HIV status.
- Acceptance of the overall 2016 political declaration whose elements contribute “to fast tracking the end of AIDS”.
- Recognising the targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals that recommend pursuing the end of AIDS in the context of an integrated health approach.
- Reframing the response to the Justice for All roadmap that allows for short, medium and long term actions. Hence there is virtual consensus on the acceptability of the seven short term actionable recommendations.
- The importance for Faith Leaders to have a presence and actively participate in the National AIDS Commissions and thereby make contributions to the national HIV strategies.
- The representation of Faith Leaders on the PANCAP’s Knowledge Management Committee to inform new areas of thought on the AIDS response that could benefit the FBO discussions.
- Recognising the diversity within the Faith Leadership at National and regional levels and working to achieve broad consensus on most issues while making provision for coping with disagreements on others.

2. Special circumstances that require the national network to reconsider or reject some recommendations

- Most participants are willing to consider the implementation of the JFA in the medium term but some networks are not in support of condom use and pre exposure prophylaxis as opposed to abstinence as a means of prevention within the context of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Report: PANCAP National Consultations on Roles of Caribbean Faith Leaders in Ending AIDS
January- July 2017

- Others, though erroneously, equated the proposal for implementing the PANCAP Anti-Discrimination Legislation with support for gay rights, suggested the need for elaboration on the principles of the model legislation, making provision for a more reader friendly version.
- A minority but vocal religious group in each country question the principles for sexual and reproductive health and rights, equating the end result with illegal abortion rather than essentially promoting prevention and rights based approach to health and development.
- There is growing tendency toward inter-racial, inter-religious and intercultural relations in all countries which includes evidence of early sexual initiation by both boys and girls, though at least one religious group claims exceptionalism.
- The lack of supporting and reliable information is seen as an impediment to taking action and providing guidance on matters related to HIV.

3. **Novel responses that may be considered as emerging good practices identified in the national consultations**

Barbados (Co-Chairs: Bishop Dr. Nigel Taylor, Bishop Dr. Winston Clarke and Canon Noel Burke). The group agreed to organise the FBOs into two parallel networks: The Barbados Council of Churches (BCC) and the Barbados Evangelical Association (BEA) to permit each to proceed with implementation of recommendations at its own pace. They also have made provision for regular joint meetings of the networks twice a year or once a quarter as determined appropriate. This would permit the two networks to discuss possibilities and take actions for achieving goals, without impeding the progress of the other, but yet coming together to foster agreements, share and disseminate information.

The Barbados Evangelic Association sees the nexus between FBOs and the National AIDS Commission to be important. It has been and will continue to be engaged in national testing and training of counsellors. It is collaborating with the Barbados' Boys Scouts Association to sponsor a National Health Awareness Fair on July 1, 2017 as part of National Testing Day. Based on the results of 2015 sexual survey among church members, which parallel those of a national sexual survey (2014), it has been able

**Report: PANCAP National Consultations on Roles of Caribbean Faith Leaders in Ending AIDS
January- July 2017**

to put in place programmes to stimulate gender awareness and to support the need for age appropriate sexual education in churches and schools. In addition, the Association has developed a Declaration of Commitment for a better response to the HIV and AIDS response.

Belize (Co-Chairs: Bishop Dr. Roosevelt Papouloute and Bishop Philip Wright). The national FBO scenario comprises four separate networks – Belize Christian Council (BCC), Belize National Evangelical Association (BNEA) the Adventists and the Belize Faith Leaders Alliance (BFLA). The meeting indicated the feasibility of pursuing a similar model to that of Barbados that would permit the BCC to move ahead with the implementation of both the short and medium term targets of the JFA roadmap and to immediately discuss the feasibility of pursuing the long term targets. The polarising issue for major religious networks in Belize revolves around the ruling of the Belize Chief Justice in September 2016 that to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation is unconstitutional. The withdrawal of the representatives of BCC from the Church State Commission provides another indication of unresolved differences.

The Belize Christian Council has agreed to pursue collaboration with the NEA chaired by Pastor Howell Longworth who attended the PANCAP Regional Forum and leaving the door open for collaboration with the other networks. It agreed to establish terms of engagement between the Faith Leaders and the LGBTI Community. Faith leaders also agreed to convene a national consultation of faith leaders in collaboration with the National AIDS Commission and to solicit support from PANCAP to sponsor the participation of Bishop Dr Nigel Taylor of Barbados and Canon Garth Minott of Jamaica to mediate with the various networks in Belize and to co-facilitate the consultation.

St Kitts/Nevis. The network comprises the Grenada Christian Council and the Grenada Evangelic Association that operate as separate entities while occasionally holding joint activities or contributing and collaborating to promote common causes joint activities.

There is broad agreement among the leadership on a wide variety of issues such as the role of the church in supporting prevention and treatment to end the AIDS epidemic and generally for the short and most of the medium term recommendations in the JFA roadmap. They agree also on the need for continued dialogue on the specific long term recommendations such as the abolition of discriminatory laws and are

involved in the discussions on the revision of the sexual offences legislation. This network was also quite concerned that the major contributors to the AIDS epidemic are lack of awareness and the social determinants including high rates of crime and violence as well of teen pregnancies. The female faith leaders were particularly vocal on the need for the church to be more active in implementing sexual education in the Sunday school curricula and agreed to promote the Every Caribbean Woman Every Caribbean Child Initiative being championed by Caribbean First Ladies/Spouses.

The combined network has engaged governments in recent times in an effort to get the FBOs more involved in crime reduction. They agreed that the network would discuss the how best to use "social witness" and outreach programmes to understand and engage marginalized populations, encourage their congregations to get tested, and sponsor training and orientation session for empowering faith leaders in the techniques of counselling and dispelling 'faith stigma' in keeping with the recent WCC guidelines.

Trinidad and Tobago (Co-Coordinator: Pastor Winston Mansingh and Imam Imtiaz Ali). The group met at San Juan Masjid (ASJA) Mosque. It has blended the representation of the Inter-Religious Organisation into the Trinidad and Tobago Faith Leaders Network. This means that its Muslim and Hindu components are well represented along with Shouter Baptists. While its coordinator is Evangelical, the emerging deputies are Catholic and Muslim respectively. Consequently, the established multi religious composition of the network has led to a relatively progressive Declaration of Commitment on HIV originally issued in 2012 and revised and reaffirmed by the Network in 2016. This Declaration required negotiations among the various religious networks but now form the basis of an instrument on which collective action may be taken. The more recent parliamentary debate on increasing the age of marriage to 18 years has polarized the network with the President of the IRO opposing the increase on religious/cultural grounds. There is also agreement on the implementation of the JFA roadmap, but various networks have varying responses to the long term actions on modifying and repealing the discriminatory law, particularly those associated with LGBTI, which still remain problematic and require further discussion.

**Report: PANCAP National Consultations on Roles of Caribbean Faith Leaders in Ending AIDS
January- July 2017**

Another benefit to the composition of the Network is illustrated in the outcome of the National Consultation held in a mosque in which the rights of LGBTI were openly discussed and resolved through a free and frank exchange among peers of different religious persuasions. The agreement is that the networks will proceed in accordance with their understanding and without prejudice to their religious principles.

Grenada (Co Chairs Dr. Raphael James and Pastor Jerome Gordon). The national network displayed a great degree of cohesion across the networks. Its composition that included a relative high ratio of female and young faith leaders 40% and 50% respectively may have accounted for the unanimity of views on the role of the network in areas such as reducing stigma, the use of condoms to reduce teenage pregnancies, while continuing to advocate for abstinence, advocacy for affordable medicines as a human right and, placing greater emphasis on youth programmes and sexual education in the churches and schools. Grenada has agreed to move forward with its programme as a collective group, bearing in mind the differences to be overcome on some issues. This group explicitly approves the consideration of the PANCAP Model anti-discrimination legislation and was prepared to fully discuss the long term implications of the PANCAP JFA roadmap.

Haiti (Chair Father Walin De Camps). The network comprised religious leaders who also worked in HIV care giving including a medical doctor who is involved in counselling of PLWH. Most of its members are also involved hands on in treatment and care at the community level. The network agreed that there was need for consultation on the issues among a wider cross section of FBOs and proposed to convene another meeting in July and report to PANCAP. The network recognised that many of the barriers to prevention and treatment of HIV fall outside the health system. They therefore agreed on the need to create spaces that combine treating HIV with alleviating poverty and malnutrition, and ensuring access to information on prevention. They also requested that PANCAP consider sponsoring a small group of Faith Leaders from other Caribbean Networks to attend a future consultation of Haitian Faith Leaders and share good practices and establish peer to peer relations for advancing the response to HIV.

Jamaica: The network comprises the Religious Groups Steering Committee chaired by Rev. Gary Harriott with Canon Garth Minott as Programme Director.

Its consultations focused on a follow up to a mapping exercise of attitudes and values of Faith leaders carried out in 2015 among the major religious organizations. The major finding is the lack of cohesion between government policy and the response of the various religious groups. The network, led by the steering committee, has been charged with the responsibility to facilitate the development of policies in each religious group that will drive a national FBO policy and will ensure a coordinated response to HIV at the local, regional and global levels. The collaboration of the Jamaica network with the WCC in advancing this exercise is a critical devise to ensure that international developments are also taken into consideration.

The following guidelines from the Jamaica mapping exercise should provide the basis for policy formulation and actions that national religious networks may wish to consider:

JAMAICA Generated Guidelines

- 1. The Inter-Faith Strategies** included in HIV & AIDS policies, identified in the literature and existing policies whose goals are aligned with and reflect international and national commitments to prevent the spread of HIV & AIDS : educating leadership on HIV issues; empowering members to protect themselves from HIV infection; supporting HIV prevention efforts for the wider community; advocating for the prevention of violence against women and girls and reduction of their risks and vulnerabilities to HIV; and enhancing social protection for people affected by HIV & AIDS.
- 2. Key directions and related objections** identified by FBOs worldwide: prevent HIV Transmission in pregnant women, their partners, young people and the general population; provide capacity building and support to faith based leaders to effectively guide their faiths and local gatherings to respond to HIV & AIDS; exercise of their theology of care and compassion to address the needs of PLHIV and those affected; provide counselling and support for people living with and affected by HIV & AIDS.
- 3. Key Actions, roles and responsibilities to be highlighted by Networks** for support that they require from UN agencies and government ministries: design or adopt HIV & AIDS education curricula to be delivered amongst religious organisations; provide guidelines on confidentiality, including disclosure of HIV and AIDS status of persons who are part of the network; support

pregnant women, their partners and young people to access reproductive health services; ensure the right of people with HIV & AIDS to dignified final rites; support and empower women and their partners to reduce gender based violence and reduce their risks and vulnerabilities to HIV; provide counselling and support to families belonging to the network and the wider community who are infected and/or affected by HIV; avoid/ remove restrictions on the employment of leaders and other staff who are HIV positive; educate communities on stigma and discrimination; and initiate capacity building training within their networks so they become better informed on HIV & AIDS issues.

4. Networks working with the Worldwide Interfaith Council as the HIV & AIDS reference group with a view to maintaining an articulated relationship with international, regional and national agencies that respond to the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

4. Challenges to be resolved or requiring Special Attention

The Networks in all countries identified the following challenges to their meaningful contribution to ending AIDS with varying levels of intensity. While the guidelines from the Jamaica mapping exercise recommend actions to be taken, the challenges below will be the subject for further discussions and resolution at the national and regional levels:

- Lack of Funds to initiate and sustain FBOs involvement in national and community level programmes on prevention and treatment.
- Lack of access to research findings that would facilitate meaningful interventions and advocacy by FBOs.
- Guidelines on breaking the barriers to stigma and discrimination requiring special programmes for training and increasing awareness of FBOs that include creating spaces for dealing with poverty, nutrition outreach to marginalised including out of school youth, the differently abled, the elderly and prisoners.
- Greater appreciation by governments and civil society of the critical roles of FBOs in prevention, care and treatment programmes.

**Report: PANCAP National Consultations on Roles of Caribbean Faith Leaders in Ending AIDS
January- July 2017**

- Agreements on outreach programmes to key populations which could be resolved by the proposal of the Regional Consultative Committee to incorporate a representative of the LGBTI community into its discussions a decision making system.
- Inviting faith leaders from other countries to participate in meetings of networks to share experience and engage in peer to peer policy formulation.
- Establishing a mechanism for sharing information among and between religious organisations and country networks. The launching of the newly designed PANCAP website in July/August is intended to assist in this process.

Parallel Activities to the Faith Leaders Country consultations

In each country in which consultations with Faith leaders were held, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV in the Caribbean and the Director of PANCAP were involved with a series of activities that either complemented or supplemented the outcomes of the consultations. These included engagements with Senior Government officials such as Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Barbados, Belize, Grenada and Haiti; Ministers of Health and their technical teams in Grenada, Belize and Haiti and Guyana; the Leaders of the Opposition in St Kitts Nevis and Jamaica; Ministers of States in the Offices of the Prime Ministers of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago; Caribbean First Ladies Spouses in Jamaica, Belize and Haiti, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago ; the UN Regional Coordinators and UN Coordinating Committees in Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Haiti; Civil Society Leaders in Belize and Jamaica; UNAIDS RST, Caribbean Sub Regional Director, Country Directors in Jamaica, Haiti and Guyana.

In addition, their active participation in the 10th Anniversary celebration of Regional Testing Day in Barbados, (May 26) and the Regional Parliamentarians Forum attracting approximately 50 government/opposition parliamentarians from 15 countries, provided an opportunity to highlight the developments within the Faith Communities and sensitise various stakeholders on possibilities for collaboration in accelerating the end of AIDS by 2030.

A series of newspaper articles, radio and television reports together with Facebook and Tweets communicated with a variety of stakeholders the extensive nature and results of the field exercises.

