

Gender and HIV/AIDS: Bringing Women and Men Together *An Interactive Workshop*

Report from the Satellite Session
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The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policy of Health Canada or the Canadian International Development Agency.

Executive Summary

For many years now, HIV/AIDS has been recognized as a global development challenge that affects and is affected by every aspect of life, from health services and education to food security and international relations. As a result, an effective strategy to address HIV/AIDS must cut across sectors – government, non-government, voluntary, and clinical. Although there have been a number of important initiatives to mainstream HIV/AIDS into policies and programmes in all sectors, often these efforts have targeted large populations, overlooking and/or underserving different sub-groups, particularly the disparate needs of women and men, girls and boys.

In January 2000, the Commonwealth Secretariat (Com Sec), London UK, invited the Atlantic (formerly Maritime) Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (ACEWH), Halifax, Canada, to co-author a publication entitled *Gender Mainstreaming in HIV/AIDS: Taking a Multisectoral Approach* as part of Com Sec's Gender Mainstreaming Series on Development Issues. This book, published in the spring of 2002 with financial support from the Women's Health Bureau, Health Canada, offers a number of case studies from the developing and developed world that illustrate how programmes, addressing gender and other social factors with regards to HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support are more likely to succeed than those that ignore social and cultural factors.

While working on the publication, ACEWH, Com Sec, and their international partners identified the need to create a designated training centre for gender mainstreaming materials. The concept of an International Training Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS was developed in 2001. In January 2002 a group of international professionals working in gender and/or HIV/AIDS from 10 countries was convened in Halifax to assess the feasibility and support for the proposed Institute. The positive response received from workshop participants indicated strong support and affirmation of the need for an international training institute.

The hosting of an international satellite session during the World AIDS Conference in Barcelona was one of many recommendations generated during the Feasibility Workshop in January 2002. ACEWH received funding from Health Canada (International Affairs Directorate, HIV/AIDS Programme, Policy and Coordination Division and Centres of Excellence for Women's Health Contribution Programme, Women's Health Bureau) and Canadian International Development Agency to host a satellite session entitled *Gender and HIV/AIDS: Bringing Women and Men Together* (see Appendix).

In January 2003, ACEWH will convene a second international workshop in Halifax, to fine-tune the curriculum. The curriculum will be tested during a pilot International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS scheduled for late summer of 2003.

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the proceedings from the *AIDS 2002* satellite session entitled *Gender and HIV/AIDS: Bringing Women and Men Together*. For sake of clarity, this report has been divided into four parts. The first section will provide an overview of the programme, including the purpose and objectives of the session as well as a description of the session audience. The second section will include a summary of the four panel presentations. The third section will present a review of key points that arose during the discussion of next steps for the design of a curriculum for the Institute. The fourth and final section will assess outcomes from the session, commenting on the extent to which the intended purpose and objectives of the session were achieved as well as a short discussion of planned activities over the next several months.

PART I

Programme Overview

The satellite session was co-chaired by Dr. Carol Amaratunga, Executive Director, ACEWH and Dr. Jacqueline Gahagan, Research Associate, ACEWH.

Purpose

The overall purpose of the satellite session was to foster an international discussion that will inform the development of an International Institute on Gender Mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS.

Objectives

The objectives of this satellite session were to:

- hear presentations from an international panel about their experiences and best practices with gender mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS policies and programmes;
- provide an opportunity for participants to respond to the issues and topics presented by panelists and session organizers;
- seek advice from participants about the design of an International Institute on Gender Mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS, particularly about issues to be considered in curriculum design;
- enhance and support the ongoing development of an international network of individuals and organizations working in the area of gender and HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support.

Audience

Hosting this satellite session at AIDS 2002 provided an opportunity to launch the concept of the Institute and gather information for its development from a very diverse group of international conference delegates. As anticipated, the people who attended the session represented a cross section of distinguished individuals and organizations from various sectors in HIV/AIDS and/or gender. The audience included approximately 150 regional, national, and international representatives from policy and programme development sectors—both government and non-government, advocacy groups, educational entities, the health care sector, HIV/AIDS service providers and users, people with HIV/AIDS, as well as national and international funding bodies.

PART II

Session Presentations

Welcome

Deanna St. Prix-Alexander, Executive Director of the Women's Health Bureau, Health Canada, brought opening remarks and words of welcome from the session organizers and Canadian and international sponsors. Ms. St. Prix-Alexander stated that her presence, as well as that of her other colleagues from Health Canada, was symbolic of Canada's support for the development of an International Institute on Gender Mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS. In Ms St. Prix-Alexander's opinion, the Institute is of particular interest because it will provide opportunities for national and international collaboration in addressing this global emergency.

Panelists

Each of the four expert panelists had also been presenters and participants at the *Feasibility/Design Study for a Proposed International Institute on Gender Mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS* in Halifax, January 2002. Since the Feasibility workshop, all four individuals and their organizations have been working collaboratively with and supporting ACEWH on the development of the Institute. The satellite co-chairs, Dr. Amaratunga and Dr. Gahagan, introduced the panelists.

Nancy Spence

The first presenter, Nancy Spence, is Director of the Social Transformation Programmes Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat (Com Sec), London, UK. In her presentation, entitled: *A Collaborative Initiative between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health in the Development of an International Institute on Gender Mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS*, Ms. Spence highlighted the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a commonwealth emergency by the fact that the nine hardest hit countries are Commonwealth countries and 60% of infected people living in Commonwealth countries. Com Sec's involvement as a collaborating partner with ACEWH on the development of the Institute is rooted in their concern about HIV/AIDS as a gender and development issue requiring a specific approach such as the one that will be encompassed by the Institute.

Ms. Spence presented statistics that illustrated the disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on women in a global context, quickly assuring the audience that her intention is not to place men and women in adversarial roles. Rather, it is to stimulate gender analysis within cultural contexts so that issues may be addressed appropriately. Ms. Spence pointed out the lack of male presence in addressing gender issues relating to HIV prevention, care, treatment, and support. This lack of male presence leads to what Com Sec refers to as "preaching to the converted", that is, women talking to women. In fact, gender issues around HIV prevention, care, treatment and support affect both males and females, hence men and women must work together to affect social change.

Ms. Spence claimed that there is very little gender mainstreaming training available for those working on HIV/AIDS in health and other sectors. Moreover, often the training that is available is not transformative in nature. The Institute will target mid-career professionals from across sectors such as government, academia, health, agriculture, etc.

Ms. Spence observed that ACEWH is a “well-placed partner” by virtue of the success of other international training, programmes and institutes located in Atlantic Canada. Such institutes include the International Oceans Institute (IOI), an annual summer Institute based at Dalhousie University; the Summer Institute for Gender and Development (SIGAD) that ran out of St. Mary’s University for four years; and the Coady International Institute of St. Francis Xavier University.

Finally, Ms. Spence outlined two specific ways that Com Sec will continue to contribute to the Institute: first, through networking with Commonwealth governments to promote advocate, and assist in building partnerships, particularly with respect to fundraising efforts; second, Com Sec will play a major role in the identification of international participants and faculty for the Institute.

Frank Abamu

Dr. Frank Abamu is an agronomist, serving as the Focal Point on HIV/AIDS for the West African Rice Development Association (WARDA), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) of the World Bank. Dr. Abamu serves on a working group whose purpose is to mitigate the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS on food security. Among the objectives of this group are to increase understanding of the multi-directional linkages between HIV/AIDS, agriculture, food and nutrition security, and to develop and disseminate innovative gender-sensitive policies, technologies and methodologies.

Dr. Abamu’s presentation, entitled: *Outcomes of a Feasibility/Design Workshop and the Importance of Gender Perspectives in HIV/AIDS Prevention in the Agricultural Sector* reiterated unanimous support for the International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS that was evident at the Feasibility workshop in January, 2002. Dr. Abamu concluded that the proposed Institute would be valuable and relevant to the needs of Commonwealth countries, both in the North and South.

In his discussion of the work of the CGIAR, Dr. Abamu emphasized the need for HIV/AIDS policies and programmes to bring the agricultural sector into focus, specifically economics and sustainability, particularly for women and children. His work with CGIAR addresses the problem of women’s inability to say “no” to unprotected sex due to economic dependency by involving women in small-scale agricultural projects in order to strengthen their economic independence.

Madhu Bala Nath

Madhu Bala Nath is currently working as the United Nations Development Fund For Women (UNIFEM) Regional Advisory, Gender and HIV/AIDS, Asia and the Pacific, based in India. In her presentation entitled: *Curriculum Development for Capacity Building Initiatives in HIV/AIDS Issues*, Ms. Bala Nath identified one of the key

challenges in developing curriculum to be that of breaking stereotypes. New learning is crucial to this process, but so is what Ms. Bala Nath referred to as “unlearning” destructive cultural norms. We need, said Ms Bala Nath, “to snap the relationships between morality, gender and sexuality” that have been passed down for generations.

Ms. Bala Nath provided specific examples of innovative participatory training materials developed by UNIFEM, that address these and other challenges through the use of role playing, reversing the roles of males and females in order to instill what she called “transformation of the heart”. Examples of training materials included creative ways to talk openly and honestly about sexuality.

“Transformation of the heart”, particularly with regards to gender issues and HIV/AIDS, according to Ms. Bala Nath, will be best achieved through the creation of dissonance between people’s preconceived ideas about HIV/AIDS and the true implications of HIV/AIDS. Challenging misconceptions through the presentation of statistics, for example, can be very effective and is perhaps most important for programmers and policy makers in order that policies and programmes may be amended to better address the gender implications of HIV/AIDS.

Felicitas Chiganze

Felicitas Chiganze has worked with the Southern African AIDS Training Programme (SAT) for the past nine years, and now holds the position of Deputy Director. SAT is supported by CIDA and is mandated to promote emerging community responses to HIV/AIDS through partnerships in five countries and is considered Canada’s main response to HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa. Ms. Chiganze’s presentation, the focus of which was to outline the experience of SAT in linking HIV/AIDS, gender and development issues, began with a review of factors that continue to fuel the gendered impact of HIV/AIDS. Among the social factors that Ms. Chiganze presented were: male control in sexual relationships; gender violence; female stigmatization and blame; limited levels of education for women; female economic dependence; limited access to health care for women; and women as caregivers of people with HIV/AIDS and/or orphans. Ms. Chiganze concluded her overview of the issues with a statement about the link between women’s exposure to HIV infection and their lack of personal autonomy.

Ms. Chiganze went on to describe SAT’s proactive response to gender issues, including co-funding an annual training course on gender mainstreaming for senior managers and programmers, established through the Regional AIDS Training Network (RATN), delivered by Tanzania Gender Network Program (TGNP), and publication of gender mainstreaming guidelines for community groups and institutions.

SAT has raised awareness of the link between HIV, gender and development issues, and has helped to move gender issues to a place of greater prominence on the political agendas of many governments in the regions of Africa in which they work. Among the remaining challenges, according to Ms. Chiganze are, resistance to change at all levels (individual, organizational, and societal) and the lack of technical support and guidance that would allow their partners to persevere and succeed in tackling these gender issues.

In closing, Ms. Chiganze stated that SAT would continue to collaborate with other regional and international organizations and institutions, such as ACEWH, that are “seeking to strengthen capacities in gender mainstreaming”.

PART III

Key Points

Dr. Jacqueline Gahagan, Assistant Professor at the School of Health and Human Performance at Dalhousie University and Research Associate of ACEWH, concluded the session with an overview of key issues presented during the panel presentations and facilitated an open discussion about specific considerations that ought to be taken into account in the development of curriculum for the Institute. The topics and issues that were presented and discussed have been analyzed and categorized according to the themes described in the following paragraphs.

Male Involvement

Since this initiative will address gender relations, that is, the interplay between women and men, the greatest concern is the involvement of men. Initiatives that are designed to address gender relations must include both men and women. The term gender itself is problematic, as gender is often misconstrued as “a women’s thing”—by women for women, with gender activities being often perceived as an attack on men. It must be clear that this initiative is challenging men and women to rethink the impact and or nature of gender relations as they relate to HIV/AIDS. This initiative is challenging patriarchy, i.e. the power relations that create gender imbalance and inequity, thereby increasing women’s vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and the impact of HIV/AIDS. The Institute must include men and women both as faculty and participants in order to properly address the power relations that create gender imbalances.

In order for this type of gender initiative to be embraced more widely by men, there was a suggested need for involvement of male role models—men who currently work in gender analysis. When it comes to curriculum development, it was also suggested that gender and HIV issues for males reach beyond the commonly cited issues of incarceration and the military. Other male gender issues that might be addressed include, for example, the tendency for men not to seek health care and the fact that men are not socialized to communicate with their partners in intimate relationships. To enhance the potential for individual transformation and to reinforce this as men and women working together, it was suggested that the program be built on common ground to which both men and women would be able to relate, i.e. scenarios that are shared by men and women. “Fear of infertility”, for example, might be provided as a point of departure for a discussion on family formation and vertical transmission.

Gender and HIV/AIDS In North America

One participant wanted to make it clear to international participants that Canada has not been entirely successful in gender mainstreaming when it comes to its own programmes, services and policies related to HIV prevention, care, treatment and support. In Canada, HIV/AIDS programs and services are provided largely by gay men within gay organizations, ignoring women's issues in the design and delivery of HIV programmes and services.

Another participant, speaking from personal experience, cautioned that gender issues not be considered homogeneous across cultures, countries and regions. Racism and cultural diversity further compound the existing gendered impact of HIV/AIDS. In this participant's opinion, it is women of visible minorities who are experiencing the most serious effects of HIV/AIDS in North America.

Organizational and Community Change

There is a tendency for organizations and agencies to look straight to the community when planning and implementing gender initiatives. However, it was pointed out that an organization must start with a gender analysis of its own agency, including a gender breakdown of personnel. Unless organizations can understand what is going on in their own offices, policies and programmes, it is difficult for them to translate gender issues at the community level. Gender audits of personnel and other policies within an organization will reveal gender disparities that often exemplify gender disparities at the community level.

A Multi-Sectoral Approach

HIV/AIDS is now recognized as a global development challenge that affects and is affected by every aspect of life, from health services and education to food security and international relations. As a result, an effective strategy to address the gendered impacts of HIV/AIDS must cut across sectors – government, voluntary and public. Therefore, it will be important to seek representation from each of these sectors as faculty and participants for the Institute. It will be most beneficial to have multisectoral teams of participants working together on projects as a way of demonstrating the interconnectedness between sectors and their underlying common gender issues.

Summary of key points and considerations for curriculum development

- Include and encourage male participation in all programmatic aspects
- Curriculum modules must be rooted in “unlearning” stereotypes, taboos, myths and other cultural beliefs that keep women under the power of men
- Practical, useful tools that have step-by-step, how-to instructions that may be adopted and adapted as necessary to suit various contexts
- Multidisciplinary and/or multisectoral approach

PART IV

Session Outcomes

The overall purpose of this session was to foster an international discussion that would inform the design and development of an International Institute on Gender Mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS. The intention was to facilitate a two-way information sharing session. The concept of the Institute was launched and advice and recommendations were actively sought from session attendees. In order to have a meaningful discussion, it was necessary to provide attendees with background information and an overview of the concept of an International Institute on Gender Mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS.

Four expert panelists shared their experiences and insight about mainstreaming gender into HIV/AIDS policies and programmes. A question and answer session provided the opportunity for members of the panel and organizing team to clarify information that was being imparted during the session. The final portion of the session was dedicated to gathering insight from the session attendees. Specifically, attendees were asked to share considerations and recommendations that ought to be incorporated into the development of curriculum for the Institute.

A final objective was to enhance and support the ongoing development of an international network of individuals and organizations working in the area of gender and HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support. On their way into the session, attendees were asked to leave their business cards and/or contact information so that they could be sent an evaluation form and maintain communication if they were interested in doing so.

Session Evaluation

Three weeks following the session, an evaluation form was sent electronically to the list of session attendees as a way of measuring the quality, both content and context, of the session (see Appendix). The evaluation inquired about appropriateness and clarity of information that was discussed during the session. In addition, participants were asked for suggestions and recommendations for future sessions and workshops of this nature and/or for specific ideas that would inform development aspects of the Institute.

Overall, participants reported that the session achieved its intended objectives and the information that was presented during panel presentations and discussions was considered useful and appropriate. Attendees particularly appreciated the range of expertise on the panel. Many participants also expressed a desire to be included on a mailing list to receive information regarding activities related to the development of the Institute.

There was some minor dissatisfaction expressed with the way that some of the questions from attendees were dealt with, indicating that the answers were vague, shallow and/or superficial. In addition, there were participants who commented that they would have liked to have been provided with a summation and concluding remarks of the session during the event itself.

Conclusion

As stated by one of the session attendees, the challenge is now the translation of knowledge to practice. We know what the problems are but how do we deal with them? Specifically for the Institute, we need to continue asking how we develop curriculum that will address the problems and incorporate internationally identified needs, priorities and gaps.

ACEWH is in the process of developing and writing core modules for the Institute. In January 2003, a group of international experts in gender and HIV/AIDS will be convened in Halifax for a 5-day workshop to fine tune the curriculum and determine some of the structural details of the International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS. The curriculum will be tested during a pilot Institute in the summer of 2003.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that the AIDS 2002 Satellite session achieved its objectives. The participants provided invaluable insight and recommendations pertaining to the design of an International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS. Numerous ideas and suggestions were advanced with respect to the core knowledge areas required for a truly international curriculum. Perhaps most importantly, an international network of experts and organizations has coalesced. It is this “cadre” of committed individuals who will see the International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS advance from concept to reality.

Appendix