Human rights based HIV interventions for MSM in Vietnam: looking towards the future

AmfAR meeting on Integrating Rights and Health for MSM and other LGBT Peoples:

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FHI
Vietnam, HIV, and MSM: the setting

**HIV epidemiology**
- Concentrated HIV epidemic among IDU, FSW, and MSM
- Even among MSM and FSW, significant correlation between injection drug use and HIV infection

**MSM environment**
- Increasingly open environment for MSM to meet; increasing number of bars, saunas, websites
- Community organizations formed and maturing

**Policy**
- AIDS Law protecting PLWHA and mandating HIV prevention to FSW, IDU, MSM
- Implementation and enforcement still in infancy stage
Interventions currently targeting MSM in Vietnam

- Peer outreach to hotspots, e.g. saunas, bars, massage
- MSM-friendly HIV testing and STI treatment
- MSM community-based organizational development
- MSM Website development and links to HIV services on “sex-oriented” websites
- Needle exchange and methadone for injecting drug using MSM
- ARV treatment and related care services
- Access to legal services
- Quality Improvement (QI) initiative on MSM interventions
- Integrated bio-behavioral surveillance monitoring HIV, STI, behaviors, and intervention exposure among MSM
- Advocacy to policymakers and the government
So what’s the problem?
HIV prevalence among MSM: comparisons between 2006 and 2009 integrated bio-behavioral surveillance (IBBS)
Prevalence of any STI* among MSM: comparisons between 2006 and 2009

*Syphilis, GC, CT, HIV

Hanoi

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MSM reported transactional sex</th>
<th>MSM who did not</th>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<td>13</td>
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HCMC

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Consistent condom use during anal sex among MSM reporting not selling sex: comparisons between 2006-2009

* In the last month for male partners and in the last 12 months for female partners
Looking towards the future

- Lack of risk perception since few peers have died of HIV
  - Solution: Carefully bring more HIV+ MSM into community fora for discussions
- Lack of knowledge that HIV has substantially penetrated the MSM community
  - Solution: Planning “MSM Alert” campaign through emails, twitter, texting announcing that 1 in 6 MSM in Hanoi and Saigon are HIV-infected
- Internet keeps MSM from having to meet in social settings, thus inhibiting discussions
  - Solution: Advertise health services and community events to bring people out of “cyber space” and back to earth
Looking towards the future (continued)

- Lack of reach of nascent NGOs; Tendency to be “clique-ish” and reach “friends” instead of larger communities
  - Carefully analyze reach data and size estimates
- Lack of quality BCC products targeting MSM
  - Solution: Involve MSM and professionalize communications product development
First set of ad drafts promoting condom use, VCT

- Materials presented:
  - 1st set: Promote condom & lubricant use:
Focus group findings

• The metaphor using images of food to talk about sex was not appealing nor understood; sex appeal gets more attention among the target group

• Some of the images are considered not specifically MSM oriented

• The models used are not attractive to MSM, the group prefers more attractive males
Pretest findings & revised materials

- Promote condom & lubricant use:
• Encourage use of HIV testing & counseling services:
How can we improve guidance on MSM programs

• Service-oriented minimum package should be expanded to be Comprehensive MSM Health Package that includes:
  – Reduction in homophobia
  – Reduction in gender-based violence
  – Self-esteem building interventions

• Brand and market this package to donors, acknowledging that service outcomes are more short-term and measurable while homophobia and other “social change” interventions are longer-term but EQUALLY necessary

• More guidance and TA on the science of advocacy
  – Building support within “polar opposite” groups, e.g. religious groups
How can we improve guidance on MSM programs

• Engage MSM communities in planning local NGOs
  – Manage expectations and avoid establishing too many NGOs

• Clarify HIV testing issue
  – Evolution from VCT to HTC to PITC
  – What is needed is Regular HIV Testing and Counseling (RHTC?) within context of regular Men’s Health exam
Clarify HIV testing issue

- Evolution from VCT to HTC to PITC
- What is needed is Regular HIV Testing and Counseling (RHTC?) within context of regular Men’s Health exam
Thank you

- USAID and CDC colleagues
- MSM organizations in Vietnam