



*City AIDS Colombia and Latin America 2007  
An Initiative for AIDS Competence in Cities*

Medellin, Colombia  
April 19 – 21, 2007

The HIV and AIDS pandemic is a problem that exceeds the capability of one single sector. The commitment from municipal leaders, medical and public health communities, as well as, the private sector and the civil society as a whole is needed for an effective response. National leadership, resource mobilization, planning and coordination are important to make a real difference in the global response to the AIDS epidemic.

**Conference and associated partners**

The International Training Center for Local Authorities in Atlanta (CIFAL Atlanta), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and the Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS, in close cooperation with the Secretary of Health of Medellín and the Colombian Corporation of Secretaries of Health (COSESAM) are organizing the first City AIDS Colombia and Latin America Conference in Medellín, Colombia from April 19 through April 21, 2007.

Approximately 90 participants representing 22 of the largest municipalities in Colombia and 11 largest municipalities in Latin America are expected to attend the workshop. This workshop will be held the first three days of the conference (April 19-20). The last day of the conference, April 21, is a public day for mayors, secretaries of health, business leaders, and leaders of civil society to share and comment on the results and findings from the previous three days. This public day will have high profile media coverage to publicize the results of the workshop.

**A facilitative approach to human capacity development**

Recent developments have demonstrated that by building on their strengths, cities can create a social transformation, where people are seen as the subjects of their own development rather than as the objects of institutional intervention. It is about appreciating and revealing local capacity to tackle a local problem. This process is universal; it applies equally to rich and poor cities, to low and high HIV-prevalence communities. By confronting AIDS, they build new experience in addressing local development challenges, and seek others' experience to build AIDS competence.

**AIDS Competence** means that people in families, communities, municipalities, organizations and policy making acknowledge the reality of HIV, act from strength to build their capacity to respond, reduce vulnerability and risks, learn and share with others, and live out their full human potential. Thirty six forward looking cities in Latin America with very diverse contexts will attend the conference, sharing best practices and experiences learned from local responses to AIDS. A team of three people will represent each city. It will comprise a senior municipal official, a representative of a local NGO, and a person living with HIV.



The central purpose of this process is to develop human capacity. It relies on a facilitative approach, which starts with a shift in leaders' attitudes, from "we believe in our own expertise to provide solution" to "we believe in people's strengths to respond," from "we control a disease" to "we facilitate responses", from "we respond to need" to "we reveal strength," and from "you have a problem" to "together, we have solutions."

### **UNITAR Knowledge Management training method**

Cities will assess their HIV competence before the workshop. Using a self-assessment tool, municipal leaders will stimulate a conversation between key actors from civil society, the business community, and the public sector to determine strengths and areas for improvement of their capacity to respond. The group sets priorities for improvement. As a result, they will know what experiences they want to share, and what they need to learn from others. The U.N. has hosted other conferences where topics such as "decentralizing HIV testing," "how to work with commercial sex workers" and "addressing vulnerability" were discussed by the working groups. British Petroleum seconded to UNITAR its Knowledge Management expert, Geoff Parcell, co-author of the best-seller *Learning to Fly*, and donated a training tool that will be used extensively during this workshop. This tool called the "river and stairs diagrams" will show one city's best practices that may benefit others.

During the previous conferences, the following topics were chosen by the participants according to their priorities:

1. Vulnerability: Addressing the Gender Dimension
2. Measuring behavior change to create an AIDS- free generation
3. Mobilization of resources
4. Prevention of HIV/AIDS among youth
5. Care and access to treatment

Sharing their experience on these topics, they identified the key advice others could use irrespective of context. This advice is supported by examples based on experience, and references for more detail constitute "knowledge assets," upon which others can build and reuse. Moreover, the exchange between peers led to the identification of new possibilities for concrete action in their local context. Workshop participants can use both the formal sessions and the informal time to learn more from each other about how to improve their city's response to HIV and AIDS.

The overall goal of the 2007 Americas Leadership Initiative for AIDS Competence in Cities is to achieve better results by facilitating the exchange of best practices throughout the Americas. At the end of the workshop, the United Nations team will prepare a final report accessible on line.