



City AIDS 2009

Americas Leadership Initiative for AIDS Competence

Atlanta, USA

Introduction

The HIV and AIDS pandemic is a problem that exceeds the capability of one single sector. The commitment from local government 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.

The City AIDS Initiative is a key component to reach one of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals: the fight against HIV/AIDS and other pandemics by fostering the ownership and competency of local authorities in responding to the pandemic in urban areas.

CIFAL Atlanta, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS, with the support of Fulton County Government are pleased to offer the City AIDS Americas 2009 Conference to be held in Atlanta, USA. This Conference will provide a venue for government officials, civic leaders, activists, researchers, academia, private sector representatives and people living with HIV/AIDS to exchange best practice strategies, as well as develop practical and unique actions plans for how government authorities can work together more effectively to manage health and HIV/AIDS for the benefit of their communities.

Objectives of the Initiative

- Strengthen the role of local authorities by providing them with necessary training and good practices sharing to improve their level of competence to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic in their cities.
- To establish and facilitate on-going exchanges of knowledge and experience among local authorities and key actors from the most affected areas by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Georgia Counties, other cities/counties across the United States, as well as cities from the Americas.
- To promote partnerships between Fulton County, other U.S. counties, and international cities to develop innovative approaches to health and HIV/AIDS management.

Background

Globally, there were an estimated 33 million people living with HIV in 2007 worldwide. The United States of America accounted for an estimated 1.2 million of the 2.0 million people living with HIV in North America. In Latin America, there were 1.7 million of people living with HIV and 230,000 people were living with the disease in the Caribbean at the end of 2007 (UNAIDS, Global Report 2008).

In the State of Georgia, The HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to grow. The total number of cumulative AIDS cases reported by the end of 2008 was 48,637. In 2008, persons aged 25–44 accounted for the largest proportions of newly diagnosed HIV/AIDS cases in Georgia. The state had the seventh highest number of AIDS cases in the US in 2007 following Pennsylvania, Texas, California and New York (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).



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. Over 25 counties/cities from the United States and from the Americas with very diverse contexts are expected to 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

Counties 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. Topics to be discussed during the conference include:

- ✓ Vulnerability: Addressing the Gender Dimension
- ✓ Mobilization of resources
- ✓ Prevention of HIV/AIDS among youth
- ✓ Care and access to treatment

Participants will share their experience on priority topics and will identify the key advice others could use irrespective of context. Moreover, the exchange between peers will lead 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 response to HIV and AIDS.

The overall goal of the 2009 Americas Leadership Initiative for AIDS Competence in Counties and Cities is to achieve better results by facilitating the exchange of best practices throughout the region. At the end of the workshop, CIFAL Atlanta team will prepare a final report accessible on line.

Beneficiaries

- Government officials, NGO representatives, people living with HIV/AIDS from more than 25 cities/counties from the United States and from the Americas.
- Extended community that is reached through the City AIDS e-workspace.

