

Report on CSW Caucus on HIV/AIDS

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Attended by more than 70 individuals, representing 25 countries, an HIV/AIDS Caucus, co-sponsored by the United Nations (UN) Non Governmental Committee on HIV/AIDS and the American Psychological Association (APA), was held March 4, 2010, at the Church Center, UN Plaza, as a parallel event to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women-54 (CSW-54), "Beijing + 15."

Agreed conclusions relevant to HIV/AIDS and women and girls since the CSW in Beijing were summarized. The floor was then opened for discussion of action steps.

Women and men in the audience often spoke powerfully from experience. Suggestions included action steps for education, empowerment, health care, involvement of men and boys, and local/national/international policy. Participants focused on caregiving; prevention; research acknowledging gender and age related issues; and the role of stigma in preventing access to care, support for people living with HIV (PLWHIV) or their caregivers, and preventing education about HIV.

Education

- Ensure that women and girls have access to education to inform them about HIV risks and choices in formal and informal educational venues
- Educate prior to risk and include within training about reproductive health and healthy relationships
- Train community members and health care personnel to reduce the stigma of HIV and thus ameliorate the social isolation of PLWHIV and their caregivers

Empowerment

- Caring for others with HIV places a disproportionate burden on women and girls, decreasing opportunities for work, education, or other life plans as well as diminishing the finances of a family
 - Share responsibility across genders
 - Disseminate models which provide financial and emotional support for caregiving activities more broadly
- Support research likely to reach and be used by women and girls (e.g., new prevention technologies, microbicides)
- Reduce gender-bias in funding women-led organization to address HIV

Health Care

- Integrate HIV prevention and testing/triage to treatment into general health care and make it immediately available to women and girls
- Develop partnerships among health care and HIV/AIDS agencies to both prevent and treat HIV

Involvement of Men and Boys

- Men and boys should shoulder their responsibility in maintaining
 - Caregiving
 - Finance of women-led initiatives
 - Gender- and age-sensitive policies
 - Healthy relationships

Local/National/International Policy

- Use CSW resolutions to lobby for within country and local change
- Keep age and gender-relevant statistics to illuminate the issues of women and girls
- Deinstitutionalize stigma through positive mission statements regarding PLWHIV and their caregivers
- Develop multi-level strategies (international, national, local) to both *prevent* and treat HIV

Participants received HIV resource guides. The Caucus was introduced by Alan Saunders and Deanna Chitayat, Chair and Vice-Chair of the NGO Committee on HIV/AIDS, respectively, with Mr. Saunders also representing the Universal Peace Federation and Dr. Chitayat representing APA as its team leader. Dr. Deborah Vietze, APA, recorded the discussion, while Beatrice Krauss, APA Special Associate to UN NGOs on HIV/AIDS issues, moderated. Special thanks go to Polly Woodard, RN, International Federation of University Women, for her work in organizing the event.