



**For Immediate Release**

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**The Global Forum on MSM & HIV to Celebrate New Oakland Headquarters with Open House**  
*Local government and non-profit leaders to join international AIDS advocates for downtown event*

**Oakland, Calif., February 23, 2010** – The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF) today announced plans for a March 1<sup>st</sup> open house that will connect local health officials and AIDS service organizations with members of the MSMGF’s staff and international steering committee. The MSMGF, a global network of civil society groups, AIDS organizations, and advocates working for improved HIV programming for men who have sex with men (MSM) worldwide, opened its headquarters in Oakland in early February.

“The MSMGF is the only advocacy organization focused specifically on the global HIV epidemic among men who have sex with men (MSM),” said Dr. George Ayala, Executive Officer of the MSMGF. “Oakland’s sustained response to a devastating epidemic among MSM of color has given local service providers a depth of experience that is extremely valuable; we look forward to working with both our local colleagues and partners abroad to ensure MSM everywhere have the services they need.”

Gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) are 19 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population in lower- and middle-income countries. Despite this fact, only 1.2% of HIV-related services are directed toward MSM.

“MSM everywhere suffer from a dearth of investment, research, and HIV-related programming” explained Othman Mellouk, MSMGF steering committee co-chair and President of Morocco's Association de Lutte Contre le Sida Maroc (ALCS). “Denial of this crisis has been especially strong in the global south. Driven by a steering committee of global advocates largely from the global south, the MSMGF is in a unique position to address these issues.”

In addition to Oakland’s leadership in HIV programming for MSM, the MSMGF also notes that the city lies within the Ninth Congressional District, represented by Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA), Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. The Congresswoman has been an outspoken advocate for communities disproportionately impacted by HIV both within the US and abroad.

“We are thrilled that the MSMGF is setting up shop in Oakland,” said Congresswoman Lee. “In many ways, the gaps in appropriate prevention and care strategies for MSM in the global south mirror the experience of minority populations in wealthy countries like the United States. A strong partnership between the AIDS response in Oakland and the global response among MSM has the potential to improve health outcomes in both communities.”

The open house, hosted by Dr. George Ayala, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and MSMGF co-chair Othman Mellouk, will be held at 1:30 PM on March 1<sup>st</sup> at the MSMGF’s new headquarters in downtown Oakland. The MSMGF’s headquarters is located at 436 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1500, Oakland, CA 94612.



*The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF) is an expanding network of AIDS organizations, MSM networks, and advocates committed to ensuring robust coverage of and equitable access to effective HIV prevention, care, treatment, and support services tailored to the needs of gay men and other MSM. Guided by a Steering Committee of 20 members from 17 countries situated mainly in the Global South, and with administrative and fiscal support from AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), the MSMGF works to promote MSM health and human rights worldwide through advocacy, information exchange, knowledge production, networking, and capacity building.*

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