



**For Immediate Release**

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**Advocacy Coalition Unveils New Strategy to Fight Global AIDS Epidemic**

**Ambitious work plan calls for a transformation of the world's HIV response to address "shameful neglect" of AIDS among gay men globally**

**Los Angeles, Calif., June 24, 2009** – Amid reports that HIV rates among gay men continue to climb, the Global Forum on MSM and HIV (MSMGF) has released details of a new international strategy to address the epidemic's growing toll on men who have sex with men (MSM). The Forum, which is the only global HIV/AIDS advocacy network specifically devoted to the needs of MSM, outlines its approach in a three-year work plan, an effort to combat "a shameful neglect of MSM needs" in international HIV care and prevention efforts.

"MSM are 19 times more likely to be infected with HIV than the general population in low- and middle-income countries worldwide -- yet fewer than one in twenty MSM has access to the prevention, care, and treatment services they so clearly need," explained George Ayala, the MSMGF's Executive Officer. "Despite this disproportionate impact, less than 2 percent of global funding for HIV-related services is directed at gay men," Ayala added. "The numbers simply don't add up.

MSMGF's strategic plan to fight the epidemic focuses on five core goals, including:

- Increased funding for effective HIV prevention, care, treatment and support programs for MSM;
- Expanded coverage of quality HIV-related services for MSM;
- Increased knowledge on MSM and HIV through enhanced research;
- Decreased stigma, discrimination and violence against MSM; and
- Strengthened regional, sub-regional, and national networks of MSM worldwide.

"The Global Forum's close ties to local networks of MSM advocates and programmers across the globe, coupled with open communication with high-level international planning and funding bodies, gives us a unique opportunity to lend a powerful voice to concerns often left unheard in the global dialogue on HIV and AIDS," explained Executive Committee Member Robert Carr, also of the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition. "Our plan for 2009 – 2011 leverages our strengths in

network development, information exchange, education and advocacy to bolster the health and human rights of MSM globally.”

MSMGF was founded in 2006 by a worldwide group of organizations in response to a shared concern that current HIV strategies do not adequately address the needs of MSM and are challenged by persistent denial and human rights abuses. In 2008, the group hosted “The Invisible Men,” a two-day pre-conference satellite to the International AIDS Conference, to examine gaps in HIV/AIDS research, care and prevention for MSM. More than 500 delegates from 82 countries attended the event.

The Strategic Work Plan, which is available for viewing at [www.msmsgf.org](http://www.msmsgf.org), was developed by MSMGF’s steering committee, with delegates from Australia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Dominican Republic, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Romania, South Africa, Uganda, the UK, the US and Zimbabwe. The Forum is housed and staffed at AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA).

*The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF) is a network of community-based organizations, AIDS service organizations, MSM groups and other agencies that work at the global and national level to advocate for improved HIV programming for MSM. With a Secretariat housed at AIDS Project Los Angeles and a Steering Committee of 21 members from 17 countries in the Global North and South, MSMGF is committed to responding to HIV/AIDS among gay men through advocacy, education and programs that promote human rights and support the empowerment of MSM around the world.*

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