

Local Ties, Global Reach: HIV Prevention Among MSM

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Increasingly, individuals and organizations must work together locally, regionally, and internationally in order to maximize resources and create opportunities. However, the nature and processes of these bilateral and multilateral collaborations are largely un-documented or perhaps their well-intentioned plans fall through. Common reasons for alliances not to reach their goals have to do primarily with misunderstanding socio-cultural contexts, and lack of trust and commitment. Establishing shared agendas and opportunities for equal exchanges, on the other hand, may lead to improved collaborations. This program describes the phases of a successful partnership between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Latin America and AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) in California. It connects the universal concerns that surface in collaborations and describes several phases worthy of consideration among organizations and individuals forging partnerships abroad:

- 1) Developing the collaborative relationship and establishing kinship;
- 2) Identifying pivotal concerns;
- 3) Generating sources of commonalities and differences experienced by the different countries;
- 4) Formulating recommendations and strategies that inform future activities; and
- 5) Managing expectations regarding limited resources and the prioritization of shared goals.



By partnering with Community-Based Organizations in Latin America, APLA seeks to generate an increase in the delivery of HIV awareness initiatives, technical assistance, print material development, feasibility studies, and strategic analysis and evaluation services concerning MSM. These activities fall under four cores: Prevention, Research, Training and Advocacy (PRTA). The acronym is enunciated as PueRTA, or door, a door to exploring and understanding HIV in Latin America.

APLA has partnered with CONGA (Coalition of Gay Organizations in Central America) to discuss HIV prevalence amongst gay men and other men who have sex with men in Central America. The result was an extensive advocacy and prevention tool titled, “No Mas en el Tintero.” Officially launched in Nicaragua in 2007 and later presented in Los Angeles in 2008, the publication offers strategies and recommendations for individuals and groups working with MSM populations. APLA aims to strengthen regional ties between civil society groups in the region, make the connections between Central America and a thriving migrant community in Los Angeles and help structure advocacy campaigns that target government and society centered on the human rights of sexually diverse groups.

In another highly innovative collaboration with Fundación Comunicación Positiva (FCP), based in Bogota, Colombia, APLA and FCP propose a culturally-sensitive prevention education initiative, titled, “‘Hamwat’a – ‘Metamorfosis de un medio sin alas” (A Centered Metamorphosis without Wings)” that will train healthcare providers, community leaders and HIV advocates in Latin America who provide services to people living with HIV (PLWH). Trainees will obtain information on communication and multimedia skills for the production of prevention and treatment-focused websites and materials based at their home organizations. APLA & FCP’s training strongly emphasizes the notion of accessing HIV information from a human rights and universal access to health care perspective. Existing information is highly technical, culturally inappropriate, and lacks advocacy. Both APLA and FCP have expertise in media, web and educational material in prevention and thus will join forces to initiate this effort.