

10 HOW-TO RESOURCES AND CORE REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

In addition to the resources included at the end of each chapter, this section has been included as an easy reference. It contains a collection of annotations that match up with the HIV/AIDS Alliance's Advocacy in Action toolkit and attunes the skill cards to MSM communities. The skills are the medium through which advocacy messages are delivered, and are broken down into easy-to-understand steps. Also included are links to 2 core reference documents: (1) the Yogyakarta Principles and (2) the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. These are very useful for references when drafting advocacy documents. Find them at the end of this section. It is suggested that toolkit users download the Advocacy in Action toolkit and read the skill cards in tandem with the annotations below. The following information is included:

- Analyzing and influencing legislation or policies
- Preparing a briefing note or position paper
- Working from inside the system
- Lobbying or face-to-face meetings
- Writing and delivering a presentation
- Persuading through drama
- Working with the media
- Writing and using a press release



- Carrying out a media interview
- Preparing a press conference
- Using the Internet

Please access the HIV/AIDS Alliance's Advocacy in Action toolkit skill cards at the following link:

<http://www.aidsalliance.org/publicationsdetails.aspx?id=142>

Please note that another very good set of skill cards is available in the APCASO Advocacy toolkit accessible at:

http://www.apcaso.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=66

SKILL CARD ANNOTATIONS:

Analyzing and influencing legislation or policies

In some countries, anal intercourse and other expressions of same-sex union are criminalized, leading to incarceration and execution. These policies not only affect individuals, but also obstruct MSM rights by officially condoning anti-MSM attitudes and obstructing HIV prevention efforts.

There are also more subtle ways that policy can impede freedom of movement and expression for MSM communities. For example, in many countries vagrancy laws against petty theft, “public nuisance,” and drugs are often regularly and falsely used against MSM in certain communities. In these cases, MSM are charged and taken into police custody in an effort to clear them from public areas.

Of course, it is not enough to stop at analyzing legislation and policies that impede and obstruct MSM individual and collective rights. It is also important to work for new policies that safeguard the rights of MSM and other groups with different sexual and gender identities. In many communities this may not happen for a number of years; nonetheless, it is important to begin thinking and working for these protective policies immediately.

Action step(s):

- Lead focus group discussions or interviews among MSM community members in your area to determine which legislation or policies are serving as obstructions. These might include penal code criminalization of MSM and local vagrancy laws that are used regularly to keep MSM out of the public space.

Preparing a briefing note or position paper

It is clear that there is much work to be done for MSM populations, which means there will be a number of positions and stands to take on multiple issues. In a situation like this, advocacy messages can be amplified by getting consensus from as many groups working with MSM as possible on stances around issues and how issues rank according to priority. Otherwise, the community runs the risk of sending mixed signals, or diluting the potential of their advocacy efforts to make change.

Action step(s):

- Network with other MSM groups in your area and learn about their stances on particular issues, as well as their own advocacy agendas and priority items.
- When possible, come to a consensus on these issues as well as their priority ranking to avoid sending mixed signals.

Working from inside the system

It is alarming how disproportionate the amount of MSM community representation is in systems that are purportedly working for MSM rights and protection. Luckily, there is increasing support for involving community members in decision-making processes, especially in HIV prevention planning bodies. As this need for greater involvement has been articulated in a number of international forums, there is a great deal of scope for leveraging these stated priorities to secure a place for more MSM in decision- and policy-making forums.

It is also important to note that representation is also very often limited to a particular segment of the MSM population; usually the educated, English-speaking, and socially mobile segments. If this is the case in your country, it is important to diversify MSM community representation so it reflects as much of the spectrum of MSM identities as possible, including MSM who may have less education, language ability, or mobility. MSM living with HIV should also be included as a very important voice.

Action step(s):

- Map potential bodies and committees to which community members can potentially contribute their voice as regular or guest participants.
- Identify commitments made by well-respected organizations on the topic of “community ownership” and “greater involvement” of MSM and marginalized communities. These can be leveraged to make a case for participation.
- Be cognizant of what MSM community members are participating and who is missing. Rotate opportunities to represent MSM among diverse types of MSM.

Lobbying or face-to-face meetings

In advocacy work with MSM, terminology is always an important question. As a general rule, use language that your advocacy target audience will understand. For example, the term “MSM” comes from the world of HIV research and prevention, and will certainly not be understood by the majority of audiences. It is also a difficult term in cultural contexts where “sex” as a term is not used openly. The terms gay, bisexual, and homosexual may work in some cultural contexts, but in

others they may not properly represent the MSM population doing the advocacy or may also be very stigmatized terms. Many communities have advocated successfully with targets in conservative cultural settings by using creative terminology to refer to MSM (for example, “ostracized men,” “feminine men,” “men with the hearts of women”). Making your advocacy target comfortable is key; tactful language use can allow for a meeting to run smoothly and for a longer duration. Another tactic in conservative settings is to consider how appearance can positively or negatively impact a meeting, and your goal should be to make your audience as comfortable as possible. MSM should not feel as if they are compromising their identity; tact is an incredibly important part of making advocacy effective.

Action step(s):

- Lead participatory discussions with MSM in your area to create a list of terms that can be used with various audiences on the basis of their being the most “appropriate” and “palpable” for that particular audience.
- Create a dress code policy as well. For example, when is it appropriate to use drag as a tool to raise awareness, and when is it more appropriate for the community to represent itself more conservatively?

Writing and delivering a presentation

The situation in which many MSM communities find themselves is shot through with gaps, missing pieces, and shortfalls. When making presentations, avoid the tendency to focus on the negative. Build into presentations a sense of positivity and possibility without getting bogged down in what is wrong, what is missing, and what is unworkable about a given situation. Be sure to include at least some examples of what is working or what has worked elsewhere, and articulate clear steps toward a solution to an articulated problem.

Action step(s):

- Designate a community member as editor for all publications and presentations to read documents for language that (1) could potentially offend important advocacy targets, such as National AIDS Program bodies, and (2) assess the degree to which a piece of writing gives readers a sense of positivity and workability.

Persuading through drama

Drama is a very powerful medium through which communities can reach the local public, especially in rural locales. Drama suits MSM community groups for a few reasons. In many cultures MSM are traditionally the keepers of the art of theater and costume, and already have the tools to put up a compelling performance. In

many cultures, drama and theater are culturally sanctioned and important parts of day-to-day life. Bringing messages about MSM to the general population in a familiar cultural medium will increase the chances that the message will reach people. Drama is also a wonderful way for communities to deliver multiple messages, depending on the theme and story of the performance, which the community can control. This makes it an incredibly flexible medium that can be changed according to context.

Action step(s):

- Convene a working group composed of MSM community members who have some degree of experience in performance or theater to assess the possibility of using drama as an advocacy tool. Consider potential actors, potential audiences (local decision makers, schools, festivals where dramas are regularly performed), and messages the community might deliver through a performance.

Working with the media:

Note: These annotations relate to the following skill cards:

- ① Writing and using a press release
- ② Carrying out a media interview
- ③ Preparing a press conference

When approaching and working with the media, MSM should remember that the media is not an objective force that necessarily sees the truth in a particular group's message or struggle, despite many people's deep trust in media outlets. Particularly in cultural contexts where MSM rights are still in a nascent stage, or where MSM identities are relegated to a particular societal segment or profession, the media can perpetuate stereotypes even though many often go to the media to learn the "truth."

The media can be used strategically and effectively to sensitize the general public about MSM issues. To do this, consider a few things:

- What is the current depiction of MSM by the local media? What kinds of stories are reported about MSM, and how are MSM portrayed? Is there a particular story that repeats regularly? What terms are used to refer to MSM? Are these in alignment with the truth of the MSM in your community? If not, what are the core stereotypes, and what parts of the story are not being told?
- Like doctors, members of the media are trained in their profession. During their training under most circumstances they do not learn about ethically and sensitively covering MSM. Consider organizing trainings for working

media personnel as well as local media college faculty and students to raise awareness about what constitutes ethical and sensitive MSM community portrayal.

- Another way to sensitize media to MSM concerns is to prepare a leaflet with key points about sensitive coverage, eg, what terminology to use, what stereotypes to avoid, etc. This “takeaway” can assist them when they are putting together their final article or news segment.
- For many MSM, participating in anything media-related can be a terrifying experience because there is the potential for people finding out their MSM status. For this reason confidentiality is a key concern. For the media, communities can prepare a set of regulations around use of names, as well as photographing community members. For a community organization, it is important to train members of the community so they understand these issues, particularly the risks of being exposed. Many MSM who were hiding their identities have been made public by the media because they did not have the knowledge to protect themselves.
- Consent forms are another good way to regulate media coverage of community names and faces. Create a template and require that media people get a signature before publishing names or faces.
- Media also includes film and TV in which the portrayal of MSM is another way stereotypes are perpetuated and learned. What are some examples in your community of MSM in film and TV? What stereotypes repeat regularly?

Action step(s):

- Do a mapping of the local media and its portrayal of MSM. Identify stereotypes that are being perpetuated by these portrayals, as well as aspects that are missing from the story the media is telling.
- Identify media colleges in your area and network with them in the interest of leading a training on ethical and sensitive portrayal of MSM.
- Bring local MSM community members to an awareness of “do’s and don’t’s” when engaging with media to assist them in protecting their privacy if they do not want their names or photographs to appear in the media. Develop a similar list for media people who cover events where MSM are present.
- As a community, come up with a core set of simple, easy-to-articulate points relating to an issue that all participating community members can master in preparation for an event where media will likely be present. This increases the chances that a clear message will reach the media.

Internet

Groups should consider launching an e-advocacy campaign through the Internet, which is accessible in many cultures and a very cost-effective option. This can be done in a number of ways. There are e-forums that host discussions on a number

Two key resources that may be useful when writing for advocacy are:

Yogyakarta

Principles: a set of international principles relating to the application of international human rights law to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, centered on affirming binding international legal standards with which all states must comply.

<http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/>

UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS:

a framework of action to halt and reverse the spread of HIV, agreed to by governments and including specific milestones and deadlines.

<http://www.unaids.org/en/AboutUNAIDS/Goals/UNGASS/default.asp>



of topics relating to MSM, human rights, and HIV in various regions of the world. It can also be achieved through creating a blog about a particular body of work or issue. E-mail blasts can be used to send a number of select recipients documents about particular issues. And social networking pages can be used to get the word out about issues that relate to MSM.

Action step(s):

- Designate an Internet action plan and delegate specific responsibilities (eg, blogger, e-forum manager, facebook manager) to community members with computer skills.