



SPEAKING
OUT

TOOLKIT

FOR MSM-LED HIV/AIDS ADVOCACY



The Global Forum on MSM and 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 18 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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Speaking Out: A Toolkit for MSM-led HIV/AIDS Advocacy

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Toolkits and resources cited in this volume

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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit has been created to fulfill a dire need that exists for men who have sex with men (MSM) everywhere to engage in advocacy locally, nationally, and globally as a means to end the HIV epidemic and to secure fulfilling, meaningful futures. The need is urgent, as the burden of the epidemic continues to disproportionately affect MSM communities across the globe. The toolkit equips individuals and organizations with tools and techniques that enable them to become advocates right now, wherever and whenever they happen to be. A thread that runs through all the exercises in the toolkit is a fundamental belief in the capacity and vibrancy of MSM communities everywhere, and that when properly channeled, their energy can make meaningful and sustainable social change.

Now, more than ever, it is important for MSM communities to identify their own strengths, weaknesses, and needs, and to self-advocate as individuals and collectives for their rights in ways that work particularly for *them*. There are so many facets to the multiple ways in which MSM communities live and breathe, and it is up to these same communities to begin raising their voices on their own terms, from their own particular contexts. That is what this toolkit is all about: empowering MSM communities with the tools to become more involved in advocating for their rights, in their homes and schools as well as in government and global forums.

This toolkit is built upon other toolkits, with some key differences: (1) it is specifically MSM-focused with exercises and ideas that serve as conduits for MSM community energy and contribution; (2) it believes that organizations can start where they are, and assumes the skill sets and organizational maturity of MSM individuals and groups are wide-ranging and take time to develop; and (3) it approaches HIV/AIDS from a broad human rights framework, balancing public health and human rights approaches toward addressing MSM community susceptibility to HIV.

Intended audience

This toolkit is designed for MSM and MSM supporters who would like to incorporate MSM-related advocacy into their current work. It assumes at least some of the participants in the trainings based on this toolkit will have basic literacy skills. It also assumes they will have a rudimentary understanding of what advocacy means; however, the toolkit has the potential to stand as an introduction to advocacy with minor supplementation with other sources. The toolkit's exploration of advocacy as it relates to MSM and HIV in particular is a new approach, and therefore participants should expect their current definitions of advocacy to be challenged and enriched.

As the HIV epidemic is making a disproportionate impact in the Global South, and MSM in those areas have been found to have less access to services and often face hostile circumstances when seeking HIV-related information and support, this toolkit is designed to reach MSM in low-and middle-income countries making a careful attempt to address the unique challenges in those particular contexts.

Although there are undeniable differences across MSM culture between countries and, in some cases, within the same cultural and geographical context, the toolkit is designed to be selectively applicable across a wide spectrum of locales. If some exercises or chapters are not relevant to a particular context, toolkit users are encouraged to skip around, and to use what works best in their particular circumstances.

How to use this toolkit

The toolkit is like a cookbook, offering a range of recipes for action that orient participants to core concepts with ideas for building advocacy campaigns wherever they are. It is divided into 3 main sections: (A) an overview of advocacy; (B) a group of 5 topic areas that serve as potential advocacy foci, namely investment, services, stigma and discrimination, research, and civil society and networks; and finally (C) 2 chapters with a special focus on working with international human rights mechanisms and working in hostile environments. Each chapter is followed by a list of related resources in the event that groups would like to pursue the topic in more depth. In addition, there is also a set of annotations for the step-by-step advocacy skill cards found in The HIV/AIDS Alliance's Advocacy in Action¹ toolkit, presenting each advocacy skill in light of MSM-specific concerns and challenges. The chapters present information in an interactive format, in a manner that is intended to build upon community strengths and latent skills.

The toolkit should be used to craft a facilitated training. It can be used in a multi-day training, or shorter half-day or full-day training. However it is used, it is intended to introduce information in a manner that is both interactive and accessible. It is suggested that facilitators include an overview of advocacy, as well as review of the annotated skill cards, which provide an orientation to the various

concrete steps and processes through which an advocacy campaign is run. The other sections of the toolkit are focused on specific advocacy topics (eg, investment) and can be selected and used according to particular need.

Note to the facilitator

The exercises in this toolkit are of an extremely sensitive nature, taking up concepts and issues that will likely reach deeply into the personal lives of training participants. It is very likely that some of the concepts will run against the grain of socially and culturally sanctioned norms in the contexts where the trainings are held. It is crucial, therefore, that the information be presented in a format that is both comfortable for participants and sensitive to their particular circumstances and personal situations. Some of the exercises call upon participants to share personal information, which may be unpleasant or difficult for them to recollect and share. Some groups may not have a highly developed degree of capacity to carry forward many of the activities presented in the toolkit. It is the job of the facilitator, then, to strike up a workable balance and cover and present material in such a manner that participants will feel inspired to take forward advocacy work with whatever skills they *do* possess. It is also very important to note that this toolkit is just a beginning to a successful advocacy campaign, and that advocacy work is a process that takes time and energy over an extended period. Participants should leave the training inspired, but also with a realistic sense for advocacy's multiple processes and sometimes slow-going nature. It is suggested that individuals who have had some degree of experience leading trainings relating to HIV, AIDS, and MSM facilitate the training. If not, facilitators should prepare with the help of materials like the ones listed on the next page.

Ground rules

It's recommended that all facilitation sessions begin with a group discussion of ground rules to ensure a safe space. These should be written out clearly on a large piece of flipchart paper for the whole group to see and discuss. Review the list and ask the group for any further suggestions. Before beginning the training, ensure the group has understood and agreed to these principles.

Suggested ground rules:

- Confidentiality – What is said in the room, stays in the room.
- Respect – Do not interrupt others; speak for yourself (use “I” statements) and use constructive statements only (no “put downs”).
- Right to pass – In roundtable discussions, participants may “pass” if they wish.

- “Step up, step back” – Allow for all of the voices in the room to be heard; if you find yourself speaking often while others are silent, encourage their participation by letting others speak.

Resources for facilitation

There have been a number of comprehensive guides to facilitating trainings in other places. It is suggested that facilitators go to these resources and prepare before leading a training:

The Naz Foundation (India) Trust. Training manual: an introduction to promoting sexual health for men who have sex with men and gay men. http://data.unaids.org/Publications/IRC-pub07/jc901-msm-asiapacific_en.pdf. Published 2001. Accessed on July 5, 2010. **See pages 1-6**

Pact Inc. and the International Center for Research on Women. Understanding and challenging stigma toward men who have sex with men: toolkit for action. Adapted version for use in Cambodia. <http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/Understanding-and-Challenging-Stigma-toward-Men-who-have-Sex-with-Men-Toolkit-for-Action.pdf>. Published 2010. Accessed on June 23, 2010. **See pages 12-24**

International Planned Parenthood Federation. Handbook for advocacy planning. http://www.ippfwhr.org/en/advocacy_planning_manual. Published 2010. Accessed on July 5, 2010. **See pages 17-23**