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The Pan-African francophone network for the defense of gay rights and the rights of men who have sexual relationships with other men



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A catalyst for increasing the amount and quality of services to MSMs

AGCS (AGCS against AIDS), the pan-African Francophone network for the defense of gay rights and the rights of men who have sexual relations with other men, or MSMs, works in 10 countries and mobilizes 19 organizations working to protect LGBTI rights and to fight against AIDS in northern, western and central Africa (see map on page 5).



Our work focuses on two closely linked areas: the fight against AIDS and the defense of sexual minorities in Africa, as the lack of awareness of this segment of society, their stigmatization and social discrimination, if not outright punishment, have increased their vulnerability and created a “hidden epidemic”.

Access to quality healthcare services for key populations, particularly gays and MSMs, forms part of the new paradigm for fighting HIV/AIDS in which the fight against this epidemic will not be considered successful until we turn all our efforts to help the most affected communities. This is why the member organizations of AGCS began developing highly original responses that have proven to work effectively. The network has charged itself with the mission of identifying, modeling, disseminating and perpetuating such measures.

“The immunological deficit takes hold wherever there is a “statutory deficit”. MSMs also suffer from these deficits, from a denial of rights, stigmatization, discrimination, and homophobic violence. This goes a long way in explaining their heightened vulnerability to HIV.”

Daniel Defert, excerpt from Practical handbook for AIDS activists in Francophone countries in the MENA Region, ALCS

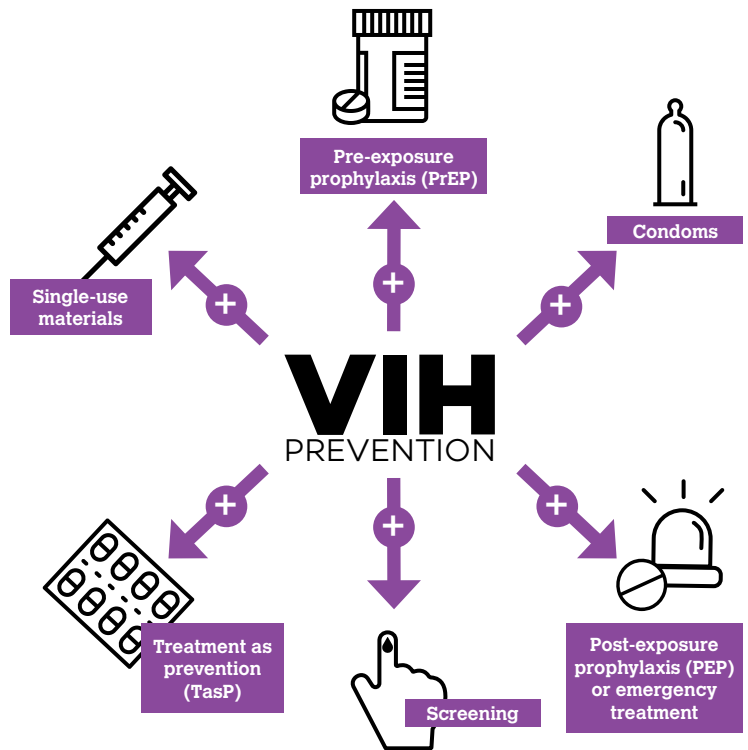
To contribute to the ambitious goals of the 90-90-90¹ strategy set forth by UNAIDS AGCS seeks to:

- promote and strengthen plans for:
 - fixed or mobile community screenings, outside a medical context whenever possible;
 - appropriate sexual health;
 - the maintenance of care and psychosocial support;
- spread new prevention strategies among its members such as oral pre-exposure prophylaxis through its activist network, a number of whom work within national healthcare agencies, or CCMs².

“What is done for us and without us is done against us.”

One of the strengths of our community organizations is their capacity to mobilize affected individuals, to involve them, and to create a relationship of trust that encourages adhering to their own healthcare requirements. This is a key component of our new strategies.

They participate at every stage of the 90-90-90 strategy's goals, and the intensification of their efforts targeting key populations, specifically gays and MSMs, has yielded excellent results.



OUR MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS REACH MORE THAN **10,000 MSMs** EACH YEAR!

1 The goal between now and 2020 is: 90% of gays/MSMs infected by HIV in the countries covered by AGCS acknowledge they are HIV-positive, 90% of them are in anti-retroviral therapy, or ART, and 90% of those treated have an undetectable level of the virus.

2 Country Coordinating Mechanisms



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The desire and ability to advocate for change lie at the heart of AGCS *contre le sida's* mission



“It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can keep him from lynching me, and I think that’s pretty important.”

Martin Luther King

Serge Yotta and Diadji Diouf, spokespersons for the AGCS network, workshop, Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, February 2016

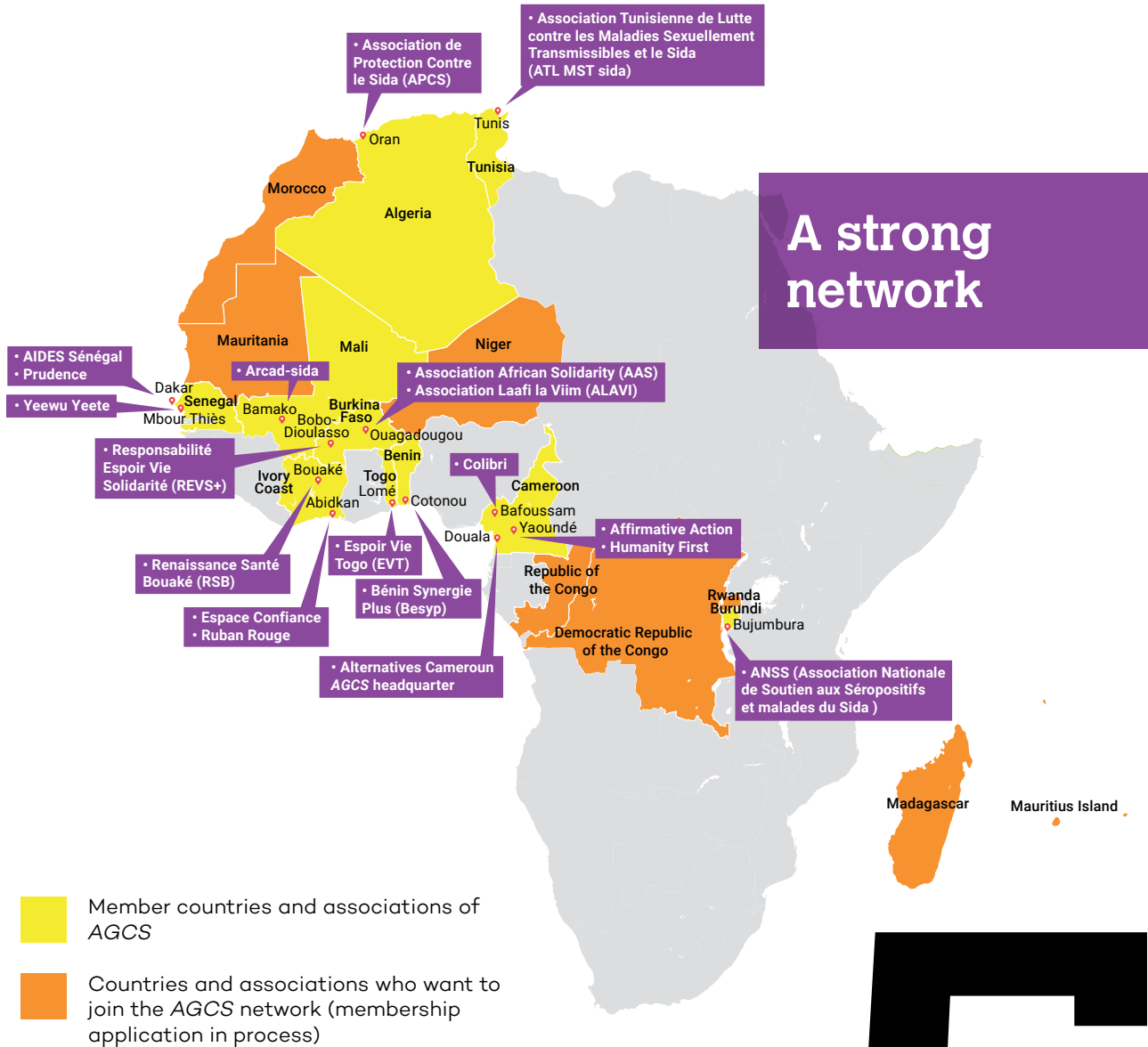
Changing mindsets

Since 2008, we have garnered considerable experience in conducting workshops called “Explaining HIV/AIDS to MSMs”. Initially designed for NGOs working on HIV in a two-day format, these awareness-raising exercises were then targeted at other groups. In 2015, more than 400 key actors (members of the police, media, justice, healthcare workers, people who man national HIV phone lines) were trained in Burkina Faso, Benin, Ivory Coast, Burundi, and Algeria. At present the network has a core of 14 seasoned and experienced resource persons.

Changing healthcare and repressive policies

AGCS has since its inception advocated tirelessly for MSM rights and access to healthcare at international events (at international conferences, high-level meetings, the UN Council on Human Rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, etc.). It continues to denounce human rights violations against LGBTI individuals (through press releases, NGO statements, shadow reports, etc.).

Diversity and synergy: 10 countries, 19 organizations, and thousands of militants



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Network milestones



**“We are not the problem.
We are the solution.”**

Yves Yomb, coordinator of the AGCS network

Press conference on the UNAIDS acceleration plan, IAS Durban 2016

Round table “Deployment of the test and treat approach & 90x90x90: Challenges for the PCs, focus on MSMs in Africa”, IAS Durban 2016

Yves Yomb (coordinator of AGCS), Mehdi Karkouri (vice-president of ALCS Morocco), Clotilde Couderc (project-manager at the ANRS), Safiatou Thiam (executive secretary of the CNLS, President of Coalition PLUS Afrique), Hugues Lago (UNAIDS AOC adviser), Diadji Diouf (spokesperson for AGCS)

THE BIRTH OF THE NETWORK

October 2007, Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)

Mobilization around the situation of gays and MSMs during the meeting of 19 NGOs working for human rights and to fight HIV; the formation of AGCS.

A STRONG PRESENCE AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

August 2008, Mexico (International AIDS Conference, Mexico)

Official launch of AGCS, which alerted the international community to situation of gays and MSMs in francophone Africa. Actions intensified at other international conferences (stands, press conferences, closing plenary sessions, symposia, networking):

- **International AIDS conference** (2010, Vienna; 2012, Washington; 2014, Melbourne; 2016, Durban);
- **Francophone conference on HIV/AIDS** (2010, Casablanca; 2012, Geneva; 2014, Montpellier; 2014, Brussels)

■ **International conference on AIDS and STDs in Africa** (Cisma, 2008, Dakar and 2011, Addis Abeba);

■ **Pan-African International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association** (PAI, 2014, Nairobi).

A CONSTANT INCREASE IN QUALITY FOR PROGRAMS TARGETING GAY PEOPLE AND MSMs

September 2008-December 2016

Implementation of three major capacity-building programs

TOWARDS AN INDEPENDENT NETWORK

November 2015-February 2016

Implantation of the secretariat within the organization Alternatives Cameroun in Douala and recruitment of a coordinator.

A network that speaks up and speaks out

“Homosexuals are afraid to leave home because they face discrimination at healthcare organizations. Doctors say things like, “I won’t touch a homosexual. My religion forbids it!” HIV+ homosexuals prefer to die at home than go to that kind of a place!”

Yves Yomb

Filmed testimony



AGCS
has produced
more than
21 filmed

testimonies in which
network members who
fight for the rights of
sexual minorities speak
openly, their faces
uncovered (see the
following links):

- Discrimination against homosexuals at healthcare structures and in their personal lives:
 - *Access to healthcare*: <https://vimeo.com/80883197> (password: plaidoyer)
 - *A committed doctor*: <https://vimeo.com/93155751>
- Deconstructing the assumption that being gay is not a part of African culture:
 - *Being gay is un-African*: <https://vimeo.com/80883198> (password: plaidoyer)
- Durban:
 - *Test and treat*: <https://vimeo.com/174858220/b35b9ffa32>
 - *PrEP Challenges*: <https://vimeo.com/174858206/O998c214a0>

“I am a woman, a wife, a mother, and a practicing Christian, but I will fight for gay rights, because I know what discrimination and stigmatization mean. I’m not ashamed to join the struggle publicly, to stand side by side with gay people, because I will never abandon my struggle, which is simply a fight against the scourge of AIDS.”

Jeanne Gapiya, President of the ANSS, former spokesperson of the AGCS network

Contact:

Yves Yomb, coordinator of the AGCS network
Email: guyphoide@yahoo.fr
Ph: 237 243 11 78 69 or 237 698 48 26 14

Main Office:

C/O Alternatives Cameroun,
80, rue Druix, Immeuble Mc Mirriam, 2nd floor
Akwa BP 12767 Douala-Cameroon

Follow us on FB:

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Partners:

Sidaction, AIDES, Coalition PLUS Afrique, GFMSM, among others

