AN AFRICAN STRUGGLE

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

AGCS
Alliance Globale des Communautés pour la Santé et les Droits
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
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.

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

Our member organizations reach more than 10,000 MSMs each year!

1The 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.

2Country Coordinating Mechanisms
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

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

Member countries and associations of AGCS

Countries and associations who want to join the AGCS network (membership application in process)
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

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);

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

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/b35b9ffda32
  - PrEP Challenges: https://vimeo.com/174858206/0998c214a0

“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
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