

Advocacy for the Human Rights of Key Populations, a Vector of Social and Legal Transformation

A Look Back on an African-Caribbean-French Inter-Associative Partnership

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Background

Human rights (HR) violations of key populations (KPs) are hampering the global fight against the HIV epidemic. From 2014 to 2018, AIDES and 7 African and Caribbean associations developed a HR project of advocacy in favor of KPs' human rights, thought and carried out by local community-based organizations (CBOs), to promote social and legal transformation.

Description

The same method was followed in each CBO:

- 1) Reinforcement of advocacy capacities, with creation of one advocacy manager position per association;
- 2) Use of advocacy activities to raise awareness, mobilize allies and intermediary bodies;
- 3) Involvement of KPs to support the advocacy.

Lessons

Countries, CBO and Identified Problems	Results
Burkina Faso REVS PLUS Lack of a national strategy for drug policies and criminalization of drug users	REVS PLUS (Burkina Faso) has transformed the national paradigm on drug policies. An International advocacy, a communication campaign and an ongoing dialogue with public authorities have led REVS PLUS to be responsible for coordinating the national drug strategy.
Cameroon Alternatives Cameroun Lack of services tailored for transgender people	Alternatives Cameroun (Cameroon) succeeded, by representing KPs within the Country Coordinating Mechanism of the global fund (CCM), to improve access to health for transgender people in the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on HIV.
Ivory Coast Espace Confiance Discrimination against Men who have sex with men	Espace Confiance (Ivory Coast) produced an alternative report when the country was reviewed within the Universal Periodic Review. One of its recommendations was included: the abolition of the crime of "public indecency", used to discriminate against MSM.
Dominican Republic COIN Criminalization of drugs users and lack of harm reduction services	COIN (Dominican Republic) was able, by coordinating the institutional commission on drug policy, to convince the Ministry of Health to train its caregivers in harm reduction and obtained the launch by UNODC of a study on the limits of the current legislation on drugs.
Burundi ANSS Lack of harm reduction services	ANSS (Burundi) advocated towards the members of the CCM so that the PWUDs were taken into account in the NSP.

Conclusions

Despite the project having ended, involved CBOs followed-up, each according to their own realities. This experience shows that advocacy in favor of KP's human rights contributes to empower KP, to mobilize their allies and to improve public policies, even in repressive contexts, and thus improve their legal environment. **Funding for HR advocacy must therefore continue to be a major focus in the global fight against HIV.**

1. AIDES, Pantin, France
 2. REVS PLUS, Burkina Faso
 3. Espace Confiance, Ivory Coast
 4. Alternatives Cameroun, Cameroon
 5. COIN, Dominican Republic