

Press Release

UNAIDS observes the International Day against Homophobia in Latin America

Action guidelines against discrimination

Panama, May 17th 2007 – UNAIDS, through its Regional Office for Latin America joins in activities on the International Day against Homophobia by launching guidelines on human rights, health and HIV. The guidelines present a set of strategic actions for the prevention and reduction of discrimination caused by sexual orientation and gender identity,

Dr. César Núñez, UNAIDS Regional Director for Latin America explained, “These guidelines were produced by the Horizontal Technical Cooperation Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, the International Centre for Technical Cooperation on HIV, in coordination with UNAIDS, as part of its global policy on Human Rights and HIV.”

Dr. Núñez also said that the document, which was developed by experts from more than 15 countries of the Latin American region, can become a “useful tool for governments and civil society in their programs and efforts oriented to reduce discrimination and promote Human Rights. “This is the result of a great visibility effort to highlight the harm caused by homophobia, whose impact truly diminishes our response to AIDS,” he said.

Homophobia is considered as one of the main obstacles in implementing HIV prevention strategies in Latin America. It forces the affected key populations to hide and even deny the existence of their sexual behaviors, a situation that moves them further away from access to HIV prevention, treatment and care programs.

Homophobia is defined as intolerance to individuals that have sexual preferences different those of heterosexuals. It is prejudice, fear, hatred, aversion and discrimination of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, transvestites and transsexuals. This terminology has been adapted by some of the affected communities to better represent their negative impact i.e. “gayfobia”, “lesbofobia”, “transfobia” and “homolesbotransfobia”.

On may 17th, 1990, the General Assembly of the World Health Organization approved the 10th Edition of the International Classification of Diseases, that established that sexual orientation (heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual), on its own, “will not be considered as a disorder”.

According to the latest statistics from UNAIDS and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), in most Latin American countries, the highest level of HIV infections are identified among gay, bisexual and transsexual populations, as well as in the group of men that have sexual relations with other men. For example, from the AIDS cases reported in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala and Peru, among 25% and 35% belong to these populations. In Mexico, their proportion surpasses half of the reported cases.

UNAIDS is working on initiatives to join efforts with governments, civil society and the media of all the Latin American countries to fight stigma and discrimination through coordinated actions in the path of human rights as part of a wide response to the AIDS epidemic, as stated in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.

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