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**“Exploring Cultural Diversity and Gender Equality: towards universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights”**

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Gender Inequalities and Sexual Minorities Discrimination in Policy and AIDS Programme Development, *Paper*

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## **ANALYSE OF GENDER INEQUALITIES AND SEXUAL MINORITIES' DISCRIMINATION IN POLICY AND AIDS PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT.**

### **I. Introduction**

Gender inequality and stigma / discrimination of sexual minorities have a very adverse impact on the spread of HIV and a negative impact on concerned persons, their families and the society in which they live, but also a negative impact on development of countries in general. The fight against gender inequality and against sexual minorities' discrimination constitute a cornerstone of effective prevention of HIV, tuberculosis and malaria but also an effective way to allow a fair care of people with these diseases and thus harmonious development in a healthy society.

### **II. Issues of gender inequalities and sexual minorities' discrimination:**

Today, we can say that gender inequalities and discrimination of sexual minorities are driving the spread of HIV and at the same time causes blockages of better care for people living with HIV especially: women, girls and sexual minorities. This is the basis of the actual feminization of HIV spread that is observed in most countries but also a concentration of high HIV prevalence rate among sex workers and sexual minorities. These inequalities and discrimination persisted through:

- The impoverishment of women and socio-economic situation which are the basis of both the occasional sex work, which is also the most dangerous (not accepted by the concerned and ignored by the entourage)
- Cultural and religious belief and practices to the disadvantage of women, girls and discrimination sexual minorities,
- The sense of the supremacy of man vis-à-vis the woman,
- The lack of access to preventive services (Screening, PMTCT, condoms use, Male circumcision, lack of support from husbands to join the PMTCT services)
- The non-accessibility to care (cost of medicines not accessible, fear of stigma, fear of being repudiated), the socio-economic burden of HIV on women and girls,

- The lack of access to support services (fear of stigma, fear of their husbands, long distance in the absence of means for transport),
- The lack of special space for the friendliness counselling for girls, sex workers and sexual minorities;
- The lack of access to information or erroneous messages that criminalize women and girls behaviours,
- Practices of sexual exploitation of girls including female circumcision of girls;
- The criminalization of sex work and homosexuality which prevents better and adapted interventions;
- Sexual abuse made against women and girls especially in situations of armed conflict;
- The non-involvement of men in the reproductive health;
- Lack of social and cultural acceptance of sexual minorities followed by lack of facilities for protecting them against HIV or lack of care for those already infected;
- The lack of space for the friendliness counselling for sexual minorities;
- The non-existence of clear policies on support for sexual minorities for the prevention and care, including human rights respect which are the basis for the establishment of good policies
- The denial of the existence of sexual minorities in countries which do not pay the appropriate services available
- Gender inequalities in the occupation of decision-making positions

### **III. What can be done to develop good policies and programmes on gender equity and sexual minorities' protection?**

#### **a) The HIV programmes' designers should:**

Engage, involve and empower women and sexual minorities:

- for their participation in development of policies
- for programmes' development
- for programmes' implementation and
- for monitoring and evaluation of programmes

Ensure proper collection and data analysis to better control the situation, because each situation is unique sometimes as it relates to one or another

company;

Develop quantitative and qualitative indicators on gender and sexual minorities, to be achieved for better monitoring and evaluation of developed programs

Ensure effective involvement of women and sexual minorities in the planning and project design:

Ensure that the gender equity and fight against sexual minorities are fully considered in national strategic plans to fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Ensure there are data disaggregated by gender and data on sexual minorities to develop better national policies integrating gender and sexual minorities' issues;

Ensure a participatory planning specific to each country is developed to propose durable solutions

Ensure the link between fighting for human rights, gender equality and fighting against sexual minorities' discrimination is better defined

Consider the specific issues of different communities in developing policies and programmes on gender and sexual minorities:

**b) The key actions and policies to be developed:**

1. To ensure equity between men and women, including the representation of sexual minorities or those who advocate for them in the decision-making positions, in the program development teams, in the implementation of programmes and in monitoring and evaluation team
2. Organise advocacy involving women, girls, sexual minorities and people who are fighting for the cause of women, girls and sexual minorities;
3. Establishment of special friendly prevention and care services for young girls and sexual minorities
4. Develop awareness programmes and mobilization on the rights of women and girls targeting men; and programs targeting the community in general to respect the rights of sexual minorities, women and girls
5. Develop training programmes for health professional awareness on gender issues and creating an enabling environment for grants of friendly services for marginalized groups;
6. Create an enabling environment for different cultures and beliefs to

develop programmes that include the gender issues and the sexual minorities in an acceptable way.

7. Support interventions for mobilization to push social and cultural barriers related to gender and sexual minorities. e.g.: those who carry out actions against penalization of sex work and homosexuality, those who fight against female circumcision ...
8. Support economically women and girls to strengthen their financial capabilities and reduce their vulnerabilities;
9. Supporting the education of girls to reduce their social vulnerabilities (lack of education, early marriage, non-accessibility to information, dependence on men,...)
10. Develop training for the strengthening of life skills and self-confidence for girls, sexual minorities and sex workers
11. Develop programs targeting leaders of opinions (religious, local authorities, parliamentarians, ...) on human rights especially of women , girls and sexual minorities rights; and the relation with the fight against the pandemic diseases (HIV, TB, Malaria),
12. Develop and fund community programs to support women, girls and sexual minorities
13. Develop and fund community programs targeting promotion of men engagement in sexual health and emphasize on their involvement.

### **c) The key challenges**

According to various analyses and current exchanges between experts, major challenges regarding the consideration of gender and sexual minorities in the development of policies and programmes, in the implementation of programmes and during monitoring and evaluation, are as follows:

- Legal recognition of sexual minorities and the sex workers
- The fight against the burden of culture, stigma and discrimination of positive women, sex workers and sexual minorities;
- The fight against the cultural burden of the consideration of women and girls as inferior beings compared to men;
- Difficulties of raising the level of socio economic status of women and girls in the society
- Lack of male engagement to better succeed in reproductive and sexual health programs.
- Awareness development of the actors, health professionals, and the communities, on gender and sexual minorities issues and promote an enabling environment for effective actions;
- Having reliable data on gender, sex workers and their clients and sexual minorities, for effective planning ;
- Having predictable financial resources and sufficient human resources trained and committed.

The issue of gender inequality and discrimination remain constraints for a fight against HIV / AIDS, however, with strong actions and commitment of everyone, the challenges may be overcome and sustainable programmes can be developed.

### **IV. Opportunities and levels of consideration for possible actions to address the issue of gender and sexual minorities for the Global Funding:**

- Situation analysis in each society in countries for programming consideration, with deep examination of gender-based determinants of the epidemics in those countries
- Skills building for program manager and community worker on gender issues, with guideline on different gender sensitive interventions to be considering while developing programs at country level;
- Work on policies in different countries and societies to encourage and promote taking the gender dimension in account while developing their

programs: e.g.: national plans on development, rights and health issues

- During proposals development (gender issues to be focus on)
- Develop Minimum Indicators to be considered and developed in programs development and during the implementation
- The implementers should be clear on gender balanced and gender clear indicators to be reported on during the grant implementation
- The implementers should be clear on gender balanced in accessing to services
- The donor should make available funding that emphasise on gender program and other development programs that consider gender as a transversal issue.

## V. Global fund gender strategy

**The Global fund is developing a strategy** for ensuring gender equality in the response to HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and malaria: “the Gender Equality Strategy”

**This strategy is aiming** to ensure the GF grants support services and intervention that meet the needs of most vulnerable and marginalised, including women, girls and sexual minorities

To achieve this, the GF have **5 objectives**:

1. Expand the Global fund’s investment in programs that focused on women and girls and those at risk of the 3 diseases
2. Ensure global fund’s policies and procedures support programs that focus on or address gender inequality
3. Establish partnerships that support the development and implementation of programs that reduce women, girls and sexual minorities vulnerabilities;
4. Develop a robust communications and advocacy strategy that promote gender equality
5. Provide leadership internally and externally by supporting and giving voice to the gender equality strategy and by living the values

### **The global fund principles and role**

The GF can play a catalytic role by supporting countries to take the gender dimension of their epidemic into account

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Undertake a strategic review to ensure that the grants it funds appropriately ensure equal and equitable access for all on different prevention, treatment and care services

- Three areas are considered: Health system strengthening
- Community system strengthening
- Dual track financing

### **Areas for strategic intervention**

- CCM role (sex parity with meaningful representation and gender dimension consideration knowledge among the team)
- Proposal and TRP (quality programming, guidelines for proposal, constitution, technical capacity and knowledge of the TRP team)
- Monitoring and evaluation (performance based funding, role of the local fund Agent, role of the TERG)
- Partners and networks: the GF should establish a broad, functional partnership network to support the processes in countries, play a catalytic role by providing resources where it is not available. There is a need to develop through a mutual accountability memoranda of understanding with partners to strengthen this engagement. The partners can support in:
  - Technical assistance
  - Normative guidance and capture of what works
  - Support advocacy in program development, governance and implementation
  - Co-financing of interventions that address gender inequalities
  - Developing operational research on what works for sharing
  - Developing new technologies with particular focus on gender
- Advocacy and Communications (in GF communication strategy through different communication media)
- Role and capacity of the secretariat (technical capacity, supportive culture,)
- Global fund governance structure (board, committee,)