

Global Fund Monitoring and Oversight for the Transgender Community in Guyana

A Case Study

Activity 3

To strengthen constituent capacity including specifically CCM representatives and other leaders, AGYW, and task forces, to engage in consultation and/or advocacy and policy initiatives



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“As trans persons, we have the responsibility to educate ourselves on what is happening around us – how decisions impact our lives. Our experience with GATE provided us the opportunity to learn, plan and act in a manner that better serves the interest of our community.”

Millie Milton, GTU

Summary

This case study seeks to document the successful implementation of this GATE activity and to describe the value that the task force added to the engagement in this advocacy and policy initiative. The case study shows how the Transgender (TG) community, in particular the members of Guyana Trans United (GTU), were able to learn, engage and plan effectively within the context of the Global Fund (GF) processes in Guyana. It highlights the collaboration between GATE and a regional TG organization, and the links established for continued support to GTU through other regional GF Technical Assistance (TA) initiatives such as: the LAC Regional Platform; the Communities, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiative; and the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations.

In May 2018, GATE undertook an initiative to implement its “Global Fund Monitoring and Evaluation for Transgender Communities Tool” in Guyana during a 2-day capacity-building and planning session with GTU. The goal of this GATE project is to improve understanding and ensure meaningful engagement of TG persons in GF activities at the national level; strengthen capacity of national TG organizations and build peer-to-peer knowledge sharing; encourage evidence-based programmatic interventions and policies based on needs of the TG community; and inform funding transition preserving investments made in strengthening the TG communities. This activity was able to:

- **Strengthen** GTU as a HIV key population network to support its constituencies to effectively engage in Global Fund-related processes during the whole grant cycle;
- **Develop** the capacity of GTU as a TG organization to effectively and safely engage in all GF-related processes;
- **Build** the capacity of GTU to advocate for increased investment in rights-based and community responsive programs, as well as effective community-led, human right and gender related programming within GF grants

This case study demonstrates, with evidence, the value added by key partners (task force) engaged in this policy and advocacy initiative and provides key recommendations such as: dissemination of lessons learnt and good practices be replicated in other countries with other TG communities; sharing of the findings of this case study with key stakeholders such as the Global Fund, GATE partner organizations and other program implementers by the task force; continuation of GTU to ensure the effective implementation of their Priorities Charter; the output of a priorities charter be documented as a best practice model demonstrating the value of task forces and the meaningful participation of the TG community in GF processes.

Introduction

This GATE capacity-building and strategic planning initiative was carried out through the successful collaboration comprised of GATE, Guyana Trans United (GTU) and MC Consultancy-Sexual Health and Development.

GATE is an international organization working on gender identity, gender expression and bodily diversity issues. Through the support of a “Communities, Rights and Gender” grant GATE is leading a global project to strengthen peer-based and community led networks of transgender populations. As a part of this initiative, GATE developed a methodology to be implemented in Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Guyana, Vietnam and Nepal, facilitated by different consultants with expertise and experience working with transgender communities.

Guyana Trans United (GTU) was founded on 14th January 2012 in recognition of the need for more trans-specific organizations in Guyana. GTU serves as a strong advocate for human rights and standing up against police abuse and violence. The mission of GTU is to empower TG Guyanese to advocate for their human rights and to participate as citizens in all decisions, which may affect their lives. GTU is a member of the Country Coordinating Mechanism of the Global Fund in Guyana. For this activity GTU was responsible for in-country logistics and the mobilization of the community. Fifteen members of GTU participated in the 2-day capacity-building and planning session held in Georgetown.

MC Consultancy: Sexual Health and Development is an association of social consultants with expertise in key areas of: Sexuality, Human Rights, Health and how these affect sustainable development. MC Consultancy is comprised of lesbian, gay, bisexual and TG associates that are committed to working with the LGBTI community to provide technical assistance in areas such as: Research, Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Policy Development, Capacity-building among others. MC Consultancy has been providing technical services in Belize and the region since 2004 while its Lead Consultant, Martha Carrillo, has been involved in this field of work since 1996.

Task Force

The successful outcomes of this initiative were based on the work of not only GATE, GTU and MC Consultancy, but also other key national partners that have continued to provide necessary guidance and support to GTU. These include members of the CCM, UNAIDS, USAID/PEPFAR, Ministry of Health and other partner NGOs such as SASOD. These entities have been supportive of the new initiatives undertaken by GTU especially in the area of advocacy at the national level. As GTU prepares to implement its Priorities Charter, it is expected that these entities will continue to be a part of the important task force that will advocate, facilitate and support the organization.

Strategic Links

A highlight of this initiative was the successful linkage with other Global Fund initiatives in the region such as the LAC Regional Platform, Communities, Rights and Gender Initiative Strategic Initiative (CRG-SI), and the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO). One important output of this activity was a Technical Assistance Request to the CRG SI of the Global Fund. The LAC Regional Platform's Caribbean Liaison who was also the facilitator for the Guyana workshop provided follow-up support to GTU for the completion of their TA requests. Once the request was submitted GATE served as a liaison between the CRG and GTU to ensure that the objectives of the TA request met the strategic priorities of the CRG. Upon approval of the TA Request, ICASO was identified as the technical assistance provider. January 23-26th, the ICASO consultant engaged the membership of GTU in the development of their Priorities Charter: A Roadmap for Transition and Sustainability.

Findings

GATE coordinated a two-day capacity building and training session with GTU which sought to facilitate a process in which transgender communities and organizations could participate in dialogue, evaluation and planning in the context of the sustainability and transition of the Global Fund and other external funds. The exercise provided the opportunity for the participants to engage in discussions, forge a joint vision as a transgender community and identify risks and opportunities within the context of transition and sustainability.

The methodology developed by MC Consultancy for this process was based on a comprehensive, evidence-based approach, which included analysis, interpretation of available evidence, engagement in dialogue and agreement among the transgender organization and community leaders in Guyana. The following activities were undertaken to ensure that the objectives of they were met successfully:

- Desk review of key documents including: GF, GATE and LAC Regional Platform reports on Transition and Sustainability Initiatives undertaken in the region
- Development of a tool to guide the facilitation of the process based on the project goal and objectives.
- Facilitation of a 2-day workshop with identified transgender leaders in Guyana.
- Guidance to the participants in the development of a TA request to the CRG
- Preparation of a case study outlining the learning experience from the perspective of two participants

The “Global Fund Monitoring and Oversight for Trans Communities tool” and its training guide developed by GATE were used to guide the process. This tool was created to facilitate the process in which transgender communities and organizations can engage in dialogue, assessment and planning within the context of sustainability and transition of the Global Fund. It provides an opportunity for forging a vision through the identification of risks and opportunities. By identifying key barriers and developing a plan of action to address these, transgender communities are able to play a critical role in the process of preparing for transition and planning for sustainability.

Guided by the activities outlined in the two-day agenda, the facilitator made presentations, described the objectives of each small group discussion, and guided the participants in the identification of gaps, opportunities and priority areas.

Key Activities




The activities for the capacity-building session were designed to provide opportunity for reflection, discussion, decision-making, consensus-building, planning and team-building among the participants. This was achieved though some of the activities described below that did provide members of the TG community to reflect, share, learn and make decisions that affect them and their lives.

1) MAKING THE CASE: GLOBAL FUND BOARD “MOCK EXERCISE”

The session included a “mock exercise” in which the participants had to prepare a presentation for the Global Fund Board. The objective was to assess the level of knowledge of the participants on the situation of the 3 diseases and the TG community in Guyana as well as their knowledge of the issues affecting the transgender community in Guyana. The participants were made aware of the importance of evidence-based data; the need to build on what the Global Fund is already doing in the country and the prioritization of the needs and issues affecting the TG community in Guyana.

Results

The participants were divided into 3 groups and each of the 3 groups was tasked accordingly:

-  Group 1 – The Situation of HIV, TB and Malaria and Transgender persons in Guyana;
-  Group 2 – Acquire background information on the Global Fund and assess what Global Fund has accomplished in Guyana;
-  Group 3 – Compile the needs and issues affecting the TG community in Guyana.

The three persons presenting on behalf of each group were asked to envision that they were presenting to the Global Fund Board. After the presentations, it was agreed that the community had a very good understanding of the situation of HIV, TB and Malaria in Guyana as well as the needs of the transgender community. However, the facilitators felt that there were also some opportunities for improvement. The participants agreed with the feedback and saw it as an opportunity for improvements.

This activity provided the participants with an opportunity to experience first-hand the necessary steps to be taken, the approach, the importance of being prepared and how to approach an important funding mechanism such as the Global Fund. The perspective of GATE’s Program Coordinator who is an alternate member on the GF Board was very helpful and insightful for the learning process.

2) THE LIFELINE OF THE TRANSGENDER PERSON IN GUYANA

The objective of this activity was to gather information from the participants on the issues affecting transgender persons in Guyana throughout their lifetime. It was important to gather this information directly from the participants to have a description of the challenges they are confronted with on a daily basis so as to be able to identify their priority needs. Participants were tasked to be as creative as they can be and to draw the lifeline of a transgender from the time of their birth to when they die. Participants were tasked to include early childhood, the TG teenager and the TG adult.

Results

Participants were open and willing to share their experiences of life as a transgender person in Guyana. In summing up, they defined the life of a transgender as a continuous struggle. This includes stigma and discrimination due to cross-dressing even though the Caribbean Court of Justice ruled that the Cross-Dressing Law is unconstitutional, they are still harassed and bullied in the streets. In addition, the economic situation for the majority of TG is difficult and many must resort to sex work which makes them vulnerable to violence and sexually transmitted infection. There are challenges within the TG community itself as there is a level of disunity among the different age groups, forms of TG expression (dress or don't dress up as a woman), TG men and TG women as well as HIV positive TG and non-positive. In general, one of the biggest challenges being faced by the TG community is the lack of a gender identity law. The absence of this law makes the community invisible and results in a violation of their rights in every possible aspect of their lives in Guyana – social, political, legal, economic and cultural.

It was a very effective exercise that allowed the TG community an opportunity to share experiences, to support each other and to identify some key common areas in which they can focus their advocacy work as a community and organization. This was accomplished through the facilitation and guidance of the task force members. The facilitator, an important part of the task force, with expertise in strategic planning was effective in guiding the participants through this process.

3) ANALYSIS OF STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND STRENGTHS OF THE TRANS COMMUNITY IN GUYANA

Participants were also provided with an opportunity to engage in an assessment of their organization and community by participating in a SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Strengths. The SWOT method was originally developed for businesses and industries, but it's equally useful in health work and community development, education and even personal growth. Participants were placed into three groups to execute a SWOT analysis.

Results

This activity engaged the TG participants in a reflection and consensus building exercise that provided an opportunity for them to speak candidly of their accomplishments and challenges. The participants shared that they were pleased with a process that helped them to visually appreciate the balance. The facilitator, an important part of the task force, with expertise in strategic planning was effective in guiding the participants through this process and the GATE representative also provided insight from an international perspective on the challenges faced by TG organizations.

4) PRIORITY AREAS IDENTIFIED

Based on the discussions, the participants were able to discuss and agree on 4 priority areas and possible actions to mitigate risks to sustainability within each of these:

1. Discriminatory Legislation
2. Stigma and discrimination at the societal level
3. Lack of skills within the community
4. Access to comprehensive health treatment and services for trans

Mitigating actions

1. Situational analysis and needs assessment
2. Engagement in country dialogue using evidence
3. Program Design – Create programs so that TG persons and trans communities can build their capacity

Results

The group discussed different opportunities for support to implement these recommended actions and learnt about the Communities, Rights and Gender Initiative Technical Assistance. The following was agreed upon as the area of Technical Assistance to be requested from the CRG:

“Build the capacity of the transgender community in Guyana to be able to serve as “watch-dogs” monitoring the Global Fund process to ensure that they are in line with the principles of community involvement, human rights and gender including technical support for the elaboration of advocacy programs for the TG Community.”

Participants shared that they were not aware of the CRG TA and that they were happy to have the opportunity to not only identify mitigating actions but to be able to prepare a request for support.



“What stands out for me is that the proposal that we as a community developed at the GATE training was approved by the CRG. Our activity with ICASO this year was a success thanks to the work we did with GATE last year. I personally would like to thank Martha, the facilitator for guiding us through this process; Millie of GTU and Erika of GATE for their wonderful work as a team that supported us and guided us in this successful activity. Thank you Global Fund.”

Lawrence Das, GTU - February 2019

OVERALL RESULTS

- The 2-day session was well-organized and saw the collaboration of the community as well as the coordinators and facilitator in a process of learning, decision-making and planning.
- That the group of participants were very receptive to the information. From the verbal evaluation we learnt that participants they found it to be appropriate, relevant and easy to understand. There were no major challenges.
- The methodology was both didactic and interactive through the use of power presentations, large and small group discussions, role-play and ice-breakers/energizers for team-building
- The objectives of the session were satisfactorily met and the goal of the activity to show the value added of task forces was also achieved.



“Because of the GATE training and the technical assistance that we received after, I am ever more prepared and motivated to stand up for myself and the transgender community which I serve. I look forward to more training opportunities.”

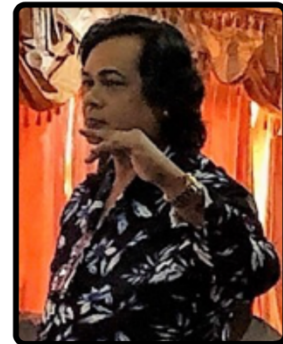
Annie Megnauth, GTU - February 2019

Lessons

The success of this activity in reaching the expected objectives and providing a positive response to the study question: “Value added of task forces for engaging in advocacy and policy development” is determined based on the following qualitative data:

- Review of the oral evaluations of the participants (annexed)
- Sentiments shared by some participants 9 months after (Feb. 2019 (annexed)
- Facilitator’s report which outlines success in reaching the objectives
- Approval of the CRG TA Request prepared by the participants
- Successful implementation of the CRG Technical Assistance which resulted in the development of a Priorities Charter: A Roadmap to Transition and Sustainability for GTU

“There are many expectations of the TG community as a key population. We have an important role to play in policy, programmes and oversight, but if we don’t have the knowledge, the skills and capacity we will fail. Thanks to GATE and MC Consultancy we are now empowered to play this important role.”



*Millie Milton, GTU member & CCM representative
- February 2019 -*

What was learnt?

- The TG community in Guyana is well-organized and is receptive to new knowledge and learning.
- The TG community is diverse, thus information, materials and presentation much be adequate for reaching diverse groups such as different literacy levels, actual knowledge of the topic and understanding of their important roles in the process.
- Involvement of leaders within the community is very important to establish trust and willingness to participate on the part of the participants. For example: Introductory remarks from the GTU Director as to the importance of the activity for the organization and the community as well as asking specific leaders to serve as small group facilitators fostered a safer and more comfortable environment conducive to participation.

- It's important to plan for situations in which certain participants may display behavioral problems such as: become aggressive if they feel offended by someone's comments or boisterous/playful during the sessions. Some of the participants coming from varied backgrounds which could lead to behavior that may not seem appropriate. It is important to take these as "teaching moments" rather than to be punitive due to the behavior.
- The Mock Exercise serves as a best practice as it was effective in allowing participants to internalize the challenges of negotiation and advocacy with the Global Fund.

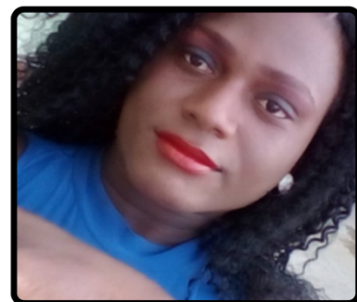
Recommendations & Next Steps

Based on the findings of this case study of the activity: “Global Fund Monitoring and Oversight Tool Training for the TG Community in Guyana which included the review of the activity report, the evaluations from the participants after the session and 9 months after, the criteria set for the study question, the output and outcomes accomplished, it can be concluded that there was added value of the task force in engaging in advocacy and policy development.

Based on the findings of this case study, the following recommendations are made:

1. That the lessons learnt, and the good practices described in this case study be replicated in other countries with other TG communities.
2. That the task force that successfully implemented this activity share the findings of this case study with key stakeholders such as the Global Fund, GATE partner organizations and other program implementers in the region to show the effectiveness of the methodology applied and its applicability to other countries and key populations.
3. That the task force and other technical assistance organizations such as CRG continue to provide support to Guyana Trans United to ensure the effective implementation of their Priorities Charter and that there will other opportunities for capacity-building and knowledge sharing.
4. That the Guyana experience beyond this activity and the development of its priorities charter be monitored and documented as a best practice demonstrating the value of task forces and the importance of the meaningful participation of the TG community.

“I was privileged to attend the training with GATE at the Guyana Pegasus Hotel. Based on what I have learnt, I can say that in the past 9 months I have grown a lot in my confidence as well as in my commitment to the work of helping to build the trans community in Guyana. Since the workshop, I have seen great improvements in my organization GTU. We are more empowered than ever to serve our peers.”



Omotola Edwards, GTU member - February 2019

Conclusions

It can be concluded that the task force which included GATE, GTU and MC Consultancy:

- Worked effectively together as roles and responsibilities were very clear from the onset and there was an agreement to deal with challenges as they arose.
- In addition, this case study exercise provided an opportunity to document what have been some of the outcomes of the study 9 months after the GATE activity.
- It is important to document that the CRG Technical Assistance request that was approved and implemented successfully – Priorities Charter for GTU developed.
- Linkages were established between Technical Assistance initiatives for CSOs such as GATE, the LAC Regional Platform and ICASO as extensions to the task force to ensure the successful follow-up to the original work completed by GATE.

Applied Knowledge/Outcomes:

- Because of the knowledge gained at the GATE capacity-building session GTU reports that it is now participating in a more meaningful way in the CCM. Most recently they successfully advocated for an opportunity serve as a sub-sub recipient. In the past it had been concluded by the CCM that they did not have the capacity. At that point they accepted that conclusion. However, after the training they were able to show concrete examples of their organizational and efficient execution of activities for other projects.
- Another important outcome is improved communication among the TG constituency on the CCM. The TG representative on the CCM has established communication channels through the use of “WhatsApp” groups, email listservs and regular meetings. This has led to more consultation and communication among the community as well as from representative to constituency.
- A significant step that was taken because of the discussions at the GATE work workshop is the inclusion of a sustainability component in the Strategic Plan that has been developed for the next 3 years.
- The experience of the 2-day session also created a closer-knit organization as many of the members that had left due to conflicts with each other have returned and are now working in greater unity.