

## International Working Group on Transmasculine People & HIV

### Background

The International Working Group on Transmasculine People & HIV is a global network, currently consisting of 28 transmasculine activists, researchers and public health experts from 19 different countries across all continents.

The formation of this project began at the [AIDS 2018 Conference in Amsterdam](#), during which a group of transmasculine people working in the areas of sexual health, HIV research and service delivery met to discuss their frustrations at the persistent exclusion of transmasculine identities from the international HIV response. Since October 2019, the International Working Group on Transmasculine People & HIV has been operating under an organized structure.

Currently, there is very little awareness or inclusion of transmasculine people in HIV platforms as a result of this community being largely ignored in HIV research data. Despite the lack of data, many transmasculine individuals are at elevated risk of HIV infection. Many intersect with other Key Populations, including MSM, sex workers, intravenous drug users, and survivors of sexual violence, to name a few. This global project focuses on strengthening and generating knowledge to further the engagement of transmasculine people in the international HIV response.

### Objectives

The International Working Group on Transmasculine People & HIV aims to produce and disseminate critical knowledge on transmasculine people and HIV and to develop strategies to increase the meaningful engagement of this group in health discussions, implementation and access to services.

This work is focused on 3 key areas:

- Impacting scientific research.
- Encouraging inclusive clinical perspectives.
- Providing socio-behavioral perspectives.

Our work seeks to make positive changes by increasing awareness among donors, global health institutions and decision makers about the realities of transmasculine individuals concerning HIV and other health related issues, including challenges, gaps, and best practices going forward.

### Achievements to Date

The International Working Group on Transmasculine People & HIV was successfully founded by a group of transmasculine members from globally diverse regions, also including both people living with HIV and PrEP users. During the first years of operation, the Working Group's Coordinator, Max Appenroth, was consulted as an expert by WHO, UNAIDS, European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG), and the PrEP in Europe Initiative and was given the opportunity to speak at various events. Following on from these presentations, the Working Group was invited to collaborate with UNAIDS in live online discussions about the sexual health needs of our community and collaborated with the PrEP in Europe Initiative to organize two trans-specific community online meetings on the needs and access barriers for trans people regarding PrEP. At the AIDS 2020 Virtual Conference, the Working Group organized a satellite session titled "[Transgender Men & HIV: Experiences and Vulnerabilities, why we should care, and where to go from here](#)", making history as the first ever transmasculine-led session at an IAS Conference.

In November 2020, the Working Group wrote a letter to the HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN) seeking greater inclusion of our community in their research projects. This has led to an ongoing dialogue resulting in a collaboration with the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health (CU). The Working Group is currently working together with CU on a research and grant proposal for a multi-site international research about including PrEP delivery into gender-affirming care services. Through a global online survey conducted from April to June 2022, preliminary data

about the needs of transmasculine individuals and their access to gender-affirming care services and PrEP were gathered.

## Next steps

The International Working Group on Transmasculine People & HIV will continue to work towards positive changes in awareness among donors, global health organizations and policy makers about the realities of transmasculine people regarding HIV, including challenges, gaps, and best practices going forward. We aim to produce further critical knowledge on transmasculine identities and HIV and to continue developing strategies to increase the meaningful inclusion of transmasculine individuals in health discussions and inclusive research.

These outcomes will be achieved through the following steps:

- To restructure and expand the Working Group to 20–25 core members to ensure adequate representation across all continents, with a wider network (500+) of general members to increase engagement with our community.
- To actively participate at the AIDS 2022 Conference.
- To hold in-person strategic meetings with group members at AIDS 2022 in order to maximize engagement.
- To expand engagement with UNAIDS, WHO and other organizations, pharma companies, research groups and universities in order to increase the inclusion of transmasculine people in HIV research and platforms.
- To design, produce and implement peer-generated prevention tools via GATE's website by hosting webinars and producing informational videos and publications, and disseminating these resources to key players in the international HIV response.

## Expected Outcomes

The core focus of the International Working Group on Transmasculine People & HIV is to increase inclusion of transmasculine people in the global HIV response in order to reduce infection rates and improve overall quality of life for those living with HIV.

The following are the expected outcomes from the next 2 years of activities:

- To build the capacity of our community through movement building and educational initiatives to advocate for our own sexual health and wellbeing.
- To enable sexual and HIV-related health services to respond appropriately and effectively to the health needs of our community through the creation and provision of practical resources and tools.
- To increase the meaningful engagement of our community in health-related research and decision making with regards to the global HIV response.
- To increase the creation of data relating to transmasculine people and HIV through collaborative efforts with ongoing and new research, both directly (e.g., trans-specific research) and indirectly (e.g., including questions in research to enable disaggregation of data relating to transmasculine identities).
- To end stigma, discrimination, exclusion and violence towards transmasculine people by creating and enabling pathways to accessing discrimination-free sexual and HIV-related healthcare.

## Research

Appenroth, M., Davids, J.D., Feuer, C., Kgositau, T.R. & Mugo, I.N. (2021) *No Data No More: Manifesto to Align HIV Prevention Research with Trans and Gender-Diverse Realities*. New York City: AVAC.

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## Resources

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