



## Testimonial: Omotola Edwards

I am Omotola, a 22 year old self-identified trans female. I am the reigning “Miss Diamond Infinity” for the Guyana Trans United, a crown that I wear proudly as a trans woman. I identify as an empowered trans woman with a passion for poetry and dance.

The situation of transgender people in Guyana is extremely bad. Transgender people experience discrimination everywhere, every day. Even though there have been older transgender people who have been working to pave the way the younger people, there is much yet to be done in sensitizing the general population. The issues of stigma and discrimination must be addressed urgently.

I didn't have too many expectations of the session, assuming it was just another HIV forum. However, I quickly realized that this was actually an opportunity for the transgender community to come together to discuss and address issues affecting our community and to come up with solutions.

*“Prior to this workshop, I was not aware that the Global Fund has been working in the areas of HIV, TB and Malaria in Guyana. I was also unaware that there is funding available through the Global Fund to help the transgender community. This was all news to me!”*

The lives of transgender people can be improved through partnerships. I recommend that organizations such as GATE and the Global Fund continue to help the trans community in any way possible. There is a lot of work to be done, and every little bit helps to improve the lives of those of us that are affected by HIV, discrimination and abuse of our rights.

We need to be able to sensitize the wider community. We are all human beings and we should not be stigmatized because of how we choose to express ourselves. I'm very happy that I had this experience as I learned so much. I was pleased to see the bonding between all the trans participants, as this is essential for continuing this work.

DATE: 1 May 2018

ACTIVITY: 2-Day Session on “Sustainability of Trans Communities in the HIV and Tuberculosis Response, Forging a Joint Vision and Action Plan beyond the Global Fund (GF)

COUNTRY: Guyana