

TRANSIT Smart Guide Workshop

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Adapting TRANSIT for a community-based audience of trans individuals and trans-led organizations



DATES: 25-26 January 2020

Location: Mexico City, Mexico

Activity: Two day workshop

Facilitators: Alexandra Rodríguez, Mahri Bahati, Erika Castellanos, JoAnne Keatley

Participants: 17 trans leaders

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2019, Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE) began a collaboration with Innovative Response Globally for Transgender Women and HIV (IRGT) to develop a community focused guide to the 2016 publication, *Implementing Comprehensive HIV and STI Programmes for Transgender People* (informally known as TRANSIT) after both organizations had received feedback from community members that the content of the original document was not accessible or easy to disseminate in local communities. This document, the *TRANSIT Smart Guide*, was completed in December 2019 and a subsequent workshop was organized to provide an opportunity for validation, community recommendations for improvement, and dissemination planning.

The workshop, held in Mexico City from 25-26 January 2020, brought together 17 trans leaders from 15 different countries. The event proved to be a successful collaboration between GATE and IRGT, providing the chance to validate the TRANSIT Smart Guide with community members and to identify opportunities for dissemination, implementation, knowledge exchange and most importantly, collaboration between regions. The Smart Guide proved to be well accepted and validated by community members with only minor suggestions for edits and revisions to increase its relevance in local communities.

Moving forward from the TRANSIT Smart Guide Workshop, GATE and IRGT will work closely with local and regional trans-led organizations to secure funder commitments to continue this important work, and to spearhead a movement to create a supplemental document to TRANSIT that covers additional topics important to the trans community.

INTRODUCTION

Project Background

Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE) is an international organization working on gender identity, gender expression and bodily diversity issues. It was founded and registered in 2009 in New York, USA. GATE's programmatic work is organized around four areas: Depathologization and legal reforms, transgender issues in the international HIV response, Movement building and Development and United Nations. Through the support of a Communities, Rights and Gender grant GATE is leading a global project on strengthen peer-based and community led networks of transgender populations. The aim is to build capacity and support regional and country-based constituencies to more effectively engage in and contribute to the development, implementation and oversight of Global Fund grants. As a part of this initiative, GATE contracted MC Consultancy: Sexual Health and Development to develop a methodology to be implemented in Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Guyana, facilitated by different consultants. In Guyana, GATE was supported by the Guyana Trans United.

The IRGT: A Global Network of Trans Women and HIV, was originally convened in 2011 by transgender leaders and their colleagues at MPact Global (formerly MSMGF) out of the need for specific input on global HIV/AIDS issues from trans communities. Since its inception, the IRGT has worked largely around the International AIDS Conference, and trans participation therein, as well as discussing and implementing strategies regarding other political opportunities as well as networking and planning together to determine the best course of action towards advancing trans global issues. Composed of members from diverse parts of the world, the IRGT is responsible for promoting advocacy on trans health and rights as they relate to HIV/AIDS. In 2016 IRGT established itself as a separate entity and now functions under a new fiscal agency agreement with the San Francisco Public Health Foundation.

Project Goal

The goal of this project is to improve understanding and ensure meaningful engagement of transgender persons in Global Fund activities at the national level; strengthen capacity of national transgender organizations and build peer-to-peer knowledge sharing; encourage evidence-based programmatic interventions and policies based on needs of the transgender community; and inform funding transition preserving investments made in strengthening transgender communities.

The project is also intended to focus on strengthening local capacity; especially in support of transgender people in their regional and country-based constituencies to more effectively engage in, and contribute to, the development, implementation and oversight of Global Fund supported programs.

OBJECTIVES

The creation and dissemination of the TRANSIT Smart Guide is a pivotal step in trans community capacity building and empowerment, providing trans people with the knowledge to take ownership of problems that face their community and come up with unique solutions that will hopefully decrease their vulnerability for HIV as well as address structural issues that perpetuate marginalization, stigma, and discrimination. GATE partnered with IRGT in the creation of the Smart Guide and subsequent workshop planning and implementation. Following the creation of the Smart Guide, thirteen trans activists and leaders were invited to Mexico City, Mexico to attend the implementation/dissemination workshop from 25-26 January 2020.

Meeting Objectives:

- Orient trans community members to resources that provide normative guidance for implementing comprehensive HIV and STI programmes for transgender people, including TRANSIT, and the TRANSIT Smart Guide
- Document and assess the impact of TRANSIT in regional and in-country contexts
- Provide overview of TRANSIT Smart Guide
- Solicit community feedback and validation of TRANSIT Smart Guide
- Identify opportunities for local dissemination and implementation within individual country contexts
- Identify opportunities for funder engagement and solicitation of support for Smart Guide dissemination

METHODOLOGY

The two-day workshop provided the chance to validate the TRANSIT Smart Guide with community members and to identify opportunities for dissemination, implementation, knowledge exchange and most importantly, collaboration between regions. The accompanying PowerPoint Slide Deck can be used by attendees to deliver community presentations and increase the awareness and uptake of TRANSIT and the accompanying Smart Guide amongst trans community members.

The topics of the TRANSIT Smart Guide highlights content areas in the original text, *Implementing Comprehensive HIV and STI Programmes with Transgender People: Practical Guidance For Collaborative Interventions*, informally known at the **Trans Implementation Tool** or TRANSIT. TRANSIT was developed for use by public-health officials and managers of HIV and STI programs; NGOs, including community and civil-society organizations; and health that are of particular interest and importance to the trans community. TRANSIT is divided into five chapters based on recommendations from the 2011 World Health Organization (WHO) guidance document *Prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among men who have sex with men and transgender people* and the 2014 WHO *Consolidated guidelines on HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for key populations*, which provide guidance and recommendations on HIV and STI interventions and treatment for key populations, including trans people. It can serve as reference tool for trans-led organizations and offers comprehensive guidance and resources on how to design and

implement services that will be accessible and acceptable to trans people, especially trans women who are disproportionately affected by HIV.



Erika Castellanos (GATE) and JoAnne Keatley (IRGT) introducing the workshop

The TRANSIT Smart Guide was developed as a collaborative effort between Innovative Response Globally for Transgender Women and HIV (IRGT) and Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE) to adapt TRANSIT for a community-based audience of trans individuals and trans-led organizations. The topic areas of the Smart Guide highlight corresponding chapter content in TRANSIT that are of particular interest and importance to the trans community. Excerpts from TRANSIT that are included in the guide include table and figure references and page numbers to help locate them in the reference document.

OVERVIEW OF TRANSIT SMART GUIDE

Purpose:

The TRANSIT Smart Guide and accompanying PowerPoint slide deck have been created to facilitate the process in which transgender community members can empower local organizations and individuals to advocate for improved service delivery and develop unique solutions to the problems facing them. As an approachable, community-oriented tool, the TRANSIT Smart Guide enhances the capacity of trans individuals and organizations to play a pivotal role in the monitoring and oversight of Global Fund processes throughout the grant cycle. By equipping the community with the necessary knowledge and skills, transgender people are able to keep national, regional and global mechanisms accountable to ensure that the populations that need most are benefitting from this financial mechanism.

Audience:

The primary targets for the TRANSIT Smart Guide are transgender people including organizations that work with and for transgender communities. Trained facilitators within the transgender community can also use it. The guide and the lessons learnt through this process will serve to inform regional and national coordinating mechanisms, stakeholders and other key decision-makers on how to engage transgender communities and other key populations in all global fund processes throughout the grant cycle to ensure that their unique challenges and needs are being addressed.

Application of the TRANSIT Smart Guide and Slide Deck:

The TRANSIT Smart Guide and accompanying PowerPoint slide deck seek to increase awareness and knowledge on designing and running programs that serve trans people, including the important role that communities should play throughout all these processes. The Smart Guide follows the same structure as TRANSIT, and is divided into the following topics:

- Topic 1: Community Empowerment
- Topic 2: Stigma, Discrimination, Violence and Human Rights
- Topic 3: Services
- Topic 4: Service Delivery Approaches
- Topic 5: Program Management

The objective of the Smart Guide and accompanying slide deck is to prepare participants for the dissemination and implementation of normative guidance for comprehensive HIV and STI programme design and service delivery within regional and country contexts. The content is highly adaptable to suit different contexts and can be incorporated into larger efforts for community mobilization, education, and advocacy.



SYNOPSIS OF THE PROCESS & FINDINGS

The workshop attendees comprised a very diverse group of 17 trans individuals from 15 countries. Among the participants there were 4 trans men, 12 trans women and 1 gender diverse person.

Day 1

Welcome

The first day of the workshop began with a welcome from GATE Director of Programs, Erika Castellanos and IRGT Board Chair, JoAnne Keatley, who welcomed individuals to the meeting, shared the history of their respective organizations, and gave overviews of their organizational activities. Erika Castellanos then provided an overview and introduction to the Community Rights and Community, Rights, and Gender Strategic Initiative (CRG), the funding stream for the creation of the TRANSIT Smart Guide and workshop implementation.

GATE CRG-SI Project Overview

Focused on developing skills and building capacity of transgender communities to meaningfully engage with Global Fund processes

Publications under this grant

- Guidelines for the integration of trans communities in the oversight of Global Fund Process
- Global fund monitoring and oversight tool and training guide for trans communities
- TRANSIT Smart Guide

Outcomes

- 12 workshops in Asia-Pacific and Latin America & Caribbean
- 180+ trans activist trained
- 3 successful Technical Assistance grants
- 1 national coalition formed

Next, Alexandra Rodríguez guided the group through a discussion of ground rules for the workshop, and a discussion of their individual expectations of the two-day training, as listed below:

Workshop Expectations:

- Trans power, empowerment
- Increase the availability of translated tools and resources in my region
- To learn more about the struggles of trans people in different communities, learn more about intersectionality
- To understand smart guide and what isn't in there, when to use it versus the TRANSIT
- To learn more about the issues facing trans men
- To understand how Smart Guide can be useful in care and services
- To understand how Smart Guide can be useful in advocacy

Following the ground rule discussion, participants gave personal introductions, and shared details about the circumstances facing trans people in their country. Common themes

included barriers to human rights protections and legal gender recognition due to interference by religious communities, lack of access to comprehensive primary and gender affirming health care services, and a lack of safe spaces that can provide adequate refuge from transphobia and gender-based violence.

Many successes were shared as well, such as:

- *Germany* – creation of the International Working Group on Trans Men and HIV
- *Colombia* – initiating data collection on trans men in collaboration with the Global fund, including data on reproductive health, trans male sex workers, and other HIV prevention, treatment, and care indicators
- *Belize* – the publication of a trans health guidebook created for medical providers to learn more about trans bodies, working closely with social workers and social work students to improve service delivery to trans people, and developing population size estimates for trans people in Belize
- *Philippines* – trans communities are working to create a local version of World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) and working on a sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) equality bill.

Next, JoAnne Keatley gave an overview of the development of TRANSIT. Although many people in the room were involved in the creation of original publication, some participants had no familiarity with material and were being introduced to it for the first time. Some of the key points covered included:

TRANSIT Overview

- The informal name for the publication is a shortened form of **Transgender Implementation Tool** (TRANSIT)
- TRANSIT was created as a collaboration between many multinational organizations (UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, PEPFAR, IRGT), trans community members, trans health experts.
- It was developed to translate the WHO 2014 Key Populations Consolidated Guidelines into practical, how-to, guidance to support high-quality trans programming, as well as the 2011 recommendations for MSM & transgender people
- Intended for public health officials, managers of HIV and STI programs, NGOs, community and civil-society organizations, health workers
- Launched in 2016 at the Trans Pre-Conference to the International AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa

Discussion of TRANSIT then shifted to its relevance in trans communities following its publication in 2016. Although it regarded as a great resource for community members, it hasn't been perceived as accessible for many reasons, most notably its length, which impacts the cost for printing and ease of distribution. As a static document, TRANSIT can also fail to keep up with the rapidly changing contexts facing trans communities. An example of this issue was shared regarding Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), which at the time of publication had a very limited evidence base in trans populations, mostly focused on the iPrEx phase III clinical trial. In the years following TRANSIT publication, a lot more research has been published on

trans women and PrEP, including trans men, highlighting the need for a more dynamic, living document such as the TRANSIT Smart Guide.



Participant from Thailand discussing the regional use of TRANSIT

Some participants posed questions about the general impression that TRANSIT prioritizes the issues of trans women and isn't very inclusive of trans men. Those involved in the creation of TRANSIT shared with the group that the majority of the content in TRANSIT is applicable to designing programmes for all trans people. It was also acknowledged that much of the epidemiology at the time of the creation of TRANSIT regarding HIV risk, pointed to a huge disparity and disproportionate impact on trans women, who were found to be 49 times more likely to become infected with HIV compared with other populations. There was never an intent to exclude parts of the trans community or make them feel invisible.

Discussion: Impact of TRANSIT within Regional and Country Contexts

Following the TRANSIT Overview, attendees divided into three small groups (two English speaking and one Spanish speaking) and spent 15 minutes to discuss and recording the impact of TRANSIT in their countries.

Group 1: Dominican Republic, Peru, Mexico

- A lot of people don't know about TRANSIT
- It is expensive to print and distribute
- It doesn't always feel as relevant in the community, Health care is more than HIV and STI services
- Can be good for monitoring impact, basis for open discussion with other stakeholders

Group 2: Belize, Kyrgyzstan, India

- Tool for advocacy/policy change/empowerment
- Tool for staff
- Comprehensive package
- Community mobilization
- Transgender people became a separate key pop in Kyrgyzstan, which has helped to articulate issues separately



Participant from Belize presenting on the impact of TRANSIT

Group 3: Philippines, Nepal, Thailand, Guyana

- Used TRANSIT to make recommendations for what should be in funding in PEPFAR comprehensive package, based on content from TRANSIT
- Serves as guidance for trans community and service providers
- TRANSIT will be helpful in Philippines; they will use the forms for history taking

TRANSIT Smart Guide Overview and Chapter Review

An overview of the Smart Guide and review of the five topical areas covered was given by Mahri Bahati and Alexandra Rodriguez. Opportunities for questions, suggestions, and initial feedback were incorporated into each topic review. Some participants advocated for the inclusion of topics not initially covered in TRANSIT, which were subsequently absent from the Smart Guide, including forced migration, self-care practices for trans community health workers and volunteers, and the inclusion of mental health screening tools. Discussion then centered around the need to be careful about making too many additions to the Smart Guide, which would make it less concise and harder to distribute in communities. It was reiterated by the meeting hosts, that the Smart Guide was not meant to replace TRANSIT, only to highlight topics of interest to community members, while guiding them back to TRANSIT for more in depth information.

Day 2

Smart Guide Review Activity

After a brief welcome into the second day of activities, participants divided into three groups to further review the Smart Guide and offer more in depth feedback. Many edits were suggested, some of which could be incorporated into the Smart Guide. Clarification was provided to the group that we must remain faithful to the original content of TRANSIT and refer to external documents and publications that are already in existence and cover topics that aren't included in TRANSIT.

Some suggestions that can be incorporated into the Smart Guide include:

- Ensure that wording is more inclusive of trans men and nonbinary people
- Reword some passages that seem to be framed around victimization of trans people
- Include language about self-determination regarding gender identity laws. Trans people should have the right to self-determine their gender identity without being required to pursue unwanted procedures
- Define the role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) in addressing human rights violations
- Include information on community feedback mechanisms
- More discussion of intersectionality

Other themes emerged, which will either need to be referenced in other documents or will require the creation of new documents. These include:

- Providing information about the diversity of sexualities in the trans community
- Educating activists and on self-care practices
- The effects of forced and voluntary migration on trans health
- A deeper examination of the intersectionality of sex work, especially concerning gender identity, and being inclusive of trans male sex workers
- A deeper dive into harm reduction for trans people, covering issues such as injection drug use, chem-sex and other topics
- Addressing the need for data de-aggregation in Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance (IBBS) Surveys and other data sets



LAC participants discussing possible uses of TRANSIT for implementing trans-inclusive HIV prevention care

Funder Engagement and Solicitation of Support for TRANSIT Implementation

Following a brief break, Erika Castellanos facilitated a brainstorming session to generate ideas for engaging funders to support dissemination of the TRANSIT Smart Guide and implementation within regional and country contexts. Participants were encouraged to identify local organizations in their countries who would benefit most from implementing TRANSIT Smart Guide trainings and disseminating the guide in the community. The importance of establishing that the local community sees the value in these activities and support them, can provide the rationale for requesting resources from funders working in the country, and IRGT and GATE will be available to support implementation.

Several potential funding streams emerged during the discussions, including the following:

- AIDS Healthcare Foundation
- Amplify Change
- Asia Pacific Transgender Network
- Global Fund Technical Assistance Request
- International Trans Fund Emergency Grant
- LINKAGES
- Open Society Foundation
- PEPFAR
- MAC AIDS Fund
- UNFPA
- ViiV Positive Action Program

Some participants identified several barriers to seeking funding within their countries, including requirements that organizations form consortia in order to apply for funding, and even when trans consortia are formed they are often told that trans organizations do not have the capacity to implement programming. Participants also mentioned that some funders appear to allocate funding based more on relationships and friendships than on actual need or organizational capacity. Working on several multi-country grant proposals (versus one big 13 country grant) was identified as a possible solution for this problem.



Participants from India and Nepal planning a TA request for in-country TRANSIT Smart Guide trainings

An important point was made regarding the need to think of capacity building and Smart Guide implementation on two levels, one targeted towards community members and the other targeted towards stakeholders such as government agencies and other CSOs, including CCMs. Two of the countries represented (India, Nepal) were eligible for the Global Fund, raising the possibility of submitting Technical Assistance requests to provide Smart Guide Trainings for trans people currently on those CCMs was discussed.

AIDS 2020 Dissemination Planning

Following the robust discussion of potential funders, discussion then shifted to two upcoming global convenings around HIV/AIDS issues: the International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2020, San Francisco, California) and the community led conference HIV 2020 (Mexico City, Mexico). It will be difficult for many trans organizations to split their limited resources between the two conferences. Because of this dilemma, many trans organizations, including IRGT, GATE, and the organizations represented in the workshop, were focusing their resources on AIDS 2020.

Many trans organizations have collaborated with IRGT to implement trans-focused activities in previous International AIDS Conferences, including GATE, Red Lac Trans, APTN, Blue Diamond Society, and Red Trans Peru. IRGT approached Virology Education (VE) about hosting a joint IAC pre-conference on 5 July 2020, due to the successful trans-health focused pre-conference they hosted in Mexico City in 2019. Thankfully VE has agreed to partner with the trans community in this effort.

- Plan is to accommodate up to 400 people at the pre-conference, about 100 clinicians and 300 community activist representatives
- 2 joint plenaries, and 3 concurrent session tracks
- There is a planning committee that has been formed, there is space for additional members
- A Call for Abstracts for the Pre-Conference will be released in a few weeks

In addition, IRGT and GATE will partner with regional and global trans organizations to host a Networking Zone in the IAC Global Village. In past years networking zones have served as great spaces for community, even providing opportunities for presentations of abstracts rejected in the main conference.

There was also discussion about dissemination and promotion of the TRANSIT Smart Guide at AIDS 2020?

- Either physical or digital copies should be available at the pre-conference and Networking Zone
- Create pamphlets with brief information – what is it the Smart Guide about and where can people find more information
- Put information in a USB drive, need ways to prevent people from deleting
- Use videos testimonials
- Use QR codes to link individuals to digital copies
- Think about packaging promotional materials for different audiences – funders and community

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There was great enthusiasm for replicating this workshop model and disseminating the TRANSIT Smart Guide in local and regional contexts for both advocacy and education. The small group activities and brainstorming session proved particularly useful in generating ideas for identifying and engaging funders to support these activities. Participants worked closely during the training to identify organizations that would benefit from these activities and help promote implementation in local communities. GATE and IRGT will remain in close contact with participants to follow through on these plans and provide technical assistance and support where needed.

An important theme that emerged during the workshop is the need to draft a document for trans community members that can also serve as a supplement to TRANSIT until revision of the original version becomes feasible. Participants recommend that this supplement highlight intersectionality and diversity within the trans community; provide a deeper discussion of sex work, gender roles, and self-care for community members; and explore the causes and consequences of forced migration on trans health and human rights.



Participant feedback on the workshop

The TRANSIT Smart Guide workshop proved to be a successful collaboration between GATE and IRGT, providing the chance to validate the TRANSIT Smart Guide with community members and to identify opportunities for dissemination, implementation, knowledge exchange and most importantly, collaboration between regions. The Smart Guide proved to be well accepted and validated by community members with only minor suggestions for edits and revisions to increase its relevance in local communities.

Moving forward from the TRANSIT Smart Guide Workshop, GATE and IRGT will work closely with local and regional trans-led organizations to secure funder commitments to continue this important work, and to spearhead a movement to create a supplemental document to TRANSIT that covers additional topics important to the trans community.

REFERENCES

Implementing Comprehensive HIV and STI Programmes with Transgender People: Practical Guidance for Collaborative Interventions (TRANSIT)

Available online at: <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/implementing-comprehensive-hiv-and-sti-programmes-transgender-people-practical-guidance>

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Workshop Timetable/Agenda for TRANSIT Smart Guide Workshop

Time	Day 1	Activity
8:00 – 9:00	ARRIVAL AND SIGN-IN	
9:00 – 9:10	Welcome	Presentation
9:10 – 9:20	IRGT Overview	Presentation
9:20 – 9:30	GATE Overview	Presentation
9:30 – 9:45	Ground rules and expectations	Discussion
9:45 – 10:30	Introductions	Discussion
10:30 – 10:45	BREAK	
10:45 – 11:30	TRANSIT Overview	Presentation
11:30 – 12:00	Impact of TRANSIT within regional/country contexts	Discussion
12:00 – 1:00	LUNCH	
1:00 – 1:20	Smart Guide Overview	Energizer
1:20 – 2:00	Smart Guide – Chapter 1 & 2	Presentation and discussion
2:00 – 2:30	Smart Guide – Chapter 3	Presentation and discussion
2:30 – 2:45	BREAK	
2:45 – 3:30	Smart Guide – Chapter 4 & 5	Presentation and discussion
3:30 – 4:00	Smart Guide – Chapter Review	Small group discussions and presentations
4:00	SUMMARY AND CLOSING	

Time	Day 2	Activity
8:00 – 8:30	ARRIVAL AND SIGN-IN	
8:30 - 8:45	Overview of Day 1	Discussion and presentation
8:45 – 9:00	Logistics	Presentation
9:00 – 9:45	Smart Guide Review	Small group discussions and presentations
9:45 – 10:30	Smart Guide Dissemination and Implementation Approaches	Large group discussion and reflection
10:30 – 10:45	BREAK	
10:45 – 11:15	Funder engagement and solicitation of support for TRANSIT Implementation	Plenary presentation and discussion
11:15 – 12:00	Country replication planning	Small group discussions and presentations
12:00 – 1:00	LUNCH	
1:00 – 2:00	AIDS 2020 dissemination planning	Plenary presentation and discussion
2:00 - 2:30	Closing discussion: next steps	Large group discussion and reflection
2:30 – 3:00	Feedback evaluation and group photo	
3:00 – 3:30	SUMMARY AND CLOSING – Presentation of certificates of completion	