

# REPORT ON AMSHER'S CONSOLIDATION PHASE

May 2010.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHer) is an African MSM and LGBT-based and -led coalition working to address the rights and health related issues faced by gay men, other men who have sex with men (MSM), and transgender persons in Africa. A coalition of 15 organizations from 13 countries, AMSHER's work is guided by a steering committee constituted of representatives of its 15 member organizations. Five of the 15 steering committee members form the management board, which has the responsibility to oversee the work of the coalition.

AMSHer successfully raised funds to cover the cost of consolidation related activities, the cost of hiring a coordinator, covering administrative cost during the period of October 1, 2009 – March 31, 2010, and hosting a meeting of its executive committee in February 2010. The funds were raised from AIDS Fonds (10,000 Euros), AFAO (AUD 10,000), SIDA (USD 25, 000) and Oxfam GB (6, 500 British Pounds). AMSHER raised 4,500 British pounds additional from Oxfam GB to cover all April 2010 expenses.

AMSHer has just completed the six months consolidation phase for which the funds were raised. During this period, various activities were carried out to meet the objectives set out by AMSHER's Executive committee for this phase. AMSHER hired, Mr. Joel Gustave Nana as its coordinator for the six months period. Mr. Nana's were given the following responsibilities during these six months as: (1) Programme planning and implementation, (2) Policy advice, responses, issues of guidance and leadership, (3) Building strategic partnerships and alliances, and (4) Fundraising to ensure sustainability beyond March 2010.

With diligent and generous administrative and logistical support from OUT LGBT Well-Being, AMSHER's secretariat, and the leadership of Mr. Joel Gustave Nana, the organization successfully implemented the activities set above.

## 2. PROGRAMME PLANING AND IMPLEMENTATION

### *Assist in the Convening of one face-to-face AMSHER Executive Committee meeting*

AMSHer successfully held two face-to-face meetings of its entire membership forum during the six months period. The first steering committee meeting was held in December 2009 ahead of

the HIVOS meeting on MSM, HIV and Culture in Nairobi. At this meeting, AMSHeR's membership Forum dealt with the various procedural policies of the coalition. One of the most important decisions that were made at this meeting was the unanimous decision, by the whole membership forum, to register the organization in South Africa.

The second meeting took place in Addis Ababa in February 2010 ahead of the 4<sup>th</sup> African Sexuality Conference on Sexuality and HIV and AIDS in Africa. At this meeting, AMSHeR drafted and adopted a two year ***operational plan, a work plan for the financial year 2010*** as well as a budget for this period. AMSHeR amended and adopted Terms of References (ToR) for its chair and deputy chair, its management committee members as well as the whole membership forum. AMSHeR also outlined the responsibilities of a potential Executive Director and Hired Mr. Joel Gustave Nana, its then coordinator for the consolidation phase, as the Executive Director for a fixed term of two year, renewable upon performance and availability of funding.

#### *Initiate and manage the implementation of inter-organization learning exchange*

With the support of the Global Forum on MSM and HIV, AMSHeR carried out a capacity assessment of all its members. The purpose of the assessment being to identify the capacity gaps and strength of each AMSHeR members in order to design a capacity building program that would eventually include twinning and learning exchange opportunities.

AMSHeR attempted one pilot learning exchange between activists in Nigeria and activists in Uganda to help identify the best way to respond to the anti-homosexuality bill in the Ugandan Parliament. This attempt failed because of the difficulties that groups in Uganda were facing.

#### *Ensure AMSHeR's participation at health and human rights related meetings*

AMSHeR actively took part to the Africa sexuality conference in Addis Ababa. At this meeting, four AMSHeR members made presentations on various panels. AMSHeR also organized a full session on *Addressing HIV in MSM communities in Africa*. The various presentations that were made on this panel are:

- Strategies for extending HIV programming to MSM persons in culturally rigid settings,
- A community-based response to state-sponsored homophobia
- Setting up a national MSM program: The example of South Africa
- Mobilizing for the Health and Rights of MSM persons in Africa.

The session was attended by over about 200 participants and set the tone for sexual orientation and gender identity related discourse at this meeting.

AMSHeR's members and Executive Director also participated and made presentations at various other sexual health and human rights related meetings. Some of the most relevant ones include:

- Hivos meeting on MSM, HIV and culture in December 2009, in Nairobi, Kenya.  
The meeting was exploring ways to use positive aspects of culture to challenge the “un-African-ness” of same-sex practicing in Africa, and provide better access to HIV prevention, treatment and care services for MSM in Africa. Eleven out of fifteen members of AMSHeR steering committee members were present at that meeting and all made presentations on the topic.
- Schorer international expert meeting on MSM/WSW and HIV in November 2009, in Amsterdam, Netherlands.  
A biannual meeting around MSM/WSW and HIV around the world. The meeting brings together activists, policymakers and researchers from around the world to share and network. At this meeting, Joel Nana, AMSHeR's Executive Director made delivered a keynote speech.
- WHO meeting on HIV and PrEP in November 2009 , in Glion, Switzerland  
Participants at this meeting were invited to share the latest developments around the Pre Exposure Prophylaxis as a mode of prevention. AMSHeR executive attended the meeting.
- UNDP training on HIV, Gender, Sexual Diversity and Human Rights in October 2009, in Dakar, Senegal.  
In the division of labor within the UN family, UNDP has the mandate to work on sexual diversity health and rights related issues. In an attempt to train its staff and sensitize them on these issues, Joel Nana was invited to deliver a brief training on MSM and HIV related issues at this meeting
- UNDP meeting of West and Central African experts on HIV, Gender and Human Rights in October 2009, in Dakar, Senegal.
- EALS meeting on HIV bill in November 2009, in Arusha, Tanzania.  
AMSHeR was invited to participate at this meeting to provide input on the draft East African Community HIV bill.
- EALS meeting on HIV law, in February 2010, in Kampala, Uganda.  
Following up on the previous meeting, AMSHeR was invited at the validation meeting to provide comments on the last draft before submission to the East African Legislative Assembly. Dr Paul Semugoma, AMSHeR management board member, attended the meeting.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Francophone HIV and AIDS conference in March 2010, in Casablanca, Morocco

The meeting is a quadrennial meeting around HIV in francophone countries around the world. AMSHeR was represented at this meeting by its Executive Director, Joel Nana, its deputy chair, Steave Nemande, and one of its Steering Committee member, late Georges Kanuma.

At this conference AMSHeR also participated and delivered presentations at the IDLO pre-conference on access to HIV related legal services, as well as the UNAIDS/UNDP side meeting on HIV and Human Rights.

### **3. POLICY ADVICE, EMERGENCY RESPONSE, GUIDANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

#### *Emergency response*

During its six months consolidation period, AMSHeR responded to crisis in various countries on the continent. AMSHeR's most critical work in responding to emergency included:

- **Responding to arrests in Malawi:**

Following the arrests of Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga<sup>1</sup> and the arrests and harassments that suffered the staff of Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), AMSHeR consulted with the leadership of CEDEP and sent Joel Nana, its director, and Sibongile Ndashe, a human rights lawyer from Interights, in Blantyre to help find the best ways to contain the situation.

While in the country, AMSHeR held several meetings with the leadership of CEDEP and the legal team defending the men. AMSHeR worked with both teams to ensure that they chose a legal and advocacy strategy that is adapted to the context.

- **Advocating to stop the adoption of homophobic laws in Rwanda and Uganda**

To better respond to the bills pending in the parliaments of Rwanda and Uganda<sup>2</sup>, and after extensive consultation with LGBT and other civil society organizations in both countries, AMSHeR partnered with the Coalition of African Lesbian (CAL) and fundraised to work with the local LGBT movement to strengthen a consolidated home-grown response to the bills, to design collective advocacy strategies in response to the bills and to develop a contingency plan in case of backlash.

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<sup>1</sup> Steven and Tiwonge had been arrested for conducting a traditional engagement ceremony in Blantyre in December 2009. They were arrested a week after the ceremony and have been in jail since then.

<sup>2</sup> The parliaments of Rwanda and Uganda have introduced bills to, respectively, criminalize and strengthen the penalties against consensual same-sex activities between adults in their country.

AMShEr's member organization, Frank and Candy, under the leadership of Dr Paul Semugoma, has been doing in-country advocacy, press *op eds* and drafting various briefing papers on the impact of the Ugandan bill on accessing HIV services by men who have sex with men in that country.

*Advocate with Sub-regional, Regional and international inter-governmental organizations*

- **East African Community:** AMShEr's Executive Director and Dr. Paul Semugoma, one of its Management board member, actively took part to the drafting of the East African HIV bill. AMShEr's involvement in the process was to ensure that the bill include progressive and inclusive provisions for men who have sex with men (MSM). Provisions that would protect MSM' rights to access HIV services without discrimination. At the drafting meetings AMShEr made strong recommendations for decriminalization of same-sex practices between consensual adults. Although the recommendations were left out at the last draft bill, some gains were made. Some protective language was included in the bill, which is a step from EAC country members' legislation. The forum offered an important avenue for sensitization on MSM rights and health related issues.
- **African Commission on Human and People's Rights:** AMShEr's Executive Director and Steave Nemande, AMShEr's then co-chair, took part to the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights as well as its preceding NGO Forum. The outcomes of AMShEr's participation at this session include: (1) AMShEr used the opportunity of being part of the NGO forum to advocate for the inclusion of GBT and other MSM related issues in the various resolutions issued by the NGO forum. (2)AMShEr submitted a statement drawing the commission's attention on the treatment of GBT and other MSM persons on the continent. (2)AMShEr, in collaboration with CAL and other organizations, including Global Rights and IGLHRC submitted a resolution calling on the commission to nominate the special rapporteur on the rights of human rights defender, the special rapporteur on freedom of expression and the special rapporteur on the rights of women, to document, monitor and address sexual orientation – and gender identity – based human rights violations. (3)AMShEr built support for an advocacy strategy to call on the commission to nominate a special rapporteur on the right to health or to form a working group on HIV and AIDS or on the right to health.
- **United Nations:** AMShEr took part to various UN related advocacy work. (1) In October 2009, AMShEr's Executive Director was invited to be part of a team of trainers of trainers, to train UNDP West and Central Africa staff on sexual orientation and Gender identity related issues. (2) In November 2009, AMShEr took part to a WHO meeting on PreP (Pre- Exposure Prophylaxis). (3)In February, AMShEr's Executive Director was

invited to give a brown bag presentation on AMSHeR's work in Africa. The Brown bag event was attended by various UNAIDS, Global Fund and IAS officials.

#### Organize and manage a pool of consultants for Capacity Building

AMSHeR has been working at putting such a database together but given the dearth of individuals and organizations with the adequate experience and skills to provide these services to the groups, AMSHeR has resolved to fundraise to hire a fulltime capacity building officer.

In Addition, AMSHeR plans to work with existing capacity building organizations and organizations, such as AmFAR, that have build such database to ensure that its members have access to these consultants.

#### **4. BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND ALLIANCES**

During the six months consolidation phase, AMSHeR worked/partnered with a number of organizations, networks and institutions including the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL), Interights, Global Rights, the University of Pretoria, Behind the Mask (BtM), the East African Law Society, the Southern African Litigation Center and Oxfam GB. AMSHeR worked with the Global Forum on MSM and HIV on a capacity assessment project.

AMSHeR and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) have been working at formalizing their relationship through the drafting of a Memorandum of understanding which is yet to be signed. Both organizations, in collaboration with the Center for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, have been working to ensure that MSM and HIV related issues are addressed at the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and its NGO Forum.

AMSHeR also worked with the secretariat of the African Council of AIDS Service Organizations (AfriCASO) to secure an invitation at its General Assembly. In December 2010, AMSHeR was finally invited to the meeting and was accepted in its membership assemble as an associate member. A commitment was made by sub-regional chapters of AfriCASO to ensure the inclusion of sub-regional and national LGBT/MSM organizations/networks in their membership forum.

#### **5. MOVING FORWARD**

AMSHeR has hired Ms Natasha Quinn as its office Manager and intends to move into its new offices on June 1<sup>st</sup>. However, AMSHeR still needs to raise about 30% of its projected budget in order to be fully operational and meet the objectives it has set out for the 2010 Fiscal Year.