



Eurasian Coalition on Male Health

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# Report on the Online Consultation

*within the Regional Dialogue for the  
Development of the ECOM Concept  
Note to the Global Fund*

2015

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Report on the Online Consultation within the Regional Dialogue for the Development of the ECOM Concept Note to the Global Fund.

Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM), October 2015

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The document is produced by the Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM), a network of organizations and activists working in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. We aim to create favourable conditions to ensure that men who have sex with men and transgender people have access to services in the field of sexual and reproductive health, including HIV, that based on evidence and respect for their human rights.



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# Abbreviations

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| AIDS        | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome                 |
| CCM         | Country Coordinating Mechanism                      |
| ECOM        | Eurasian Coalition on Male Health                   |
| EECA        | Eastern European and Central Asian Region           |
| Global Fund | Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria |
| HIV         | Human Immunodeficiency Virus                        |
| LGBT        | Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender              |
| MSM         | Men who have sex with men                           |
| NGO         | Non-Governmental Organization                       |
| PLHIV       | People Living with HIV                              |
| SOGI        | Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity              |
| STI         | Sexually Transmitted Infections                     |
| TG          | Transgender   |
| UN          | United Nations                                      |

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## Goal

The goal of this consultation is to ensure the meaningful involvement of community representatives and key partners from the planning stage of the Regional Program.

## Methodology

A questionnaire was prepared for the consultation, through which consultation participants were asked to evaluate the relevance of the stated goals and objectives of the proposed program to their countries, and to suggest means and directions of work that will allow the program to achieve maximum results within their countries.

Participants were provided with introductory information before filling out the questionnaire, which gave a description of the program as it was presented in an earlier Expression of Interest that was submitted to the Global Fund.

The questionnaire and program description were available in both Russian and English.

The invitation to participate in the Online Consultation was distributed through the main electronic listservs and Facebook groups that connect LGBT and MSM-service organizations in countries of the region.

The online consultation took place from September 10 to October 12, 2015.

The questionnaire is attached to this report. The Regional Program description is accessible at [goo.gl/x58DRx](http://goo.gl/x58DRx)

## Results

### 1. General data on the participants of the Online Consultation

66 persons from the following 12 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including the Balkans, participated in the consultation: Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine.

73% of participants identified themselves as MSM, while 13% identified as transsexual/transgender.

30% of respondents were younger than 30. 12% of participants identified themselves as belonging to the group "above 46 years of age".

## 2. Opinions on the Content of the ECOM Regional Program

### Goal of the Regional Program

95% of participants felt that the goal of the Regional Program corresponds to the needs of their country.

### Objective 1 of the Regional Program

93% of participants felt that Objective 1 corresponds or more or less corresponds to the needs of their country.

The participants rated the following activities as having the highest priority (more than 50% of the votes):

- Educating MSM/transgender organizations on issues related to the HIV prevention and treatment cascade;
- Advocating for the participation of MSM and transgender people in CCMs and in other national organs and strengthening community advocacy capacity;
- Improving strategic information about the HIV epidemic among MSM and transgender people at the national level and improving the HIV response among these groups in EECA.

The activity "Collection and dissemination of best practices in the implementation of HIV programs among MSM and transgender people" was considered a priority by only a quarter of the participants.

Participants felt it important to take the following into account in the implementation of Objective 1:

- Enhancing the effectiveness of counseling before and after testing;
- Facilitate effective linkages and referral between HIV-related counselling services and health and social services;
- Training of local activists to enable them to participate in local and national decision-making processes and cooperating with administrative authorities and medical institutions;
- Strengthening the capacity (training) of local organizations in the implementation of behavioral interventions aimed at reducing the practice of risky behavior among MSM;
- Strengthening the capacity (training) of local organizations in the protection of the human rights of LGBT people;
- Strengthening the capacity (training) of local organizations in the provision of support and assistance to LGBT people living with HIV, including raising awareness of and preparedness in matters of treatment.
- Improving the exchange of information between organizations in the region regarding their work;

- Supporting conduction of various researches and strengthening the capacity of community organizations to participate in research projects;
- Advocacy and technical support for the expansion of testing and counseling programs on the basis of community organizations.
- Providing local and national governments and decision-makers with strategic information on the needs of LGBT people in connection with the HIV epidemic.
- Developing self-support initiatives between community members.
- Providing special attention to the needs and specificities of transsexual/transgender people.

### Objective 2 of the Regional Program

88% of participants responded that Objective 2 corresponds or more or less corresponds to the needs of their country.

The participants rated the following activities as having the highest priority (more than 50% of the votes):

- Advocating for antidiscrimination measures and combating discriminatory laws and initiatives;
- Raising awareness of MSM and transgender issues (sensitization) among employees of government healthcare and law enforcement institutions.

The activities "Evaluation of the legal environment in the countries of the Regional Program" and "Documenting human rights violations, with an emphasis on the right to health, in the countries of the program" were given priority by 18 and 30 percent of respondents respectively.

Participants felt it important to take the following into account in the implementation of Objective 2:

- Raising the awareness of CCM members, local authorities, Ministry of Health officials, the police, and other decision-makers in the countries, on issues of SOGI and on the investment strategy of the Global Fund;
- Actively involving international structures, such as the EU and international human rights organizations, in advocacy work;
- Proposing model laws to countries, taking into account best international practices and SOGI strategy.
- Promoting the reduction of stigma and discrimination among the LGBT community towards people living with HIV.
- Increasing awareness on issues of sexuality and HIV among specialists, including doctors, psychologists, journalists (including bloggers), and teachers. Among other this includes working with students of relevant universities and using model education programs and/or trainings.

### Objective 3 of the Regional Program

89% of participants responded that Objective 3 corresponds or more or less corresponds with the needs of their country.

The participants rated the following activity as having the highest priority (more than 50% of the votes):

- Strengthening financial sustainability and improving financial management.

The remaining activities were deemed a priority by the following percentage of participants:

- Organizational development – 48,8%;
- Capacity building in the management of staff and volunteers and strengthening leadership – 34,9%;
- Improving monitoring and evaluation and planning skills – 37,2%.

Participants felt it important to take the following into account in the implementation of Objective 3:

- Improving the quality of the governing structures of organizations and community networks, especially in terms of meaningful community participation in the work of these structures;
- Developing volunteer programs;
- Developing alternative means of fundraising;
- Developing partnership of national community organizations between each other, with international structures, and with governmental structures.
- Creating a program of mini-grants for local community NGOs;
- Developing mechanisms to support and protect local community organizations;
- Increasing the transparency of the work of local and national LGBT and MSM-service organizations. Increasing their accountability to the community.

### Main Obstacles

The participants indicated that the following obstacles must be taken into account in the program preparation and implementation (as prioritized by respondents).

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Homophobic policies of the governments   | 62.8% |
| High level of homophobia among the general population  | 46.5% |
| Lack of effective community systems (such as developed community organizations, a significant number of community activists, and a developed system of communication between community members), which are able to protect the interests of MSM and TG with respect to health care, including HIV prevention and treatment | 37.2% |
| Presence of legislative and political barriers to the work of NGOs, including difficulties in receiving funding from national and local governments  | 37.2% |
| Low level of experience and knowledge among doctors, social workers, and other specialists of state institutions and/or NGOs on how to organize and implement targeted health programs for MSM and TG  | 34.9% |
| Lack of governmental funding for necessary HIV services to MSM and TG  | 23.3% |
| Poor quality of the health care system   | 20.9% |
| Lack of national laws, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of HIV infection  | 7.0%  |
| Presence of national laws, permitting discrimination on the basis of HIV infection   | 4.7%  |

### 3. Opinions on Country Selection Criteria

Based on their responses, the participants have suggested choosing countries for the implementation of the regional program based on a high prevalence of HIV among MSM and transgender people, the presence of active organizations, and a lack of governmental funding.

Below are the results of the evaluation of the country selection criteria.

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| High prevalence of HIV in the country as a whole   | 18.6% |
| High prevalence of STIs and hepatitis in the country as a whole  | 4.7%  |
| High prevalence of HIV among MSM and/or TG   | 65.1% |
| High prevalence of STIs and hepatitis among MSM and/or TG  | 23.3% |
| Presence of current Global Fund grants   | 18.6% |
| Lack of current Global Fund grants   | 7.0%  |
| Presence of active HIV-service NGOs, working with MSM and/or transgender people  | 51.2% |
| Lack of active HIV-service NGOs, working with MSM and/or transgender people  | 7.0%  |
| Presence of active LGBT human rights organizations   | 7.0%  |
| Lack of active LGBT human rights organizations   | 11.6% |
| High availability of ARV therapy in the country  | 0.0%  |
| Low availability of ARV therapy in the country   | 11.6% |
| Presence of governmental funding for targeted measures of HIV prevention and treatment among MSM and/or transgender people | 4.7%  |
| Lack of governmental funding for targeted measures of HIV prevention and treatment among MSM and/or transgender people     | 44.2% |

Other criteria, suggested by participants:

- Presence in the country of organizations created and managed by the LGBT community;
- Presence in the country of organizations and community leaders prepared to participate in the implementation of this regional program;
- Presence of effective mechanisms for the participation and influence of civil society in the discussion of legislative initiatives at the development stage.

### 4. Recommendations on Meaningful Community Involvement

Respondents gave the following recommendations on Meaningful Involvement of Communities in the Regional Program Implementation:

- Providing the communities with information about the Program, preferably in the form of local-level meetings, on a regular basis;

- Creating a feedback system for the program, focusing on allowing the community to have real influence on the content of the program (and to make changes to it);
- Ensuring competitive basis for participation and transparency in the use of program funds, ensuring community understanding of how the program works and why one organization or another is receiving support;
- Using the communication channels of Country Coordinating Mechanisms;
- Creating an effective resource for distributing information on health, including in paper format;
- Providing strong support for the work of local activists and community organizations, by helping to improve access to the resources necessary for their work;
- Increasing organizational capacity of community organizations;
- Developing the leadership capacity of community activists;
- Developing volunteer and self-organized programs for the community.
- Creating favorable conditions for the involvement of LGBT activists and organizations in health protection related initiatives;
- Creating a safe environment, in which community representatives will be able to safely discuss their needs and express their opinions about the program;
- Facilitating the reduction of stigma and discrimination from government officials;
- Promoting the development of cooperation between activists and community organizations and local authorities;
- Using less aggressive rhetoric in advocacy by focusing on cooperation and building dialogue;
- Promoting the growth of personal responsibility of community members for their own health.

## Using the Results

The data collected in the framework of the Online Consultation will form the basis of the discussion at the regional meeting. In addition, this data will be used directly by the group responsible for preparing the text of the concept note.

## Summary

The majority of the participants confirmed that the goal and objectives of the regional program, formulated earlier by ECOM, are relevant to the countries of the region in terms of protecting the health of MSM and transgender people from the adverse effects of the spread of HIV. Accordingly, there is currently no reason to change the goal and objectives of the regional program.

Some of the key activities for each objective received higher ratings than others. This provides a basis for including discussions on the prioritization of key activities and clarification of expected results in the agenda of the upcoming regional meeting. These results do not mean that other activities will be omitted. However, the results of the consultation may be reflected in the allocation of program funds and the formulation of more ambitious results for the activities, which were deemed to be of highest priority.

In addition, at the upcoming Regional meeting, it will be important to revise proposals concerning meaningful community involvement in the development and implementation of the program. The suggestions of the participants of the Online Consultation provide a good basis for this.

As part of further data collection on the situation and the work carried out in the program countries, we can rely on the prioritization of activities, suggestions on meaningful participation, and on data on best practices in the fields of HIV services and protection of LGBT rights, expressed/presented by the participants of the Online Consultation.

In determining country selection criteria, participants of the Online Consultation choose "the middle ground": the presence of significant challenges (high prevalence of HIV among MSM and transgender people, combined with a lack of government funding), but, at the same time, recognized the importance of concrete opportunities to implement the program, such as the presence of active community organizations, providing health services to and protecting the human rights of LGBT. The issue of defining selection criteria can be finalized at the upcoming Regional meeting.

# Annex. Online Consultation Questionnaire

1. Did you read the description of the ECOM Regional Program before this questionnaire?

Yes. (Please continue to the questionnaire questions.)

No. (Please, read the Regional Program description before answering the questionnaire:

2. Your age:

16-18 / 19-29 / 30-45 / 46-60 / 61 and over

3. Are you an MSM? (MSM is considered a homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual man who has sex with other men.)

Yes / No

4. Are you a transgender or transsexual person?

Yes / No

5. How do you participate in the health and human rights related work? Choose no more than 2 (two) options.

I am an employee/volunteer of a national NGO or informal group working on protection of health of MSM and/or TG

I am an independent activist/expert working on protection of health of MSM and/or TG

I am an employee/volunteer of a national NGO working for protection of human rights for LGBT

I am an independent activist/expert working for protection of human rights of LGBT

I am an employee/volunteer of an international NGO

I am an employee/expert of a United Nations agency/program

I am an employee of a governmental or municipal institution that provides medical and social assistance to MSM and TG

Other (please clarify):

6. If you are an employee/volunteer of an organisation informal group, can you give us the organisation/group's name and contact email

Name of the organisation/group:

email:

7. From the list below, select 1 (one) country where you are mostly aware of activities on HIV, human rights and LGBT. (ATTENTION: Any further questions will relate to activities in this country only!)

Armenia / Azerbaijan / Belarus / Estonia / Georgia / Kazakhstan / Kyrgyzstan / Latvia / Lithuania / Macedonia / Moldova / Russia / Tajikistan / Ukraine

8. The goal of the ECOM Regional Program is "To contribute to an increased uptake of HIV prevention, testing, treatment, care and support by MSM and transgender people in the HIV Prevention and Treatment Cascades in Eastern Europe and Central Asia." In your opinion, how much does the increase of HIV services availability correspond to the interests of MSM and TG in your country?

- Corresponds fully
- Rather corresponds
- Rather does not correspond
- Does not correspond at all

9. Objective 1 of the Regional Program is to "To improve HIV programming for MSM and transgender people through regional community-led advocacy, evidence building, and best practice collection and dissemination." In your opinion, how much does this Objective correspond to the interests of MSM and TG in your country?

- Corresponds fully
- Rather corresponds
- Rather does not correspond
- Does not correspond at all

10. What activities under the Objective 1 are the most important for your country? Select no more than 2 (two) options.

- Training on treatment cascade for MSM and transgender people's organizations
- Advocacy and capacity building for greater involvement of MSM and transgender people in CCM and other national HIV bodies
- Improving national-level strategic information about the HIV epidemic among MSM and transgender people and the response among these populations in EECA
- Collection and dissemination of best practices in the HIV programming for MSM and transgender people

11. Please suggest other activities that might be important in your country for achieving the Objective 1

12. Objective 2 of the Regional Program is "To create enabling environments to HIV services for MSM and transgender people through fighting stigma and discrimination, promoting and protecting human rights, and removing legal and policy barriers." In your opinion, how much does this Objective correspond to the interests of MSM and TG in your country?

- Corresponds fully
- Rather corresponds
- Rather does not correspond
- Does not correspond at all

13. What activities under the Objective 2 are the most important for your country? Select no more than 2 (two) options.

- Legal environment assessment in the project countries
- Documenting human rights violations in the project countries with a particular emphasis on the right to health
- Advocacy for anti-discrimination and counteraction of discriminatory laws and initiatives
- Sensitization trainings for public health, social care, and law enforcement officials and staff

14. Please suggest other activities that might be important in your country for achieving the Objective 2

15. Objective 3 of the Regional Program is "To increase MSM and transgender people's organizations' capacities for a sustainable HIV response by strengthening their internal structures, building technical competence, and improving fundraising skills." In your opinion, how much does this Objective correspond to the interests of MSM and TG in your country?

- Corresponds fully
- Rather corresponds
- Rather does not corresponds
- Does not correspond at all

16. What activities under the Objective 3 are the most important for your country? Select no more than 2 (two) options.

- Organizational strengthening
- Human resource and volunteer management, and leadership building
- Improving monitoring and evaluation and planning and evaluation skills
- Increasing financial sustainability and accountability

17. Please suggest other activities that might be important in your country for achieving the Objective 3

18. What criteria do you think can ensure that the country has been selected to participate in Regional Program? Select up to 3 (three) options.

- High HIV prevalence in the country in general
- High STI and hepatitis prevalence in the country in general
- High HIV prevalence among MSM and/or TG
- High STI and hepatitis prevalence among MSM and/or TG
- Currently existing grants from the Global Fund
- No current grants from the Global Fund
- Presence of NGOs currently working on HIV among MSM and/or TG
- No NGOs currently working on HIV among MSM and/or TG
- Presence of currently working LGBT human rights organizations
- No currently working LGBT human rights organizations

- High access to ART in the country
- Low access to ART in the country
- Availability of state funding to targeted measures on HIV prevention and treatment among MSM and/or TG
- No state funding to targeted measures on HIV prevention and treatment among MSM and/or TG
- Other (please specify):

19. Please indicate main obstacles that you see to the implementation of the Regional Program activities in your country. Choose no more than 3 options.

- High level of homophobia in general population
- Homophobic governmental policies
- Presence of laws permitting discrimination based on HIV status
- Absence of laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of HIV status
- The government has no enough funds to support HIV services for MSM and TG
- Legal and political barriers to the work of NGOs including the difficulty of obtaining funding from national and local governments.
- Poor quality of the health care system.
- Lack of effective community systems (developed community organizations, significant number of community activists, and developed system of communication between community members) that are able to defend the interests of MSM and TG on health, including HIV prevention and treatment
- Low level of experience and knowledge among medical doctors, social workers and other specialists in state institutions and/or NGOs on how to organize and implement health programs targeted at MSM and TG
- Other (specify, please, other obstacles that you think are important):

20. Are there in your country ongoing local and national projects aiming to increase access of MSM and TG to HIV prevention and treatment services?

Yes / No / Do not know

21. If your answer to Q. 20 is "Yes", please name these projects and, if possible, indicate the implementing organization(s) or give names and contact details of someone who can provide more information about these projects?

22. Are there in your country ongoing projects aiming at protection of human rights of LGBT people, incl. rights to health, protection of LGBT people from discrimination and violence based of sexual orientation and gender identity or provision of sex services?

Yes / No / Do not know

23. If your answer to Q. 22 is "Yes", please name these projects and, if possible, indicate the implementing organization(s) or give names and contact details of those who can provide more information about these projects?

24. In your opinion, what is the first thing to do in your country to ensure meaningful involvement of MSM and TG in decision-making and implementation of this ECOM Regional Program?

25. In your opinion, are there in your country effective programs of advocacy for access of vulnerable groups to HIV prevention and treatment? (This can be advocacy for the interests of MSM and TG as well as for access to HIV prevention and treatment for PUD, sex workers, migrants, etc.)

Yes / No / Do not know

26. If your answer to Q. 25 is "Yes", please name these projects and, if possible, indicate the implementing organization(s) or give names contact details of those who can provide more information about these projects?

27. In the future, ECOM will provide regular updates on the Regional Program progress and other initiatives (via emailing list once per month and in a Facebook group. If you wish to be updated, please leave your contact email address