

Transgender

handbook

The Transgender Health Handbook: Community Participation in the Development of Population Specific Materials

Byung'chu Dredge Kang, MA
PhD / MPH Candidate
Anthropology and Global Epidemiology
Emory University (Atlanta, GA, USA)

Issues

- Male-to-female transgender people (TG) are at particularly high risk for HIV, typically having higher seroprevalence rates than other men who have sex with men (MSM).
- As they are often subsumed under the MSM funding category, programs and materials typically do not focus on TG individuals but rather gay identified men and male sex workers.
- TG are also vulnerable to syndemic conditions based on their unique background: TG experience high rates of discrimination in health care, depression, under-education, unemployment, sex work, drug use, violence, rape, and police brutality.
- TG also engage in feminization practices (e.g. hormone use and body modification-including by injection and surgery) that pose additional health risks.

Community Identified Need

- The Asian Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) convened the Transtravaganza-Asia Transgender Health workshop in Pattaya in January 2006 with participants from 8 countries.
- Participants prioritized a simply written (and easily translatable) health information resource booklet specifically targeting issues relevant to TGs in Asia: information on hormones, mental health issues, aging, HIV prevention, and living with HIV.
- A working group developed to spearhead this project and APNSW received funding for the Greater Mekong Sub-Region in February 2008.

A TG Community Network & Capacity

- In June 2008, the Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health (APCOM) and APNSW agreed to a joint strategy on the development of an Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN).
 - At the Risks and Responsibilities Consultation held in New Delhi in September 2006, the TG caucus resolved to create their own network.
 - The clear message from TGs was that TGs are not men, that inclusion of TGs into MSM services, research, and data reporting leads to an under-reporting of TG HIV incidence and compounds the lack of health services and systemic discrimination TGs face in society.
 - Both APCOM and APNSW recognized the potential synergy of their networks, and the strength of TG in addressing their own urgent needs, and thus resolved to create a TG specific network.
- In March 2009, 7 Sisters joined APCOM and APNSW in the effort to develop APTN with a focus on strategic planning and leadership development.
 - All three organizations combined funding into a single pool to work on the development of a health handbook for TGs in Asia/Pacific and the APTN with Dredge Kang as Writer/Mentor and Hua Boonyapisomparn as Coordinator.

Project: Transgender Health Handbook

- APNSW developed a Transgender Health Handbook. The process involved a community consultation (Bangkok) to identify issues of importance and two additional consultations to provide feedback on the draft handbook (Bali and Bangkok).

Transgender health handbook

Sexual Health

Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being related to sexuality. Not all of us practice sexuality the same way. Some of us like to penetrate men, while some of us think this is disgusting. We often do things we don't like because we do it for money. Some of us also like to have sex with women. We should respect each other's choices in partners and sexual practices.

Sexual health is also about changing our bodies to match how we feel inside. Many of us are first concerned with becoming more feminine. Besides wearing women's clothing and using cosmetics, we often use hormones and surgery to make our bodies more feminine. This is a choice that some of us make to reinforce the way we feel about ourselves. Others of us choose not to take hormones or have surgery, but we are just as much women as those who change their sex.

"We don't need to modify our bodies to be beautiful or proud of ourselves. We don't need to change our bodies to become women if we already feel that we are. Whether or not we have a sex change, regardless of what our identification cards say, if we appear as women, we should be accepted as women."



Project: Asia Pacific Transgender Network

- APCOM and 7 Sisters convened a TG caucus and an APTN planning meeting at the 9th ICAAP (Bali) in August 2009. The process for the selection of participants at the first APTN meeting and a draft agenda were formulated.

APNSW, APCOM, and 7 Sisters convened two consecutive meetings in Bangkok in December 2009 to 1) finalize the TG Health Handbook and 2) develop a governance structure and strategic plan for APTN with simultaneous interpretation in Mandarin, Thai, and Khmer. This reduced travel expenses as many TGs participated in both meetings. A joint reception between the meetings also brought all participants together at once.



Big Sister says: Don't forget you need cancer screening for both your girl and boy parts.

Transgender women on female hormones need breast cancer screening like regular women since estrogens are a risk factor for breast cancer.

Pre-operative transgender women need testicular cancer screening.

Even after sex change surgery, transgender women need prostate cancer screening on the same age related basis as males.

You should get anal pap smears if you have anal sex, especially if you have had genital warts before.



Results

- Due to wide community participation in development of the Transgender Health Handbook, the materials were well received. The handbook has been translated into Indonesian and is being translated into Burmese, Malay, and Cambodian.
- Funding for materials development was synergized to help develop a network for TG in the Asia Pacific region.

Big Sister Says: Be careful with alcohol and drugs.

Sharing needles when injecting drugs can spread diseases like HIV and hepatitis. But being drunk or using drugs can be just as dangerous if you aren't able to make clear decisions or protect yourself. Many men will try to take advantage of you by getting you drunk or drugging you. Know your limits and stay within them.

"Many men don't want to use condoms because it doesn't feel as good, it spoils the mood, or it makes them feel unattractive. Practice putting on a condom quickly and without fuss so that it just becomes second nature.

TALK LESS, DO MORE

That means you don't have to discuss using condoms, just make sure you keep touching him so he stays aroused. If he is always being stimulated, he probably won't care about using a condom."



Big Sister, what can I do when I don't have a condom?

- Be creative. Try to delay penetrative sex, "save" it for another time. Try phone sex. Give him a massage.
- Have "small" sex. Bring him to orgasm with your hands. Have him fuck your thighs or breasts.



Lessons Learned

- Community participation is essential to the development of targeted materials which are life-world relevant.
- Funding from projects such as materials development can be leveraged to develop community networks.
 - Additional funding and support provided by APCOM, 7 Sisters, and the SEA HIV/AIDS Technical Support Facility.

Big Sister, what are some common symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases?

- Pain or burning sensation during urination
- Discharge from the penis, anus, or vagina
- Frequent or dark urination
- Pain or itching in the genital area, buttocks, inner thighs or abdomen
- Pain during intercourse
- Sores, warts, blisters, bumps, or swelling of the penis, scrotum, anus, vagina, or genital area
- Rashes on the palms or soles
- Yellowing of skin and the white area of the eyes

If you have any of these symptoms, you should consult a qualified health professional. Do not try to treat yourself.



Information & Acknowledgements

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Available online at:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/57738018/The-Transgender-Health-Handbook>,
<http://web.hku.hk/~sjwinter/TransgenderASIA/apnswtghandbook.pdf> and
[http://www.plri.org/sites/plri.org/files/TGhandbook%5B1%5D%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.plri.org/sites/plri.org/files/TGhandbook%5B1%5D%20(1).pdf).

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Available online at:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/57737794/Buku-Panduan-Kesehatan-Untuk-WARIA-the-Transgender-Health-Handbook-Indonesian> and
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.169708189727386.34967.100000646182894>.

Text by Dredge Byung'chu Käng-Nguyễn.

Edited by Andrew Hunter.

List of Contributors (in alphabetical order by first name):
Aldo Saragi, Amitava Sarkar, Ayer Chengtrakun, Amornsak Jaruphan, Champa Sela Sam, Harry Prabowo, Hua Boonyapisomparn, Jesse Koh, Khartini Slamah, Nada Chaiyajit, Nita Ly Tieng, Note Jetsada Taesombat, Pisey Ly, Prempreeda Pramojna Ayutthaya, Rina Elisha Kor, Senee Vongsavan, Somelith Detthongthip, Sophea Chrek, Sulastri Ariffin, and Thitiyanun Nakpor.

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