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Our Supporters & Partners

APCOM thanks its partners for their on-going support and trust in the coalition and the issues we fight for. To mention specifically:

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Bandanh Chaktomok
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SWING
Thai Red Cross – AIDS Research Centre
The Gay Passport
Trasher Bangkok
Vietnam Network of MSM and Transgender
Voluntary Health Services
White Party Bangkok
Youth Health and Development Organization
Youth Voices Count
It was a challenging year for APCOM due to the economic downturn in the global economies and the numerous budget cuts in development cooperation and HIV-related funding. We are in particular worried for those countries that are transitioned out elegantly for external funding for HIV, because of them being classified as middle-income countries. While of course we are very pleased that many countries move up the income ladder, it is only part of the story. The alarming thing is that many of these countries used the external funding to support critical HIV prevention and community strengthening - in particular for key populations.

Unfortunately the national budgets will not have provisions in many cases to continue this work and as a result, we envisage that many projects and programmes will come to an end. For APCOM specific, sadly, the long partnerships with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Hivos came to an end in 2015. Their support made APCOM strong in our capacity strengthening of country-level networks and our operations.

Knowing that this support would end, APCOM had to restructure its operations to ensure maximum efficiency and build further on the fundaments of the work we have been doing in the past. Our track record delivered also new partnerships, despite the shrinking funding for the region, with good news from USAID LINKAGES and the Elton John AIDS Foundation to promote community-led and community-owned HIV testing campaigns. We were not successful in our bid to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for a regional Greater Mekong MSM programme, but the learning experience was hugely valuable. We will work further on this programme and improve it for the next submission round of the Fund.

It is impossible to describe 2015 in one word, as we did the last years. Maybe we can describe 2015 as the year in which we worked hard to keep the fire burning for the HIV response for MSM and transgender people in Asia and the Pacific.

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A good example of this was the community-organised and-led regional PrEP consultation. We worked jointly with UNAIDS and WHO on this first ever regional community consultation. It was a huge recognition of APCOM’s ability to organise high profile events. The consultation ignited fierce discussions on barriers to integrate this new and innovative prevention method into the existing service delivery systems and HIV prevention toolkit, looking at it from all stakeholder perspectives and the community in particular. If the community doesn’t see the benefits and the prevention option, PrEP cannot be introduced and accepted successfully in Asia and the Pacific. As a result of the consultation, national consultations are held and PrEP roll-out plans are being developed in eight countries in the region.

With Global Fund support, we have been conducting trainings on finance, monitoring and evaluation and resource mobilisation for almost 300 community members in South Asia through the UNDP managed South Asia regional programme. The programme supported us as well in strengthening our own internal systems in many ways. And, last but not least, we have revamped our website to make it more engaging and informative, so please visit our new website to have a look.

2016 will be a tough year. Not just for APCOM but for all other community networks too as funding will become even more scarce. We do want to and need to continue our PrEP advocacy, our investment for MSM and transgender programming where it is truly community-led and community-centred approach is not being dropped out or forgotten, as it is the community and the community only which has the key in ending the HIV epidemic.

And we do see more positive developments. UNAIDS has developed the Fast Track Strategy to end AIDS by 2030 and the Global Fund board approved its new strategic framework for its 2017-2022 to maximise impact, strengthen systems for health, promote and protect human rights and gender equality, and mobilise additional and new resources for the fight against HIV and AIDS. And we should also mention PEPFAR 3.0 ‘Controlling the Epidemic: Delivering on the Promise of an AIDS-free Generation’, which is focused on transparency and accountability for impact, as well as accelerating core interventions for epidemic control. Our role as community coalition is to make sure that in all these new global frameworks the community-led and community-centred approach is not being dropped out or forgotten, as it is the community and the community only which has the key in ending the HIV epidemic.

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Welcome to APCOM’s 2015 Annual Update! We are pleased to present to you our results, highlights and challenges in 2015, as well as a sneak preview of what we intend to do in 2016.

Founded in 2007, we are a coalition of members – governments, UN partners, non-profits and community based organisations – from Asia and the Pacific. APCOM represent a diverse range of interests working together to advocate on, highlight and prioritise HIV issues that affect the lives of men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender (TG) people, including rights, health and well-being.

Our goal is to improve male sexual health through increased investment, coverage and quality of sexual health services for our communities. We aim to do so through 4 strategies:

- Advocate for sexual health services
- Advocate for an enabling environment
- Gather, generate & share strategic information
- Build a cadre of advocates at all levels

By informing and pressuring governments, decision makers and opinion leaders, we are generating positive, enduring change. We review and track the degree of inclusion of MSM, TG and HIV issues in the national AIDS plans for various countries. Further, we monitor the violation of MSM and transgender rights.

We work with MSM, transgender and HIV community networks and organisations by offering support and mentorship, and technical expertise. We also nurture and help grow supportive networks and perform a critical role of community liaison.

Finally, we advocate for qualitative research and extensive studies, which help policy makers and service providers in their work. As a community of excellence, we emphasise sharing data and insights to build capacity, knowledge and recognition. At our core, we are on a mission to shift attitudes and sensitise society to the needs of our diverse and vibrant community. Together, we are sharing knowledge and real-life stories that support and promote the sexual orientation and gender identity rights of MSM and transgender people.

We believe in collaboration. We have faith in ideas. And we advocate for change. We are focused on creating a world where MSM and transgender people live life fully, free of stigma and discrimination, a world where everyone is treated equally. Most of all, we believe in equity, dignity and social justice.
The HIV epidemic and response among MSM and transgender people in Asia and the Pacific

Unfortunately 2015 did not see a huge change in the course of the HIV epidemic and response in Asia and the Pacific. Quite the contrary, new alarming figures, especially among young people, were published. We will keep on repeating the latest extremely worrying figures and trends, as we do every year.
National HIV prevalence is estimated to be more than 5% for men who have sex with men in at least six countries (China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam), and continues to rise in several cities and regions within these countries and also in India, Mongolia and the Philippines.

Prevalence is particularly high — 15% to nearly 25% — in large urban areas including Bangkok, Hanoi and Jakarta hubs of new infections. Among others, in the Philippines, the number of reported HIV cases jumped from one per day in 2007 to thirteen by August 2013, with men who have sex with men accounting for ten of those thirteen cases. Many men who have sex with men are becoming infected at a young age, based on comparing the HIV prevalence of men who are aged less than and older than 25 surveyed at the same locations. Already in 2008 the Commission on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific stated that nearly 50% of all new HIV infections in 2020 "HIV prevalence among MSM in urban areas is much higher than that of the general population" in the Philippines.

Male sex workers are more likely to be infected than their female counterparts in the same cities, with an HIV prevalence as high as 18%. Among men who have sex with men in high prevalence countries, 6–20% buys sex from male sex workers. In countries where data are available, men who have sex with men reported up to six male sexual partners in the last six months. High proportions also have regular female partners (86% in China-Chengdu and Guangzhou, 64% in Indonesia and 49% in Viet Nam), and buy sex from women (6% in Mumbai and 14% in Hanoi) — all of which influences onward HIV transmission (UNAIDS, 2013).

MSM and transgender people are extremely vulnerable to get HIV, especially because of the human rights situation in the region. Nineteen of the forty eight countries in the region criminalize male to male sex and/or prostitution. MSM and transgender people are often subjected to police abuses, extortion, harassment, assault, detention and other human rights violations. The 2012 report from the Global Commission on HIV and the Law “Risks, Rights & Health” demonstrates clear evidence how human rights based laws can end an epidemic of bad laws and transform the global AIDS response, especially for key populations like MSM and transgender people. Unfortunately the situation has not changed much in the region since 2012.

Most worrying was the news that was released by the Asia-Pacific Inter-Agency Task Team on Young Key Populations, which includes UNICEF, UNAIDS and others for World AIDS Day late November. The Asia-Pacific region is facing a ‘hidden epidemic’ of HIV among adolescents. There were an estimated 50,000 new HIV infections among adolescents aged 15-19 in 2014, accounting for 15 per cent of new infections. There are now around 220,000 adolescents living with HIV in the region, with large cities like Bangkok, Hanoi and Jakarta hubs

Although the rate of new HIV infections is falling overall, they are rising among adolescents from key populations, in particular young gay men and other men who have sex with men. The rise in new infections coincides with an increase in risky behaviour, such as multiple sexual partners and inconsistent condom use. These findings come in a new report ‘Adolescents: Under the Radar in the Asia-Pacific AIDS Response’. It will not be possible to end the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030 without tackling the epidemic among adolescents.

The HIV burden among adolescents falls heaviest on ten countries in the region, which together account for 98 per cent of adolescents aged 10 to 19 living with HIV in Asia-Pacific. These are: Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Among countries where data are available, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines have the highest proportion of adolescents living with HIV, accounting for almost 10 per cent of total people living with HIV in each country. In the Philippines, new HIV infections among 15-19 year olds have risen by 50 per cent over four years, from an estimated 800 in 2010 to 1,210 in 2014. In South Asia, AIDS-related deaths among 10-19 year olds have almost quadrupled from around 1,500 in 2001 to 5,300 in 2014. In East Asia and the Pacific, deaths have increased from 1,000 to 1,300 over the same period.
The recommendations of the report included introducing funding transition plans to greater domestic investment, focusing resources where most new HIV infections occur, mainly in key populations, and protecting funding for civil society. While the report has a focus on national levels, the same applies to funding for the regional level.

And 2015 saw the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, as follow up from the Millennium Development Goals. SDG 3, the overarching goal on health issues includes a target on HIV and AIDS. Target 3.3 is "by 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases". To achieve the target means that in 2030 there will be zero HIV infections, zero HIV related deaths, zero HIV related discrimination, and all people who are living with HIV would have access to ART. There is more than enough evidence on what needs to be done to end HIV and AIDS by 2030 and reach the target, but much will depend on political and financial willingness to make it happen, especially in our region, but we will work hard to achieve this goal for our communities in the years to come.

"by 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases."
APCOM is championing TestXXX, a city-based HIV testing campaign in cities in the region with high HIV prevalence among young MSM. This year, TestBKK, the pilot TestXXX project targeting young MSM in Bangkok, has ended its second year with a bigger accomplishment than that of last year.
TestBKK, our community-led and sex-positive sexual health campaign, innovatively complements the already existing gay-friendly testing and counselling services in Bangkok. The campaign persuades more and more young MSM to go to the existing MSM-friendly clinics to take the test, and if tested positive, be supported by follow-up treatment, care and support. In partnership with community organisations, private and public sectors, the campaign has set a new standard for city-based testing models and is soon be rolled-out to other Asia Pacific cities with high HIV prevalence among young MSM.

What’s New on the Website

The campaign website, TestBKK.org, has served as an information gateway to guide young MSM in Bangkok to knowledge relating to HIV testing. It showcases comprehensive contact details of gay-friendly clinics in the city and information about what to expect when taking a HIV test and how to understand the result, along with knowledge on how to stay HIV negative. The website’s language is easy to understand. The use of technical jargon is kept to a minimum. The interface is easy to navigate.

With the breakthrough of PrEP roll out in several clinics and hospitals in Bangkok, TestBKK strived to fill in the information gap that might occur among the young MSM. TestBKK published a new section called “Hear about PrEP?” showcasing the questions and answers relating to PrEP, including where to access them. A PrEP 101 motion graphic video is expected to be launched in 2016 to make the section more engaging.

TestBKK understands the pervasive group sex among young gay men. Lots of condoms and lubes are certainly needed on the house. TestBKK’s Party Pack, with free delivery services to addresses in Bangkok, was launched as our new initiative. Containing 15 condoms and water-based lubricants, a pack of wet wipes, temporary tattoos and stickers, the Party Pack can be confidentially ordered through our website. 194 party pack has been dispersed in 2015.

Geo Social Applications’ Ads

TestBKK collaborated with Thailand’s popular gay dating mobile applications such as Hornet, Grindr and Jack’d to build healthier online communities and support in the prevention efforts for the Bangkok users. Over 2015, we promoted PrEP and the ASAP Survey through the apps. The ads reached more than 12K clicks.

Social Media Platforms

TestBKK understands that there are young MSM who cannot and will not be reached through conventional methods of offline community outreach. But they are very active and can be reached through mobile technologies like social media platforms and online/mobile dating apps. Along with the abovementioned campaign videos, the campaign produced tailor made messaging that would suit the current age of digital social networking among young audiences via Facebook and YouTube.

Geo Social Applications’ Ads

The Annual Sex and Pleasure (ASAP) Survey is conducted by the University of Amsterdam, Mahidol University and APCOM to provide a snapshot of behaviour, perceptions of risk and sexual intention among gay men during the Songkran (Thai New Year) festival. The analysis of the survey will allow APCOM to strengthen sexual health interventions and campaigns in future festival periods.

Thank you for the new information (on PrEP). It is interesting [It’s] just one pill a day. Gay men nowadays take beauty vitamins like crazy, adding one more pill is surely not a burden. [PrEP] is a fascinating option!

Call me the non-traditional, but I never like one-on-one intercourse. The more the merrier! TestBKK’s Party Pack was a breakthrough for me, considering I always host an orgy and, when I don’t have enough condoms and lube, I am too lazy to get out to buy the new ones. And not all of my guests always bring their own condoms.
Encouraging Testing

On World AIDS Day, we were proud to launch a new partnership with the UK-based Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF). The funding granted by EJAF will make it possible for APCOM to continue and expand the TestXXX-campaign for the next three years in Bangkok and other cities in Asia.

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Songkran 2015 gCircuit Intervention

On April 10-12, the TestBKK team collaborated with gCircuit - Asia’s largest gay circuit party that takes place annually in Bangkok. This year’s gCircuit saw approximately 10,000 - 15,000 gay men from all over Asia attending up to five different parties over a three-day period. In order to ensure safe sexual health among the partygoers, TestBKK delivered a highly visible intervention campaign within the party venues. An interactive booth was erected in the evening parties, equipped with staff and campaign promotion crew who managed to hand out 25,000 condoms and water-based lubricants, 185 Party Packs, and more than 10K sexual health materials and memorabilia such as HTC referral cards, waterproof pouches, face towels, badges and hand fans.

To learn more about TestBKK, download TestBKK's Highlight publication.

The TestBKK booth [in gCircuit party] has encouraged me to take an HIV-test at the gay-friendly clinic once the party days were over.
To strengthen advocacy capacity of community organisations APCOM aims to improve, and build on an organisation’s existing management structures and advocacy work, while encouraging ongoing community leadership for a community-led HIV response. Through the Jumpstart Initiative, APCOM serves as a catalyst for regional, sub-regional and national networks to explore core competencies that they can build on and, at the same time, to explore skills development that the networks may require to solidify their advocacy work and efforts.
APCOM's JumpStart is our flagship capacity strengthening programme for community organisations. We work to improve, and build on an organisation’s existing management and advocacy, while encouraging leadership for a community-led HIV response. The project serves as well as a catalyst for regional, sub-regional and national networks to explore their core competencies that they can build on and, at the same time, explore skill development areas that they still need. JumpStart started as a partnership of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) and APCOM.

JumpStart developed two unique tools to assess the network or organisation:

The Rapid Assessment Apparatus
A scoring tool which assesses a community organisation in its operations and performance against programmatic and organisational criteria.

The Dissemination Plan Template
A tool to assist community organisations to use the available strategic information in doing more systematic and planned advocacy.

As a result, the programme provided a core package of support to 15 partners working at regional/sub-regional/country city levels. This included:

1. Grants – providing partners with financial support, ranging from AUD 5,000 – 45,000.
2. RapApp – working with partners to implement the JumpStart Rapid Assessment Tool, a self-assessment of their organisation’s capacity.
3. Key strategic information – providing and supporting partners’ dissemination and translation of key information resources on HIV, MSM and transgender issues produced by APCOM, AFAO and other agencies. This process was supported through the use of the JumpStart Dissemination Template (D-Plate) with partners.
4. Stakeholder visits – supporting partners to meet and have strategic discussions with key external stakeholders, such as from donors, the government, civil society or United Nations agencies.

In some contexts, JumpStart complemented the core package with further support:

- Additional strategic information – supporting partners to conduct consultations or community-based research to gather specific evidence and produce resources.
- Specific activities – supporting partners to produce Advocacy Agendas, or to hold community mobilisation or capacity building events.

With some partners, JumpStart complemented the core package with further support related to: researching or producing additional community-led strategic information materials; conducting specific activities, such as community mobilisation, capacity building or advocacy activities; and producing advocacy agendas.

The programme was evaluated and the following results were found:

- JumpStart was a strategic and logical initiative considering the HIV context in Asia and the Pacific, the needs of MSM and transgender organisations and the stage in development of APCOM.
- If evaluated as a pilot project, JumpStart performed well and made strong progress towards its stated goal and objectives, with concrete results at all levels.
- A key strength of JumpStart was its systematic approach to capacity building (based on a well-conceived package of support) combined with straightforward project management.
- A further key strength of JumpStart was its peer-based and partnership approach, based on strong interpersonal communication.
- JumpStart was a vital initiative for APCOM. It enabled the organisation to build expertise in technical support provision and advocacy; learn in greater detail the needs and dynamics of its constituency; strengthen its relationships with direct project partners; and build its credibility and profile among civil society in Asia and the Pacific.
- JumpStart produced invaluable lessons learned that should be incorporated into the future work of APCOM/ AFAO and others working in this field.
- There remains a large and growing need for JumpStart. However, in the future, it will be important to learn from the programme’s pilot phase and to focus-on in on how best to achieve impact and support sustainability among MSM and transgender organisations and networks.

In Cambodia and Indonesia, under JumpStart initiative, APCOM organised Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) on the engagements of the MSM and transgender community with the Global Fund country processes for in total 28 participants.

In The Philippines, we held Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) on the engagements of the MSM and transgender community with the Global Fund country processes for in total 23 participants. While on a first glance these numbers might not seem very high, it is for many community leaders and representatives a steep learning process on how to access and deal with large and complex funding processes as from the Global Fund.

JumpStart ended at the end of September 2015, although we are carrying on with the work and are looking for new funders for the programme. The evaluation also recommended that a next phase of Jumpstart should be developed – a phase that focuses on providing more intensive support and achieving more tangible outcomes, in both advocacy and programming, with fewer partners.
Amongst of all the technical support activities to strengthen networks, JumpStart is the project that leads to opportunities for BC to be a strong and functional Network. JumpStart applies an assessment tool to measure the strong points and the weak points of BC, which are important for us to record the points to concentrate on.

- Bandanh Chaktomok Board

JumpStart is a useful initiative to strengthen and build the capacity of the members of Vietnam Network of MSM and Transgender through bridging us access to government and policy makers. This project will not only strengthen our network but also create future partnerships with other regional networks.

- Bao Huy Vu, President of the Executive Committee, VNMSMTG

Download the regional analysis reports on the capacity assessment of Asia-Pacific’s MSM and transgender organisations and networking.
APCOM strives to improve the development and availability of evidence-informed strategic information that can also strengthen advocacy messages. Year 2015 witnessed numerous evidence-informed PrEP advocacy activities, initiatives and roll out in various countries around the globe, and APCOM stepped up to the plate to kickstart the PrEP roll out in Asia by conducting the region’s first and biggest community-led PrEP consultation, PrEParing Asia.
Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) presents an important game-changing intervention that can complement existing HIV prevention tools. WHO recommends PrEP as an important intervention and for example the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend PrEP for HIV negative people at high risk of HIV exposure, such as gay men who have anal sex without condoms.

APCOM was keen to expand its work on PrEP advocacy, given the new WHO Guidelines, the possibilities this new intervention tool brings and APCOM’s own strategic goals. It is a tool that could have a huge impact on the HIV epidemic in the communities that we work for. APCOM organised therefore a regional consultation on PrEP roll-out, as the first community-led PrEP meeting in the world. The “PrEParing Asia”-regional consultation was organised in Bangkok, Thailand from 23-25 September 2015. The consultation saw 120 people gathering to discuss the overall objective of the consultation: explore the viability and application of PrEP for men who have sex with men in the Asian context. During 3 days, MSM and other stakeholders explored a range of concerns and issues. The consultation delivered a wide range of recommendations, conclusions and take-home messages. The main ones are listed below:

- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is efficacious, and has the real potential to help global and local efforts to reach prevention targets. PrEP is especially useful for MSM, and especially indicated for those at highest risk, such as young MSM and those unable to use condoms consistently with all partners. PrEP is more than a daily pill: PrEP services include kidney screening, regular HIV testing, adherence support, and screening for STIs and side effects.

- Globally and in Asia, PrEP real-life demonstration projects confirm the efficacy found in clinical trials, and show that PrEP uptake and adherence is best among those men who benefit most from PrEP. PrEP both requires and enables regular HIV testing, and as such is the gateway to the strategy of ‘test and treat, test and prevent.’

- MSM in Asia are ready to consider PrEP as a prevention option. PrEP users appreciate the empowerment PrEP provides and the reduced anxiety about sex and intimacy it brings. However, awareness about PrEP is very low and questions exist about effectiveness, safety and side effects. Cost is low in some countries (30 Baht/day in Thailand), but is highly variable and presents a significant barrier to some, including young men.

- HIV service providers are ready to recommend and provide PrEP to MSM. Experiences of service providers in current pilot projects are positive, and interest is especially high among community based service providers to incorporate PrEP into existing MSM services.

- To scale up PrEP pilot projects into the national health system, countries need to consider relevant health system components. This includes task shifting and capacity building of service providers; positioning of PrEP in other (HIV) services; public-private partnerships with community based services, and financing of PrEP in the context of universal health coverage programs.

- National AIDS programme managers are aware and interested to include PrEP into the national HIV prevention strategy, and several countries are implementing or planning demonstration services. Opportunities exist for incorporating PrEP into strategies for meeting the new global targets for prevention (zero new infections) and treatment (90-90-90), and linking prevention (PrEP) and treatment (TasP) with (community based) HIV testing and counselling as a common entry point. Additional costs of PrEP need to be covered with additional resource mobilisation, but PrEP cost-effectiveness can be increased through generic drugs, effective targeting men at highest risk, and community-based service delivery models.
MSM community and service organisations are ready and actively supporting PrEP roll out in countries like China, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand. Local LGBT and male sexual health organisations have a key role in advocating for and rolling out PrEP for MSM. PrEP has catalysed a new activism among MSM communities. But the notion of MSM “communities” is vague, and male sexual health platforms have varying priorities. For awareness raising and advocacy, early PrEP adopters may be crucial. Next steps in the region is country-level PrEP roll out planning, where possible, and PrEP advocacy where needed. The consultation delivered 8 country specific roll out plans. MSM communities will have a key role in supporting not only the increased awareness about PrEP and creating demand, but will need to be able to support people to take it safely – stressing the need to adherence and monitoring.

The consultation looked in-depth at advocacy strategies for national PrEP advocates. PrEP advocacy has a role before introduction of services, but also during service delivery. As long as key stakeholders are not ready for PrEP, community advocates need to work on awareness and demand creation. Also during the roll out of PrEP services, policy dialogue remains necessary in order to improve quality and accessibility of services. Advocacy needs to influence attitudes of those making decisions, for example those making guidelines and strategies, those who allocate resources, and importantly MSM themselves.

Key issues for PrEP advocacy are to increase awareness amongst all stakeholders, and to increase demand among those who benefit from PrEP. One advocacy issue for service providers is their lack of knowledge and enthusiasm about PrEP. Another advocacy issue for the health sector is stigma within health settings. Not all health workers are comfortable discussing sex and sexuality, including risk behaviours, in an open, sex positive and non-judgmental manner. As always, good data and evidence is a key resource for advocacy. The evidence base needs to be build further by and for the community, using international and local research. Possible topics are community needs, gather local evidence and what uptake might look like in a specific setting.

Overall, APCOM and supporting partners can look back at a very successful consultation and with many action points to follow-up in the New Year to make sure that PrEP will find its place in the HIV prevention toolkit for MSM in the region. A next step will be the roll-out in eight countries of national PrEP advocacy strategies.
**Publication/Fact Sheet**

**Assumptions and Principles of HIV Prevention and Care Programming for MSM and Transgender People in Asia and the Pacific.**

A scoping paper that looks critically and strategically at the current landscape of MSM and transgender programming, identifies and analyses the key assumptions which lie behind the core principles underpinning HIV programming for MSM and transgender people; and provides recommendations on other assumptions that are not yet studied and could have potential positive outcomes at the programming level.

**From Principles to Practice: A tool to help understand assumptions that lie behind the work with MSM and Transgender people.**

Building on the key principles and underlying assumptions identified in the “Assumptions and Principles of HIV Prevention and Care Programming for MSM and Transgender People in Asia and the Pacific” (see above), this tool will help organisations that work with MSM and transgender people to understand assumptions that underpin their work and comprehend key advocacy areas to pursue.

**Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) 101.**

An online information sheet containing crisp, easy-to-understand questions and answers regarding PrEP, accompanied by snackable memes visualising the benefit of PrEP.

**A Capacity Assessment of Regional, Sub-Regional and National MSM and Transgender Networks in Asia and the Pacific.**

A series of infographics showcasing the result of JumpStart in assessing the programmatic and organisational strengths and needs of APCOM’s community network partners at a given time.

**Video**

**Discussing PrEP with Experts and a PrEP user.**

A series of interviews on the efficacy, the roll out and the use of PrEP with experts Dr Chris Beyrer (International AIDS Society) and Dr Nittaya Phanuphak (Thai Red Cross Anonymous Clinic), as well as a PrEP user.

**What Do People Think about PrEP.**

A vox pop video on what the PrEP advocates think about the breakthrough medication in just a few words.

**Turning the Corner: Interviews with Community Advocates.**

Interviews with South Asian community advocates of MSA partners and the trainer of Turning the Corner, a resource mobilisation skills workshop on the landscape of resource mobilisation and sustainability among LGBT and HIV networks in South Asia.
Conferences/Workshops/Panels and Presentations

Workshop on the Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Promoting and Protecting the Rights, Including Health, of LGBTI People in Asia and the Pacific.

Co-organised with UNPD and APP, the workshop gathers representatives from national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society groups from across Asia and the Pacific to conclude with a call for greater efforts to advance the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in the region. Within the workshop, APCOM presented ‘Successes and Challenges Faced by LGBTI Communities in Engaging with NHRIs’, a map of advocacy activities curated from a survey of LGBTI people in 22 Asia-Pacific countries.

The UN Reports & Resolutions: A maze of useful tools for advancing human rights of LGBTI persons in Asia.

As part of the 2015 ILGA Asia Conference, this session comprised presentations and discussions on whether or not UN reports and resolutions can provide an effective platform for the community advocates in advancing the basic rights of marginalised LGBT communities in Asia.

Christianity, Sexual Diversity and Access to Health.

As part of the 2015 ILGA Asia Conference, this session encompassed presentations and discussions on intersecting issues of Christianity, sexual diversity and access to sexual healthcare services. Topics discussed included viewpoints from Abrahamic scriptures followed by Christian religion and religious groups that oppose and support LGBTIQ people, and collaborations between LGBTIQ and HIV civil society organisations and Christian groups in Asia.

TestBKK’s Highlight for Young HIV Campaigner across Asia.

Part of the “HIV intervention” side event of 2015 ILGA Asia Conference and presented bilingually in English and Chinese, TestBKK shared the innovation behind the campaign in increasing the uptake of HIV testing among young MSM in Bangkok.

Delivering an Effective Community-Led HIV Testing Campaign.

A health campaign skill building presentation modelled after the community-led approach of TestBKK, presented at the 2015 AIDS Impact Conference in Amsterdam.

TestBKK’s Contribution to the Thai Ministry of Public Health’s ‘Strategically Planning on Safe Sex Awareness Activity’ Workshop.

A session in which TestBKK shared the success and challenges of the campaign in terms of reaching gay men at higher risk and the importance of tailored and targeted materials for specific sub-populations.

Sucking the Lessons out of TestBKK.

A workshop on developing a digital change-for-cause campaign, modelled after TestBKK’s online intervention, for 12 young volunteers in the UNFPA-IPPF South Asia Capacity Building Workshop for Young Activists in Bangkok.
Building Leadership

APCOM supports the development of a future generation of change-makers by providing guidance and support to Youth Voices Count (YVC), a youth initiative led by young MSM and young transgender people.
The second workshop of the IGNITE!-mentorship programme took place from 2–6 November in Bangkok, Thailand. The training workshop was the second level of capacity building for the mentees and was a follow-up from the first workshop held in June. The workshop also peer-assessed the work plans of the small scale projects of the trainees which were drafted and finalized between the first workshop and the second workshop. The second workshop also provided an opportunity to discuss with the mentors the support required for the implementation of the small scale projects especially in terms of transferring of funds, monitoring the implementation and finances and reporting requirements.

Other sessions during the training workshop were on leadership, monitoring & reporting, policy advocacy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The session on leadership had the aim to have the participants discover which leadership qualities they already have and also to identify the qualities they need to cultivate as emerging leaders. The session also included activities on public speaking and persuasive skills which are necessary in advocacy.

Download our YVC Call for Action

APCOM invests in leadership building by working with the regional youth network Youth Voices Count. 2015 brought about another chapter for YVC with the launch of the IGNITE!-mentorship Programme for young MSM and young transgender women in Asia-Pacific. This program will address the current gaps in capacity building for young MSM and young transgender persons, strengthen their skills and knowledge, and build a cadre of young leaders for the HIV movement in Asia and the Pacific. The programme started with 10 mentees from as many countries from the region, including countries where we didn’t have any presence before like Bhutan.

The concept of the programme was developed in consultation with the Core Working Group of Youth Voices Count which consists of 5 members who represent the five sub-regions in Asia Pacific. A steering committee was established with representatives from regional partners including AFAO, APN+, APTN, Save the Children, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, and Youth LEAD who all provided technical inputs to the programme. As a result of an intense selection process 10 mentees were selected out of 120 applications for the mentorship program representing all sub regions in Asia and Pacific.

One of the criteria was to select young MSM with a passion to be leaders who do not have the capacity yet to engage in leadership processes. Therefore the selected mentees are relatively new to the community movement and have different levels of affiliations and associations with existing LGBT organisations in their countries. A mentor was selected for every mentee from their own country to support the leadership training process.

The first workshop of the IGNITE!-mentorship programme took place from 15th – 19th of June in Bangkok, Thailand. The purpose of the first workshop was to provide the mentees with basic knowledge on human rights, gender, sexuality, media and communications, effective interventions for young MSM and young transgender people, and develop work plans for in-country work.

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And as a result YVC is gaining traction in strengthening the youth voice in the HIV response in the region. YVC engaged heavily in the Intergovernmental meeting (IGM) on HIV in Asia and Pacific and was also involved in the youth caucus and the civil society pre-meeting prior to the IGM. YVC also took part in the writing committee of the civil society statement to the Global Fund partnership forum in 2015. Two YVC members attended the Global fund Partnership forum. During the IGNITE first and second workshop under human rights and policy advocacy the UPR process was discussed and the mentees (who are YVC members) were actively engaged in exploring how to engage with the UPR country processes in their respective countries. We hope to see results on this in 2016 and 2017 when some countries are up for review.
Transgender-Specific Activities

APCOM is proud to be at the forefront of sexual health advocacy for transgender individuals, along with other trans advocates in the region. We have been consistent in calling for the removal of laws that marginalise transgender people, and the creation of legal environments conducive to their well-being and protection.
Scoping Discussion to Improve the Well-being of Transgender Populations

Since 2014, we’ve been stimulating small pilot community-led HIV projects in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Vietnam and Yangon, Myanmar, to look specifically and address the situation, challenges and issues for transgender people in HIV, health, and human rights.

In Vietnam, data on the health and well-being of transgender people is limited. A few local studies have included transgender populations, but only as a small subgroup within broader studies aimed at the MSM or LGBTI communities. Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) is one of the most popular internal migration destinations for transgender women in Vietnam, hosting an estimated population of between 2,000 and 3,000 transgender women. There are no recent data on HIV prevalence in the city’s transgender population, but the prevalence among MSM in HCMC is almost tripled between 2006 and 2009, rising from 5.3% to 14.8%.

The scoping discussion with the trans communities in HCMC and Yangon generated the following suggestions of action points that will better orientate APCOM’s trans-related initiatives:

- Build the capacity of transgender organisations, including capacity building in leadership, organisational development, community mobilisation, peer and community-based service delivery, advocacy, and the use of transgender-sensitive language. Transgender groups also need to look within themselves to ensure there is no discrimination against transgender people living with HIV and those working in sex work, and in working with the wider LGBTI community.
- Work closely with other local, national and regional civil society organisations.
- Increase provision of and improve access to trans-specific appropriate HIV and sexual health, such as integration of HIV testing centres that provide hormone injections as well as advice and counselling on sexual reassignment surgery.
- Create an enabling environment for transgender people’s health and well-being, in which transgender identity is legally recognized, access of trans people to legal information and services is ensured.
- Sensitive the society and reduce the systematic discrimination towards trans people so that the employment rate and school uptake among trans people will be increased. A major part of this will be done through building relationships with policy makers, and ensuring they know the challenges transgender people are facing in everyday life.
- Develop, utilise and disseminate strategic information that specifically benefits trans people.
- Mobilise resources for transgender groups and transgender specific health and HIV services.

Peer-Led Youth Transgender Empowerment

Under our Youth Voices Count’s ‘IGNITE Mentorship’ programme, we supported the following youth transgender-oriented projects:

- Transgender safety committees in schools in Mumbai – India
  This small-scale project aims to develop transgender safety committees in three selected schools as a pilot in Mumbai India. The transgender safety committees will function as complaint bodies for any violence or harassment transgender students face in the school setting and will also look into adapting policies within the school to create an enabling learning environment for transgender students. The project will initially assess the administration of each school on the challenges, difficulties, violence and harassments transgender students face and will also conduct several awareness sessions for schools prefects, presidents of different associations and organisations in the school and students in general.

- Transgender Men handbook on transitioning – Indonesia
  The trans men handbook that will be developed will consist of information and guidance especially for trans men on transitioning, hormonal treatments and identity documents changing. As trans men also face multiple layers of stigma and discrimination, this would be a very first attempt to establish a standard guideline for trans men to complete their transition systematically. This pilot handbook could then be adapted to any other context accordingly.

- Transgender Youth Mobilisation – Fiji
  In the Pacific, mobilising transgender youth to actively engage in community activities and the rights movement is still a challenge. Several activities will be carried out to encourage more transgender youth to actively engage in community activities. These activities mainly involve several focus group discussions and a video that will disseminate positive and encouraging messages targeting young transgender people.

Download our latest policy brief on HIV and rights of transgender people in Asia and the Pacific.
Engaging with the Global Fund

APCOM has been partnering with the Global Fund and UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub to strengthen community organisations across South Asia under the Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme (MSA)
Since 2011, APCOM has been partnering with The Global Fund against HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) as a regional Sub-Recipient of the MSA. MSA is a regional HIV Programme operating in seven countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The overall goal of the Programme is to reduce the impact of, and vulnerability to, HIV of men who have sex with men (MSM), hijras and transgender people through Community Systems Strengthening (CSS). In Afghanistan, the programme focuses on HIV prevention services for men with high-risk behaviour. The technical assistance and advisory of UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub, which acts as Principal Recipient of the grant, has been significantly helpful in assisting APCOM to conduct the CSS activities under the Programme.

The Programme, currently in its second phase, is supported by a $16.7 million grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and has run since 2013. The Programme promotes and protects the rights of key populations of MSM and transgender people and is building a foundation to ensure that regional and country-level community networks continue to be an essential partner in the HIV response. It focuses on strengthening community systems to improve coordination with local governments and health care providers, deliver concentrated and quality capacity development support, and provide strategic information and technical assistance to ensure high intervention impact and sustainability.

Ensuring the Quality of the Knowledge Products
APCOM hosted the inaugural APCOM South Asia Strategic Information Advisors (ASASIA) meeting. The advisory group consists of a group of regional experts with experience in policy, research, program development and organisational management. Also in attendance were key members from APCOM Management and UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub. The role of ASASIA is to function as a peer review for all the knowledge generated under the Multi-Country South Asia (MSA) Global Fund HIV Programme, including knowledge products, research studies, strategic plans, etc. Additionally, ASASIA will contribute to the achievement of APCOM’s core mandate on development of strategic information and explore opportunities to strengthen Strategic Information beyond the Programme.

Covering seven south Asian countries, initiated two multi-city studies in partnership with UNDP on 7 City Scan on HIV services for MSM & TG population and Sexual violence against MSM & TG population, both the studies are under progress and the findings and final report will be launched in 2016. under progress and the findings and final report will be launched in 2016.

Turning the Corner
APCOM’s workshop on resource mobilisation and sustainability which directly benefited 29 community members and further supported to 25 CBOs in finalising their organisational specific Resource Mobilisation Plans. According to pre- and post-test evaluations, 90% of the participants have increased their resource mobilisation knowledge. Using the same module, the country SRs conducted similar type of training for their downstream CBOs which helped approximately 235 community members to develop skill and knowledge on resource mobilisation.

Cultivating PrEP Knowledge and Advocacy
Thirteen PrEP advocates from the SR partners were funded to attend the regional PrEParing Asia consultation. Following the consultation, these PrEP advocates committed themselves to conduct follow up actions to promote PrEP to their peers – in and/or outside their own hometowns. While some of these initiatives were taken up on a small scale, some advocates were ambitious and opted for large scale projects. At the time of writing of this annual report, the number of community members educated by these 13 advocates subsequent to the consultation had reached to 475 individuals across India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Learn more about their initiatives here.

Advancing Communities’ Monitoring and Evaluation Skills
A Monitoring and Evaluation Regional Workshop, a three-day workshop to improve South Asian community advocates’ organisational skills on monitoring and evaluation (M&E), was conducted to develop indicators to measure their progress on their advocacy, communications and social mobilization. The workshop was conducted in Bangkok on October 18-20 with 24 incumbent/potential M&E staff members from CBOs across six countries. According to pre- and post-test evaluations, 85% of the participants have increased their M&E knowledge, with aggregate assessment scores rising from 4.8 to 6.3. Following up on the workshop, APCOM’s very own M&E officer continued the support to the 13 CBOs in drafting their own M&E plans.

Ensuring the Quality of the Knowledge Products
Improving the Communities’ Resource Mobilisation and Sustainability Skills
Cultivating PrEP Knowledge and Advocacy
Advancing Communities’ Monitoring and Evaluation Skills

Download the report of our Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme-funded Resource Mobilisation workshop.

Download the report of our Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme-funded Monitoring and Evaluation workshop.
Shining a Light: Amplifying Community Voices

We strive to build and strengthen information and knowledge sharing related to HIV issues for MSM and transgender persons across Asia and the Pacific.
Karma Dupchen (Bhutan)

Karma, the creator of LGBT Bhutan, Bhutan’s first ever Facebook page dedicated to spreading awareness about LGBT community. Karma recalls his journey from growing up alienated in Bhutan to working with the LGBT community and now hoping to transform LGBT Bhutan into an organisation that provides mental health and peer monitoring.

Meghna Lagan (Nepal)

Meghna, a transgender woman, shares with us her extraordinary journey from opening her own restaurant that caters for LGBTI, to being a famous model, as well as being a community advocate with the Blue Diamond Society.

Elly Hazri Mustaffa (Malaysia)

Elly, a transgender woman working for mySEAN (Malaysian MSM and Transgender Women National Network) shares with us her experiences of stigma and discrimination, and her passion to advocate for the rights of transgender people and MSM.

Tamani Rama (Fiji)

Tamani, a young transgender queer woman who works at the Rainbow Pride Foundation Fiji, reflects on her gender and sexual expression, and what it is like being a transgender person in the Pacific Islands.

Daina (India)

Daina tells us her stories about the hardship and her life as a former sex worker, her struggle with depression, her dreams of being a model, and her advocacy work with community-based organisation GAURAV.

Lhak-Sam (BNP+) (Bhutan)

Lhak-Sam (BNP+) is the first and only network of HIV positive people in Bhutan that promotes and provides leadership, education and capacity building for PLHIV.

The Humsafar Trust, (India)

Humsafar Trust (HST) manages six projects on HIV prevention, care, support and treatment, reaching out to more than 9,000 MSM and transgender people in the Mumbai metro area.

Intan Life Zone, Johor (Malaysia)

Starting as a community organisation focusing on harm reduction among PWID, Intan Life Zone has expanded its work to provide HIV and STI testing and counselling to young MSM in Johor area.

Khawaja Sira Society (Pakistan)

Khawaja Sira Society (KSS) is Pakistan’s first and largest transgender community organisation. Their work ranges from the VCT and literacy programmes among the trans community to advocacy towards the government.

Empowering the Powerless in Pakistan

Naz Male Health Alliance (NMHA) is the first MSM and transgender community organisation in Pakistan, and has been providing technical, financial and institutional support for the community members throughout the country.
**Highlight**
We showcase good practices within the community work.

**TestBKK | Suck. F*#k. Test. Repeat.**
The Highlight summarizes the behind-the-scene of TestBKK, APCOM’s community-led and sex-positive sexual health campaign that innovatively complements the already existing gay-friendly testing and counselling services in Bangkok in increasing the uptake of testing among young MSM.

**Reflection Stories**
We reflect on the community events we engage at.

**My IGM Experience: The Mongolian Perspective.**
Myagmardorj D., Executive Director of Youth for Health in Mongolia, reflects on the challenges faced in Mongolia and the advocacy strategies explored at the 2015 Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on HIV and AIDS.

**My IGM Experience: A Young Pakistani Perspective.**
Dr. Muhammad Moiz, the YVC member from Pakistan, reflects on his experience at the 2015 Intergovernmental Meeting, and theorizes on how approaching regional discussion and cooperation through a Muslim platform might encourage more progressive thinking within Muslim national governments.

**PrEP in the Eyes of a Young Thai Gay Man.**
Apiwitti Tibumrung (Em), APCOM’s campaign officer, reflects on his experience on the TestBKK’s social media campaign and his own learning experience on PrEP over the past two years.

**My IDAHOT 2015 Experience: A Heterosexual Perspective**
Paul, a heterosexual ally who served as a co-president of a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) of an international high school in Bangkok, reflects on his motivations for setting up his own GSA club and how he thinks the IDAHOT 2015 event in Thailand is an excellent way to bring forth (increase) awareness among to the Thai community.

**PrEParing Pakistan, One Young MSM at a Time.**
Sarmad Ali, YVC member from Pakistan, reflects on how much he has learnt from attending PrEPARING ASIA and shares his enthusiasm for greater PrEP advocacy for Pakistani young MSM.

**After the Rain, Comes the Rainbow?**
Safir Soeparna, APCOM’s media & communications officer, reflects on his participation in two of Asia’s largest LGBT rights events: the 2015 ILGA Asia Conference and the Taiwan LGBT Pride.
In 2015, APCOM started a process to change its governance structure from a sub-regional representative board to a board based on skills and merits. The process to reform our board, now called Regional Advisory Group, was completed in December 2015 with the appointment of 4 new members. We will present our new board early in 2016.

With the complete reformation of our governance structure we also redefined and documented all manuals and procedures to reflect the changes and further professionalise the processes in place. New publications include the APCOM Governance manual and a special RAG manual for RAG members. The APCOM board met twice in 2015. The 9th ExCo meeting was held in Indonesia on the 11th and 12th of September and the 10th ExCo meeting was held on the 16th of December in Bangkok, Thailand.

With the vanishing funding, we worked hard to strengthen our resource mobilisation strategies.

A donation page on our website and a fundraising brochure called “On the Ground” were finally set up and disseminated as broadly as possible. A networking reception for our current and potential partners, supporters and donors, called APCOM GALA: Shining a Light, was organised right before Christmas. The idea is to have the gala return as an annual event. We envisage that these additional tools will increasingly support APCOM’s programmatic, institutional and financial sustainability.
We are united in our courage to advocacy issues that affect the lives of men who have sex with men and transgender people, including HIV, rights, health and well being.