Hello friends welcome to another issue of The Desk at CVC!

In this issue we’re taking a quick look at some of the activities since the last issue. The team and our partners had a fruitful trip to the AIDS 2018 Global conference in Amsterdam. It was a great opportunity to share with and learn from global stakeholders who are at the forefront of the HIV response. CVC was also well represented at the Caribbean Broadcasting Union’s 49th General Assembly in Kingston. The coalition sponsored and presented two awards for coverage of HIV related issues.

We continued our various programmatic interventions and advocacy work during the period including capacity building workshops for our partners.

As we come to the end of another Global Fund project year, let us reflect on all the progress we’ve made and the fruits of our hard work. It is also an exciting time for the organization as we work together to strategize for the next few years and embrace the remarkable responsibility of transition to Principal Recipient. We also take this opportunity to welcome the new members of our team in the Project Management Unit. Together we will be able to achieve everything we set out to in order to improve the lives of the most marginalized among us throughout the Caribbean.
CVC CONDUCTS CAPACITY TRAINING FOR PARTNERS

The training was well received by all the participants, with 100% rating the training as very useful in their work. Almost perfect ratings were also received for the workshop content, sessions and facilitators.

On July 12 & 13 2018, CVC organized a Grants Management Training under the Global Fund Grant ‘Challenging stigma and discrimination to improve access to and quality of HIV services in the Caribbean.’ The training was part of the Projects Capacity Development initiative and was co-facilitated by CVC Grants Management Officer Dionne Thompson and UNDP Programme Manager Paula Ghrist. The training, held in Guyana, was attended by mini-grantees and sub-sub-recipients working with people living with HIV (PLWHIV), transgender persons, men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers and other key populations. The purpose of this training was to build the confidence, skills, competencies and efficiencies of those responsible for managing the grant and to satisfy the financial terms and conditions for implementing the programs. The training was well received by all the participants, with 100% rating the training as very useful in their work. Almost perfect ratings were also received for the workshop content, sessions and facilitators, as well as the mixture of theory and practice.
Through funding from the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF), the Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network - JYAN was selected by the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities as the entity charged with the responsibility of addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of marginalized adolescents and youth in Jamaica. JYAN identified a cohort of 25 young persons who benefitted from a series of intensive workshops which focused on the areas of Advocacy and Social Media, Human Rights and Legal Literacy and Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness respectively. The issue of safe spaces for young people was also discussed.

The Caribbean LGBTI Leadership Academy hosted its second cohort of the “Building LGBT Leaders from the Inside Out” residential training session in Trinidad from August 15-18. The sessions focused on helping LGBT community leaders hone their transformational leadership skills. Some of the themes explored during the four-day training were: Sex, Gender and Power; Strategies for Change and Advocacy Planning.
CVC at CBU

CVC participated in the Caribbean Broadcasting Union’s 49th General Assembly where a booth was setup to allow CVC staff members to interact with media stakeholders from across the Caribbean and other dignitaries who came through the event. During the event’s Opening Ceremony Jamaica’s Prime Minister, the Most Honorable Andrew Holness visited the CVC booth where he reiterated the importance of and pledged his support for the work that the coalition is doing.

Coverage of HIV related issues is extremely important to the fight against the disease in the region. That is why the coalition sponsored and presented awards for the coverage of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support. Congratulations to the Great Belize Production Company for winning the main award in the category.
The International AIDS Conference is the largest conference on any global health issue in the world. The AIDS 2018 theme was “Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges”. The conference promoted human rights based and evidence-informed HIV responses that are tailored to the needs of particularly vulnerable communities. These communities include people living with HIV, displaced populations, men who have sex with men, people in closed settings, people who use drugs, sex workers, transgender people, women and girls and young people. The conference also provided a safe space for people who are working within the global response to come together and share their success stories, strategies, challenges as well as data that informed the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in their respective countries. CVC’s Shared Incident Database Coordinator Marlon Thompson was one of many presenters from the region. His presentation focused on the coalition’s monitoring and reporting mechanism to strengthen community activism and address Human Rights Violation. “The Desk @ CVC” caught up with Marlon to hear more about his trip.

The Desk: What was it like putting together your Amsterdam presentation?
MT: Putting together my presentation on the Shared Incident Database was very interesting as I was tasked with representing this very dynamic human rights documentation platform and the wider community social justice programme in a 10 minutes presentation. This wasn’t easy, but I think I represented the key areas of the programme well.
The Desk: How did you prepare to make such an important presentation in front of a global audience?
MT: I have never presented on such an international stage and the thought of that made me very nervous. As a strategy to shake off my nervousness, I focused on learning best practices from the various presenters while constantly reviewing my presentation as it came closer to my time to present.

The Desk: What were some of the major points in your presentation?
MT: My presentation looked mostly at the Shared Incident Database (SID), which is the first regional civil society-led human rights monitoring mechanism that records, analyses and exchanges information on rights violations. It facilitates comprehensive data collection through standardized intake procedures which enhance the capacity of KPs and CSOs to document rights breaches and enables data sharing, to support redress or engagement with policy, public health and legal decision-makers. Clients’ identifiable details are only visible at an organizational level and there are varied data access levels within an organization’s profile. At an organizational, national and regional level the database generates non-identifiable aggregated data with geographic identifiers. The database is linked to redress opportunities such as Cari-bono which is a network of lawyers around the Caribbean who will be offering pro-bono services for documented cases and community paralegals. As a result of improved community monitoring of legal rights, there have been five legal challenges filed before the courts in Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago. The database has supported the building of CSO capacity to carry out redress for their clients. While CSOs engage their clients around redress, it provides capacity building opportunity for community members to take on self-advocacy. For instance; where persons are not aware of the official patient complaint mechanism, SID has proven to be a viable substitute once there is an understanding between the CSOs documenting the rights violations and the health care officials.

The Desk: What feedback did you get about the points you brought across?
MT: The feedback was very positive as the audience found the content interesting and easy to follow. After the presentation, a few persons commended me on how practical the presentation was for such a dynamic system.

The Desk: What are some of the key takeaways for you from the conference?
MT: There were a lot of presentations around Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Research in the Paris region has found that on-demand PrEP is an effective strategy for preventing HIV transmission in the MSM population. On-demand PrEP involves taking a pill containing tenofovir plus emtricitabine (TDF/FTC) before and after sex, rather than daily. The study found no HIV infections among men taking PrEP on-demand.

The Desk: How can CVC help to champion the implementation of some of the best practices that came out of the conference?
MT: These can be championed by sharing the best practices with our partners and provide technical assistance and grant support with implementation.

The Desk: What stood out most for you at the conference?
MT: The amount of work being done on PrEP in the different regions.

The Desk: Knowing the importance of such a global conference what suggestions do you have to improve the experience for attendees?
MT: There was a lot going on at once which saw many people missing out on some really interesting sessions because they were running concurrently. Maybe the organizers can find a way to address that.

Upcoming Dates

October 10-11: Regional Civil Society Forum
The RCSF will provide an exciting opportunity for CSOs to showcase their work, learn from each other and deepen their understanding of innovative approaches to addressing the challenges in the regional HIV response. It provides an opportunity for networking and strengthening the linkages between CSOs, National AIDS Programs and Key Population networks around the Caribbean.

October 30-31: PANCAP Regional Meeting for Advancing Recommendations for Addressing Gaps in the Human Rights Response under the Justice for All Programme. The event will be held in Kingston.