



THE DESK

Online Newsletter



August 2026



- Team CVC Brings Research and Advocacy to 26th International AIDS Conference in Brazil
- SAIL-SRHR Young Researchers Share PAR Findings
- SMU Hosts Historic Healthfair
- Breaking Barriers Season 2 hits YouTube

These stories and many more inside

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the latest issue of ***The Desk***, CVC's quarterly newsletter. This edition captures another active and impactful period for the organisation, marked by regional engagement, youth leadership, research, advocacy and the continued use of creative communication to advance health, dignity and human rights across the Caribbean. The stories featured throughout these pages reflect CVC's commitment to ensuring that communities are not only included in important conversations, but are also helping to shape the policies, programmes and solutions that affect their lives.

In this issue, we share highlights from CVC's participation in the 26th International AIDS Conference in Rio de Janeiro, where team members contributed to major discussions on HIV elimination, stigma, community leadership and adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights. We also spotlight young researchers from Clarendon, Manchester, St. Catherine, St. Thomas, Kingston and St. Andrew who presented findings from the SAIL-SRHR participatory action research (PAR) initiative, demonstrating the value of youth-led evidence and peer engagement. Readers will also learn more about the launch of Season Two of Breaking Barriers and the new Men-tenance Conversations social media campaign, which is encouraging open dialogue around masculinity, emotions and healthier social norms.

Together, these stories show the many ways CVC continues to combine research, advocacy, storytelling and partnership to create meaningful change. We hope this issue gives you a deeper understanding of the work being done across the region and inspires continued support for inclusive, community-led approaches to health and development.

We hope you enjoy reading.

THE DESK

CVC Highlights Community Leadership and Inclusive HIV Responses at AIDS 2026

The Caribbean Vulnerable Communities (CVC) made a strong contribution to the **26th International AIDS Conference** in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, using the global platform to share evidence, strengthen partnerships and advocate for more inclusive, community-led approaches to the HIV response.

CVC Executive Director Ivan Cruickshank participated as a panellist in Symposium 18, dubbed **'Making HIV Elimination in the Americas a Reality: Leadership, Evidence, Action.'** The session also formally launched the Alliance for the Elimination of HIV in the Americas, a platform bringing together political leadership, technical expertise and sustainable financing to accelerate progress towards HIV elimination across the region.

Throughout the duration of the conference, the CVC booth highlighted achievements, lessons and experiences from the **Strengthening Access, Inclusion and Leadership for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SAIL-SRHR)** project. The team engaged participants in discussions on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, exchanged best practices and explored opportunities for future collaboration across the Caribbean and beyond.

Meanwhile CVC Senior Researcher Dr. Sharlene Jarrett contributed to the panel discussion titled, **'When Stigmas Intersect: Advancing HIV Stigma Research and Practice.'** Her presentation examined persistent internalised HIV stigma among people living with HIV in Jamaica and its implications for engagement in care amid shifting funding priorities. The wider session underscored the importance of peer-led and community-based approaches to reducing stigma, improving prevention and education, and addressing health inequities.

In the meantime, the CVC Dominican Republic team further strengthened the organisation's presence through the poster exhibition titled **'Beyond the Stigma: A Look at the LGBT Movement in the Fight Against HIV'**, which was mounted in partnership with REVASA, COIN and Universidad Iberoamericana, the exhibition transformed HIV statistics into a visual statement of dignity, memory and resilience. It served as a space for political advocacy, social justice and community connection across Latin America and the Caribbean. The exhibit attracted approximately 60 visitors during the first two days. Additionally, the team attended key panel sessions and held important discussions focused on collaboration and advancing a more inclusive, rights-based and community-led HIV response.

Our participation at AIDS 2026 reaffirmed the importance of placing communities at the centre of the HIV response. By contributing evidence, sharing lived experiences and strengthening regional and international partnerships, we'll continue to advocate for approaches that are inclusive, rights-based and responsive to the realities of key and vulnerable populations.

CVC at IAS 2026 cont'd



CVC Executive Director Ivan Cruickshank participating in the 26th International AIDS Conference

CVC at IAS 2026 cont'd



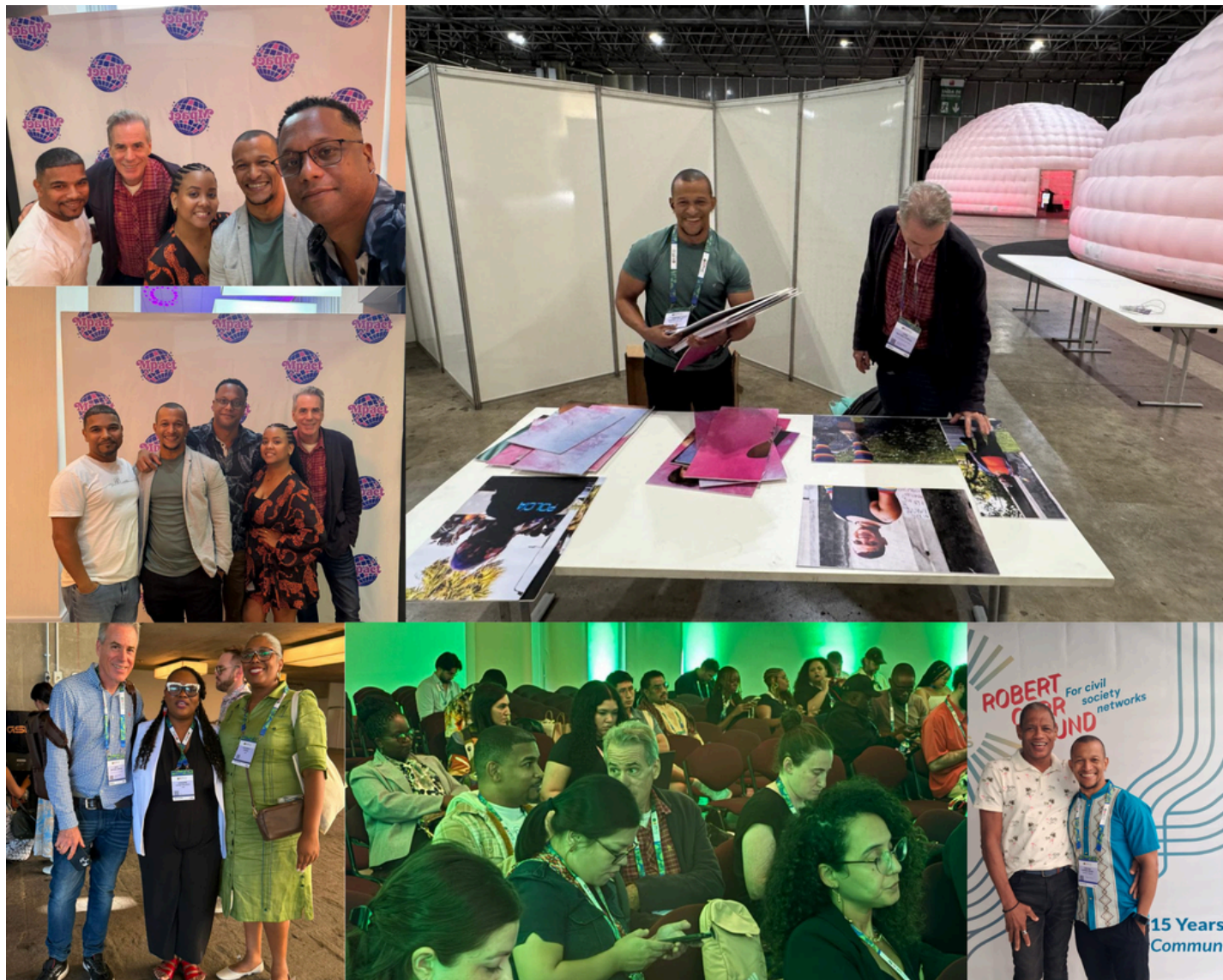
The SAIL-SRHR booth at IAS 2026 welcomed scores of participants throughout the conference

CVC at IAS 2026 cont'd



CVC Senior Researcher Dr. Sharlene Jarrett participating in the 26th International AIDS Conference

CVC at IAS 2026 cont'd



Members of the CVC Dominican Republic team participating at the 26th International AIDS Conference

CONDOMS GO WHERE YOU GO



Just like sunscreen
protects your skin,
condoms protect
your sexual health.



Caribbean
Vulnerable
Communities

Young Researchers Lead Important Conversations on Adolescent Sexual Health and Rights

Young researchers across several parishes in Jamaica recently presented findings from participatory action research (PAR) examining issues that directly affect adolescents' sexual and reproductive health, rights and well-being. The presentations were held at dissemination meetings in each parish where various stakeholders were invited to discuss the issues coming out of the research.

The research formed part of the Strengthening Access, Inclusion and Leadership for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SAIL-SRHR) project's participatory action research (PAR) initiative.

In Clarendon, Kimoy Fuller, Kimona Miller and Matthew Petgrave presented their study, which examined the psychological and behavioural effects of pornographic media consumption on selected adolescents. In Manchester, Jola-Shae Faulknor and Dannielle Brown shared findings from their research on the menstrual practice needs of adolescent girls and in St. Thomas, Breanna Harrison and Jularney Thomas led discussions on the root causes of gender-based violence among youth. Meanwhile Jada Smith and Shamar Samuels representing the parishes of St. Catherine, Kingston and St. Andrew presented the findings of their research titled 'Bridging the Gap: Exploring the need for teen mental health and sexual and reproductive support through community-based health centers in Portmore St. Catherine'.

The SAIL-SRHR participatory action research initiative is crucial because it positions young people as researchers and knowledge producers, rather than only as participants in studies designed by adults. By conducting research among their peers, the young researchers were able to explore sensitive issues in language and contexts that adolescents understand. Their shared experiences also helped to build trust and encourage more open, honest responses.

The process strengthened the participants' skills in research, critical thinking, leadership, communication and advocacy. It also created opportunities for young people to present evidence directly to stakeholders and influence the development of programmes and responses that better reflect their realities. By centring youth voices, the PAR initiative supports more relevant, inclusive and effective approaches to adolescent health and rights.

Young Researchers cont'd



Young researchers from St. Thomas share research findings with stakeholders

Young Researchers cont'd



Young researchers from Manchester share research findings with stakeholders

Young Researchers cont'd



Young researchers from Clarendon share research findings with stakeholders

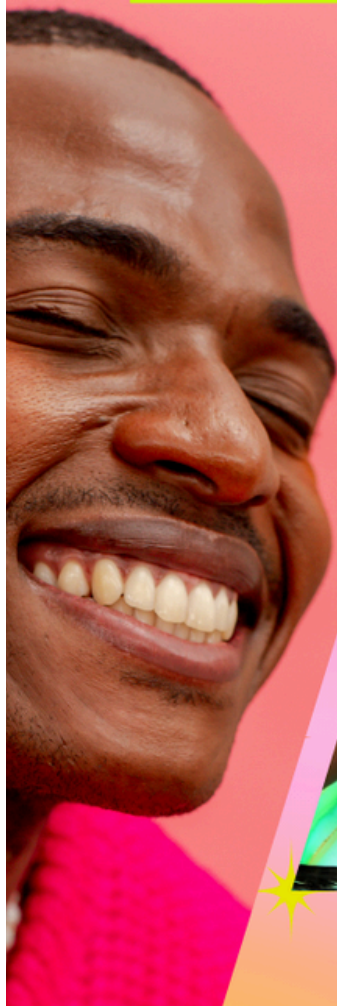
Young Researchers cont'd



Young researchers from St. Catherine, Kingston and St. Andrew share research findings with stakeholders

FESTIVAL READY?

STAY PROTECTED



- ☒ Hydrate
- ☒ Carry Condoms
- ☒ Charge Phone
- ☒ Know Emergency Contacts
- ☒ Respect Consent



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THE DESK

CVC Launches Positive Masculinity Campaign with Jamaican Content Creators

CVC has launched **Men-tenance Conversations**, a new social media campaign aimed at promoting healthier and more positive expressions of masculinity. The series is part of the Strengthening Access, Inclusion and Leadership for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SAIL-SRHR) project.

The video series features male Jamaican content creators in honest conversations about what it really means to “be a man.” Throughout the various videos in the campaign, the creators reflect on how ideas about masculinity are learned from childhood and reinforced through family, community and popular culture. Boys are often encouraged to hide their emotions, avoid vulnerability, dominate others or simply “tough it out.” These expectations can make it difficult for men to communicate openly, seek support or admit when they are struggling. **Men-tenance Conversations** challenges these harmful messages and encourages a broader understanding of masculinity rooted in respect, empathy, accountability and emotional honesty.

The campaign highlights that strength can also mean asking for help, expressing emotions, listening to others and choosing healthier ways to respond to pressure. By using familiar voices and relatable experiences, the series is designed to spark meaningful conversations among men and boys.



Breaking Barriers Returns with New Conversations on Youth SRHR

Season 2 of CVC's popular YouTube series, **Breaking Barriers**, is now underway, bringing fresh stories and honest conversations about the sexual and reproductive health and rights issues affecting young people across Jamaica and the wider Caribbean.

Building on the foundation established during its first season, the new episodes create a youth-friendly space where sensitive topics can be discussed openly, respectfully and without judgement.

This season explores a broader range of issues young people face, including consent, relationships, sexual health, gender expectations, stigma, access to services and the social pressures that can influence their choices. Through relatable storytelling and engaging discussions, **Breaking Barriers** presents accurate and practical information in ways that young audiences can understand and apply to their own lives.

The series also encourages young people to question harmful norms, seek reliable information and make informed decisions about their health, safety and well-being.

By reflecting their experiences and amplifying diverse perspectives, season 2 strengthens CVC's efforts to advance inclusive, rights-based sexual and reproductive health education.

The **Breaking Barriers** series is produced by CVC as part of the Strengthening Access, Inclusion and Leadership for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SAIL-SRHR) project. New episodes of **Breaking Barriers** are now available on the SAIL-SRHR and CVC social media channels.



Screengrab from Breaking Barriers Season 2 Episode 1

PLANNING A HOOKUP?

PLAN FOR SAFETY TOO.



Meet Safely

***Tell someone where
you're going***

Carry Protection



Suriname Men United Hosts Historic Healthfair

Suriname Men United (SMU) in collaboration with CVC, hosted a first of its kind Health and Information Fair in District Para, in June, bringing essential health, legal, and social services directly to community members, including LGBTQIA+ persons and other vulnerable groups. The fair was designed to address a major gap in access to inclusive services.

Many residents in District Para have limited opportunities to connect with service providers in one space, particularly around issues such as HIV prevention, mental health, domestic violence support, children's rights, sexual and reproductive health, and LGBTQIA+ inclusion. According to Kenneth van Emden, Executive Director of Suriname Men United, the event was both necessary and timely. "The objectives of this event was to raise awareness of available services, connect residents directly with service providers, promote inclusive service delivery, and empower people with actionable information on health, rights, and support," he said.

Seventeen organisations participated in the fair, offering a wide range of information and services. These included mental health support, children's rights and youth counselling, domestic violence support, HIV/AIDS awareness and testing referrals, sexual health education on PrEP and PEP, victim support services, social welfare assistance, LGBTQIA+ awareness, stigma reduction, physical fitness programmes, and reproductive health information, including menstrual health.

The response from the community was overwhelmingly positive, with approximately 275 people attending.



Representatives from SMU at a booth during the healthfair

PrEP = Extra Protection

PrEP helps prevent HIV when taken correctly.



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CVC Virtual Course NOW OPEN
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OUR ONLINE COURSE

RESOURCE MOBILISATION FOR LGBTQ ORGANISATIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN

EXTENDED
REGISTRATION
AUGUST 31ST



Register at
[www.cvcvirtual.org/
academy](http://www.cvcvirtual.org/academy)

