



UN Cares in Action

The Case of Mongolia 2013

Addressing Stigma about HIV and LGBT persons

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All of the activities adopted served to incorporate human rights and gender equality perspectives by conducting learning sessions that were focused on promoting a stigma-free work environment and protecting the rights of staff with HIV



Summary

After reading that HIV stigma and discrimination was a major concern among UN staff members, UN Cares leaders prioritized activities to build on anti-stigma messaging, learning sessions, and UN staff community building. With the “Stigma Fuels HIV” campaign of 2011, Mongolia’s UN Cares team promoted the campaign with anti-stigma posters and UN agency-wide e-mails. Staff members participated in roundtable discussions, group activities to address sexual minority ignorance, and interacted with individuals from stigmatised groups. During the events, more than 90 per cent of UN staff members were reached. Because of these activities, Mongolia was awarded the 2012 UN Cares award for the category of addressing HIV-related stigma and discrimination in the workplace.

Background and Context:

In Mongolia, fewer than 1,000 people currently live with HIV. As of 2012, the total HIV spending was US \$3.7 million, of which 70 per cent come from international sources such as the Global Fund, Asian Development Bank and UN agencies. HIV epidemic among men having sex with men in Ulaanbaatar is on the rise, standing at 7.5 per cent prevalence.

Mongolia’s governmental and non-governmental agencies collaborate to scale up existing HIV prevention, treatment and care services for the community of people living with HIV, (PLHIV), as well as reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

In Mongolia, there are five resident UN and affiliated agencies present including UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and World Bank. In addition, we find FAO, ILO, IOM, UN Habitat, UNAIDS, UNDSS, UNESCO, and UNHCR are operating as non-resident agencies. Collectively, the organizations

contribute to the UN Cares workplace programme, designed to offer HIV- and AIDS-related resource materials, knowledge, and insight to UN personnel.

Structure of UN Cares Mongolia

Mongolia was one of the first countries to implement UN Cares in the Asia Pacific Region. The joint UN Theme Group on AIDS then expanded its mission to include that of UN Cares.

The current UN Resident Coordinator in Mongolia, Ms. Sezin Sinanoglu, committed to instituting UN Cares, more specifically addressing elimination of stigma and discrimination at UN offices in Mongolia through a series of planned interventions.

In 2012, Mongolia won the UN Cares award for Addressing Stigma and Discrimination in the Workplace. Their participation in the global “Stigma Fuels HIV” campaign of 2011 succeeded in addressing HIV and AIDS stigma as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation. More than 90 per cent of the UN staff was reached.

Leaders of UN Cares

UN Cares team and focal points are appointed from the UN Dispensary, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDSS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO. The team is led by the HIV focal person in the UN Resident Coordinator’s office, supported by the Chair of the HIV/AIDS Theme Group. All participating agencies contribute to the annual budget of UN Cares, and the UN Theme Group Chair provides leadership to implement all activities planned under UN Cares. The planned activities include various training sessions for UN staff, organization of meetings and events for UN staff family members specifically targeted to their age and interest. In addition, the team actively participates in the members’ capacity building events.

Funding

Each agency present at the duty station provides annual funding to allow for UN Cares’ continuation and growth. The total funding is US \$8,500, which is prorated based on the number of staff benefitting from UN Cares. The organizations funding UN Cares are: FAO, ILO, IOM, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDSS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS/GEF, UN Dispensary, WHO, and World Bank.

Approaches adopted

Based on an anonymous survey among UN staff in 2009, the UN in Mongolia defined an existing challenge as overcoming HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

To rectify the challenge, UN Mongolia focused its UN Cares mission and resources to address stigma and social discomfort towards certain sexual behaviors. In 2011, UN Cares team in collaboration with local NGO networks implemented the global “Stigma Fuels HIV” campaign in Mongolia. The “Stigma Fuels HIV” campaign was launched on 9 June 2011.

The four main goals of UN Mongolia’s “Stigma Fuels HIV” campaign were:

- To raise awareness about the effects of discrimination on those living with HIV;
- To challenge discrimination in the workplace;
- To reduce stigma and discrimination towards affected populations (especially men who have sex with men), and;
- To raise awareness about UN Cares, UN Plus, and the UN Cares’ 10 Minimum Standards.

“Stigma Fuels HIV” involved three in-house workshops, Internet advertisements, UN Mongolia network-wide e-mails, and the campaign launch itself. On 6 June 2011, an e-mail about the campaign launch was sent to all the focal points of Mongolia UN agencies to encourage greater staff participation. On 7 June 2011, posters and banners were displayed around the UN House commune. Ms. Sezin Sinanoglu, UN Resident Coordinator opened the event on 9 June 2011 with her speech outside the UN House entrance, where 80 staff members were present. Following the speech, an additional 60 staff members attended in-house workshops, presentations and lunch meetings. A full 90 per cent of UN Staff participated in the “Stigma Fuels HIV” campaign.

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Throughout the month of June, UN Cares team in Mongolia continued to address HIV stigma and sexual discrimination within the workplace setting. The first week involved a casual lunch and representatives from HIV-positive and LGBT local NGOs who engaged staff on a variety of issues surrounding stigma, discrimination and human rights in Mongolia. Invited guests shared personal experiences, stories, and their knowledge with UN staff members who actively participated in the events. Staff feedback following the discussion was very positive and supportive. Another week was devoted to gender specific group discussions that defined and disintegrated HIV- and AIDS-related myths and beliefs. About 30 staff members participated in these learning sessions.

In November 2011, UN Cares Regional Coordinator Ms. Lazeena Muna-McQuay, implemented another learning session during which 40 staff members from various agencies participated in a group session that addressed safe sex practices, HIV care and support, and stigma and discrimination in the workplace.

In December 2012, UN Cares organized another anti-stigma event. Seventy UN staff members were present, equaling 60 per cent of the total UN Staff. The UN Cares team continues to have awareness sessions where people living with HIV (PLHIV) and LGBT representatives are present and active. The sessions continue to inspire and encourage UN staff to change past ideas and opinions about HIV-related stigma.

Lastly, On 17 May 2013, also known as the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO), the UN Resident Coordinator sent out an UN agency-wide e-mail encouraging the celebration of LGBT communities and discouraging stigmatizing and discriminatory behaviour. With the success the



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e-mail had this past May, the UNCT hopes to send similar messages annually.

Here are some quotes from UN staff who participated in the anti-stigma event with LGBT and PLHIV communities.

“I can say one thing to other people who did not have chance to meet them. Try to put yourself in their shoes and you will understand the beauty of accepting people as they are.”

“I only knew transgender people from movies. But, I did not expect that a NGO woman would reveal her true identity as a man. The session was great and I can’t wait [until] the next year’s session.”

Strengths

- UN Cares Mongolia created learning sessions where UN personnel could communicate with individuals from previously stigmatized groups.
- The UN Country Team and Resident Coordinator supported UN Cares. Every UN agency present at the duty station displayed interest in the UN Cares activities.
- The UNCT was involved in both the planning and budget aspects of the anti-stigma campaign.

Barrier

Confronting the individual and social reasoning behind the prejudice faced by PLHIV, and intolerance against sexual minorities remains a barrier. As a country where no UN staff had openly lived with HIV, community voices played a crucial role in dispelling myths and bringing attitudinal changes to UN staff. Mongolia’s UN Cares team defined the importance of relating experiences

within these stigmatized communities to break through workplace ignorance, and discomfort. By developing a relationship with non-profit organizations dedicated to providing resources to HIV positive and LGBT communities, the Mongolia UN Cares team highlighted their acceptance of these communities, and encouraged their acceptance within the UN staff community.

Advice to other UN Cares teams

- Develop a realistic UN Cares workplan where budgeting is completed in advanced and agencies can plan specific cost sharing.
- Don't struggle to organize a lot of activities; instead invest the UN Cares team's time in perfecting a few activities.
- Organize meetings between UN Cares focal points often.
- Maintain a great relationship with the UNCT: report HIV and AIDS session and workshops successes and challenges and define the significance of their support and endorsement of the programme.
- Ask UN organizations with HIV and human rights missions to participate in the learning sessions as resource persons. Because the country UN Cares team is small, it was interesting for staff to meet other UN professionals and discuss HIV perspectives.

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Future projects/ plans

UN Mongolia is determined to institute anti-stigma workshops and sessions annually. Because of high rates of new employees, UN Cares Mongolia leaders have made the anti-stigma sessions a priority.

Mongolia's UN Cares team is also interested instituting a Wellness programme. The team is making a conscious effort to address nutrition and physical activity in the current and coming years.

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