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Living positively together: new policy brief released on HIV prevention and men who have sex with men

Bangkok, Monday July 16, 2012 – Today the Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health (APCOM) are launching a significant policy brief titled, ‘More than the virus: HIV prevention and men who have sex with men living with HIV’. The launch coincides with the XIX International AIDS Conference, held in Washington DC, from July 22-27th.

The brief recommends that guidance and best practice need to address three key areas to better represent the issues important to men who have sex with men and are living with HIV (MSM+) in the prevention discourse:

1. **MSM+ are entitled to a healthy and satisfying sex life.** Prevention programmes need to provide opportunities to explore and discuss what this actually means from the perspective of being an MSM living with HIV.

2. **MSM+ do have a role to play in protecting others.** This is a shared responsibility and MSM+ should not shoulder the entire burden, particularly since most MSM+ do not know they are HIV-infected.

3. **MSM+ need to be meaningfully engaged in discussions about HIV prevention.** For this to happen, MSM+ must feel secure that they will not face discrimination or be stigmatised by people and organisations that are committed to supporting them.

“I think this policy brief is timely for the current discussion and debate in the AIDS sector on treatment as prevention, particularly at the upcoming International AIDS Conference in Washington, DC,” said Midnight Poonkasetwattana, APCOM Executive Director. He added, “The transmission of HIV should always be addressed by public health measures that are both evidence-based and respectful of human rights of individuals and should never be a matter of criminal sanction.”

The brief, which is produced in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Knowledge Services and Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV (APN+), examines current best practice and guidance for men who have sex with men (MSM) programming in Asia and the Pacific, and provides specific policy recommendations to ensure they meet the needs of MSM+ HIV prevention.
Perhaps most importantly, it highlights that HIV prevention programmes have mostly ignored the wide spectrum of prevention needs of MSM who are living with HIV. The brief argues that it is time to shift thinking away from the ‘vectors of transmission’ framework to a ‘shared responsibility’ framework, which encompasses a much wider view of the important role that MSM+ play in HIV prevention.

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The policy brief can be accessed here:

The Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health (APCOM) is a regional coalition of MSM and HIV community-based organisations, the government sector, donors, technical experts and the UN system. The main purpose is advocating for political support and increases in investment and coverage of HIV services in Asia and the Pacific.

For more information on APCOM, please visit our website www.apcom.org and our Facebook page www.facebook.com/apcom.org

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