Summary Report of the Rapid Assessment of the Malaysian MSM and Transgender Women National Network (myISEAN)
JumpStart is APCOM’s 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 (Rap App), a scoring tool which assesses a community organisation in its operations and performance against programmatic and organisational criteria and the Dissemination Plan Template (D-Plate), a tool to assist community organisations to use the available strategic information in doing more systematic and planned advocacy.

The Rapid Assessment Apparatus is an assessment tool joint designed by APCOM and AFAO under this initiative to assess the core competencies of an organisation or network against eleven programmatic and organisational areas. The networks undertook a facilitated self-assessment process to identify their capacity and technical needs. the findings were the bases for technical support.
Malaysian MSM and Transgender National Network (myISEAN) is a national network of community based organisations (CBOs) and self-help groups dedicated to the enhancement of sexual health and well-being of men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender people in Malaysia. myISEAN’s mission is to work towards a Malaysia where all MSM and transgender people are treated as equal members of society, and have equal access to sexual health services. It was founded in June 2012 and was officially registered with the Registry of Society as a network working with/for key affected populations in HIV prevention and care in June 2014. It currently has 19 CBO members across 7 of the 14 states in Peninsular Malaysia.

myISEAN was assessed in 17 key organisational and programmatic areas, using the Jumpstart Rapid Assessment Apparatus (Rap App). The Rap App is one of the core tools of JumpStart, an MSM and Transgender network capacity strengthening initiative implemented through a partnership with APCOM and the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO). The tool allows us to create a snapshot of the strengths and technical support needs of an organisation at a given time, based on 11 key organisational and programmatic criteria, and 6 criteria on engagement with key affected populations. The tool was completed by myISEAN during a facilitated self-assessment process at a two-day meeting in May 2015.
TOP THREE TECHNICAL SUPPORT PRIORITIES

Fulfilment of the following technical support needs would transform VNMSMTG into a more effective and efficient organisation.

A. **Resource mobilisation**

myISEAN needs urgent support to develop a resource mobilisation strategy, as its sole source of funding ends in September 2016. Its staff need training and mentoring in developing funding proposals, and in how to identify and effectively engage with donors.

B. **Finance**

myISEAN needs support to establish a simple but effective financial management system, as well as training for its staff. This includes budgeting for projects in line with its strategic plan.

C. **Partnerships and Networking**

myISEAN needs support to develop a partnership database of potential partners with relevant interests/expertise. It would also benefit from mentoring in how to engage more actively with partners.
myISEAN achieved a total score of 138/216 in the Rap App. It was assessed in 11 key areas and 6 sub-areas, both organisational and programmatic, with each area having a maximum score of 12. A summary of the data and information from each key area is outlined below.

A. ORGANISATIONAL CRITERIA

i) Governance

The myISEAN Board was established as the network’s key governing body in 2012. The network registered with the Registry of Society (ROS) in June 2014, a strategic move to allow it to bid for more funding. The Board has 9 members (3 MSM, 3 transgender people, 2 PLHIV and one focal point for external communications), who are elected to represent the MSM, transgender and PLHIV population. Board members are elected every two years at the General Assembly, with votes needing to be evenly distributed between MSM and transgender Board candidates. Board members have specific roles including Focal Point (represents myISEAN in official capacity, and sits on the board of ISEAN), Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and general Board members. In addition, Board members have designated ‘portfolios’ which include communications, finance and administration, advocacy, and training. A long-term goal is to have the portfolios made into staff positions, allowing the Board to focus on governance, strategic direction and policy.

There are no documents outlining the Board’s roles and responsibilities, and myISEAN’s constitution has not been finalised. The Board meets quarterly and minutes are distributed to Board members. A quorum of 6 out of 9 is consistently achieved.

Recommendations for next steps

myISEAN has received substantial technical support in governance and has made good progress. However, it would benefit from further support from its donor partners to source funds to ensure annual General Assemblies can take place, to encourage engagement with members. The network would also benefit from support from a consultant to develop terms of reference for Board members, including references to their responsibilities within the other portfolios of members, and management responsibilities and working within a constitution/ by-laws.
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ii) Staffing
myISEAN has one paid member of staff, employed as the Network Co-coordinator with funding from the ISEAN-Hivos programme. The Network Co-ordinator has a contract through the project donor PT Foundation, as well as a job description and terms of reference.

Recommendations for next steps

myISEAN needs support from its partners to access core funding to employ more staff and support the operation of a network secretariat. This includes a finance staff member and a coordinator with expertise in advocacy. It also needs support from an external consultant to develop a human resource manual and policy on recruitment.

iii) Finance
myISEAN uses the PT Foundation as its fiscal agent as it does not have a bank account. myISEAN does not have a financial system, and does not prepare financial reports or undergo auditing, which creates barriers to accessing funds. However, within these restrictions, the network does keep careful financial records (receipts and transactions) and closely monitors its expenses at each Board meeting.

Recommendations for next steps

myISEAN urgently needs to open its own bank account. It needs support from an expert consultant to create and establish a financial system within which organisational budget and expenses can be regularly monitored and analysed. It needs ongoing support to develop budgets for future programmes in line with its strategic plan, demonstrating to donors its capacity to manage scaled-up activities.

iv) Resource Mobilisation
myISEAN is not active in pursuing funds and is not able to develop proposals. It currently has one source of funding which is through the Global Fund via IHP. This runs until September 2016, after which there will be the need to secure new funding agreements. The plan is for myISEAN to build its capacity and gradually take over IHP’s role after September 2016. This puts an urgent time pressure on meeting the technical support needs of myISEAN.

Some Board members have had training/experience in proposal writing and myISEAN has a volunteer consultant who has experience with Global Fund grants and can provide technical support.
v) **Partnerships and Networking**

myISEAN does not currently conduct activities in partnership with other stakeholders. One of the Board members is a member of the CCM in Malaysia, which provides an important platform for the network to voice the issues faced by MSM and transgender people. There is a formal platform for quarterly meetings with ISEAN, and less formal contact through email, phone calls and social media. Partnerships exist with donor agencies such as the Global Fund (through IHP), and regional networks such as APCOM.

## Recommendations for next steps

myISEAN needs support to develop a longer-term resource mobilisation strategy, focusing mainly on advocacy programmes and activities, representation of its members and core funding for network activities. This should examine a variety of sources of funds including donors, fundraising, government, private business and individual donors, and should outline any changes myISEAN would need to make in order to access these funding streams. Board members and any staff recruited would benefit from training in effective proposal development. myISEAN would also benefit from ongoing support and mentoring from more established networks in the region to improve its networking with potential funding partners.

vi) **Membership**

myISEAN has 19 CBO members, all working with MSM (including male sex workers) and transgender women (including sex workers). The members are mainly based in central peninsula Malaysia but it has also has limited representation in the north, south and east coast of peninsula Malaysia.

Engaging with member organisations on a regular basis is challenging due to a lack of adequate funds. Face-to-face engagement is mostly limited to the CBO members clustered around Kuala Lumpur, while email and phone is used with members further from the capital. The General Assembly (held every two years) is an opportunity to engage with and consult member CBOs.
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Membership records include an expression of interest, organisation chart and organisation profile. There are no specific criteria for becoming a member, other than working for and with the MSM and transgender populations. This means small and unregistered groups, including support groups, can become members and receive support from myISEAN.

### Recommendations for next steps

myISEAN needs support from an external consultant to develop a communications system to guide information flow from the network to members and vice versa. The Network Coordinator needs to develop membership guidelines/MoU to establish criteria for eligible members, feedback mechanisms on issues that need decisions or consideration, and the scope of myISEAN and members’ roles and responsibilities.

### B. CRITERIA ON ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY AFFECTED POPULATIONS (KAP)

This section of the Rap App aims to measure the engagement and scope of the network’s work with KAP, with the goal of identifying opportunities to expand coverage.

Generally, myISEAN’s engagement with KAP is good, but it needs to ensure it is reaching young KAP and those that use drugs. It also needs to try to increase its geographic spread across Malaysia.

**i) MSM engagement**

myISEAN scores well in this criteria, with MSM issues being well-integrated into organisational advocacy priorities on prevention, testing, support, legal rights and human rights. Three Board members officially represent the MSM community, including at least one member officially representing MSM PLHIV. The network engages with MSM who are young, living with HIV, selling sex or using drugs, and also collaborates with organisations focusing on MSM rights, such as LGBT rights groups. The MSM population is also well-represented in the membership, and myISEAN communicates with them through email, social media, online surveys and the General Assembly. myISEAN members are informed when there are funding opportunities from ISEAN, and are given support to develop proposals.

There are issues around disclosure which limit the engagement of MSM with the network, as well as societal taboos about talking about sex, especially same sex behaviour. The network lacks creative programmes which target MSM needs and interests, and it recognises that often its interventions place too strong a focus on HIV, STI and medical issues which can limit engagement. Innovative methods of engagement which reflect the realities of MSM lives and imbed health promotion messages within the broader interests of MSM are needed. Online engagement can also help overcome stigma.
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### ii) Engagement with transgender people

myISEAN achieved a maximum score in this section. The issues faced by transgender people in Malaysia are well-integrated into myISEAN’s advocacy work including topics such as awareness raising of gender diversity, engagement on laws related to gender identification, access to testing, access to PEP/PrEP, and health policy related to hormone therapies before, during and after sexual reassignment surgery. Three Board members officially represent transgender women and at least one Board member officially represents transgender PLHIV. myISEAN also reaches out to LGBT organisations which tackle transgender issues.

Transgender member organisations are actively engaged in project activities, and membership includes young people, transgender women who are living with HIV, sell sex or use drugs, demonstrating that the network engages a broad range of the transgender community. myISEAN members are informed when there are funding opportunities from ISEAN, and are given support to develop proposals.

myISEAN communicates with its transgender community members through email, social media and an online transwomen’s group (MYNETRA).

### Recommendations for next steps

MSM can be difficult to reach in Malaysia as stigma and discrimination lead to many staying hidden and limiting their engagement with the community. myISEAN acknowledges that more innovative engagement is required and it would benefit from attending lesson/experience-sharing meetings with peer organisations to learn about innovative approaches that have succeeded in other countries.

### iii) Engagement with young people

Issues facing young key affected populations (YKP) are not well integrated into myISEAN’s advocacy work, or clearly defined as a target group in the membership. Although one member of the Board is young (26 years old), he/she is not officially representing YKP.

myISEAN needs to review its work and ensure its activities take the specific needs of young people into account. It would be helpful for myISEAN to consult with YVC in developing strategies that are tailored to YKAP.

### Recommendations for next steps

myISEAN should improve its engagement with APTN.

myISEAN needs to review its work and ensure its activities take the specific needs of young people into account. It would be helpful for myISEAN to consult with YVC in developing strategies that are tailored to YKAP.
iv) **Sex worker engagement**

myISEAN does not prioritise sex workers in its organisational policy but it does include issues faced by male and transgender sex workers (such as criminalisation) into its advocacy work. Some members of the Board belong to the sex worker community, but do not officially represent sex workers. myISEAN has an active membership of CBOs which carry out service delivery and outreach with sex workers as part of their core work, but these are not specifically sex worker organisations.

v) **Engagement with people who use drugs**

Issues relating to drug use are not well-integrated into myISEAN’s work, and PWUD are not clearly defined as a target group. However, myISEAN does have member CBOs that represent and engage actively with the issues facing PWUD, mostly related to injecting drug use and harm reduction.

myISEAN sees its role as advocating for awareness of MSM and transgender specific issues to mainstream PWUD communities, networks and CBOs. It has useful partnerships with various research and PWUD organisations which can provide a platform for this.

vi) **Engagement with PLHIV**

The issues of PLHIV are well-integrated into myISEAN’s work. There is official representation on the Board of at least one MSM and one transgender woman living with HIV. Advocacy priorities such as access to testing, support at time of diagnosis, access to treatment, early initiation of ART, reducing stigma and discrimination, and assistance with disclosure are shared by myISEAN, its partners and some member CBOs.

The network has active partnerships with Positive Malaysian Treatment Access and Advocacy Group (MTAAG+), MSM poz and myPLUS, who are member CBOs of myISEAN. Opportunities for partnership, engagement and consultation on programme design also exist with KLASS, CERiA and MAC and these should be actively pursued.

### Recommendations for next steps

myISEAN’s engagement with sex workers and issues facing its members who also engage in sex work could be strengthened by connecting with APNSW.
C. PROGRAMMATIC CRITERIA

i) Project design and management, including monitoring and evaluation

myISEAN is currently implementing one project under IHP which focuses on development of the network, including capacity building of the Board, governance, setting of strategic goals, vision and mission, and communication with members. The funding for this ends in September 2016. Other activities (community SOGIE training and stakeholder sensitisation workshops) are jointly implemented with partner and/or member CBOs. myISEAN has no other programme funding and consequently no broader organisational workplan in place. The network lacks a monitoring and evaluation system; all M&E is done by IHP and is in line with Global Fund requirements.

Recommendations for next steps

myISEAN needs training for staff and Board members in project design, workplan development and budgeting. It needs support from an external consultant and then mentoring during initial implementation to develop an M&E system to support monitoring and document lessons learned. It would benefit from support from a consultant to develop a strategic plan with a focus on project design, partnership and advocacy. myISEAN’s current strategic plan is more activity-based, and it needs support to think strategically in terms of achieving its objectives.

ii) Technical Capacity

myISEAN Board members and staff have strong technical knowledge on HIV prevention, care and treatment, human rights and diverse sexuality and gender expression, gained through work experience, SOGIE training, personal experience and community participation/engagement. The network receives technical support from partners such as ISEAN (on a broad range of issues), and Justice for Sisters (legal/human rights). Expert medical information on HIV prevention, treatment and care is available through myISEAN’s links with the Department of Medicine at the University of Malaya.

myISEAN does not currently provide technical support to its member CBOs due to a lack of staff capacity. When technical assistance is required by a member CBO, myISEAN provides links to the appropriate provider such as IHP. The future goal is for myISEAN itself to become a technical support provider.

Recommendations for next steps

myISEAN needs to position itself to have more consistent access to regional and global information on HIV prevention, treatment and care developments, and to advocate for them to be made available in Bahasa Melayu. If only available in English, the network should try to recruit volunteer translators who would be willing to summarise and translate relevant information into local languages. myISEAN Board members and staff have a good technical capacity but would benefit from learning more about working with certain key populations, for example young key populations and PWUD. This would not have to be a formal training but could be an exchange visit with another network, or shadowing of staff at a network working with these groups.
iii) Advocacy
myISEAN does not have a written advocacy plan and its capacity as a network to mobilise around key advocacy issues is limited. It conducts advocacy by raising issues at partner and Government meetings, which are then documented by the Network Coordinator and disseminated amongst members. Implementation of other advocacy activities (production of advocacy materials, events and campaigns) is constrained by the lack of secure funding and human resources to mobilise activities; the challenge of balancing caution in advocacy relating to sexual issues due to social/religious perceptions, and the desire of donors to see strong messages; limited opportunity to engage with potential partners; limited access to strategic information to use as an evidence base; limited capacity to analyse strategic information and translate it into advocacy; and the need to strengthen the credibility of the network.

myISEAN maintains relations with the CCM and the Global Fund, and is also involved in the process to develop the National Strategic Plan for HIV. These opportunities provide excellent platforms for myISEAN to advocate for the sexual health and wellbeing of MSM and transgender women in Malaysia.

[Recommendations for next steps]

myISEAN needs support from an external consultant/facilitator to develop an advocacy strategy through consultation with members and key stakeholders. This should be developed through a theory of change process, with outputs of an advocacy strategy and detailed workplan. During the Rap App process, myISEAN Board members identified three key advocacy issues which they felt could form the basis of an initial advocacy agenda, and myISEAN needs to progress with this and organise a broader planning discussion with its members.

iv) Communications
myISEAN communicates well internally, and Board members, network members and partners communicate regularly through telephone calls, emails, social media such as closed Facebook pages, and face-to-face meetings. Board meetings are minuted. Communication with external partners is significantly more limited and takes place mainly at conferences, seminars and meetings. The network does have a Facebook page which is accessible to external partners but this is not very active.

[Recommendations for next steps]

myISEAN requires support from a consultant to develop a communications strategy which gives guidance on priorities and methods of communication with external partners. The consultant could also help the network to develop procedures to guide internal communications between myISEAN and its members across the country, including how to encourage two-way communication.
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v) Strategic Information
The network accesses strategic information in an ad hoc manner via publications and the internet. This activity is not guided by a work plan or allocation of responsibility. Although myISEAN has links with centres of research such as CERiA and the University of Malaya, flow of strategic information from these sources to myISEAN is limited. Distribution of available strategic information to members and the Board is managed by the Network Co-ordinator.

The network has not produced its own strategic information, but some Board members and staff have previous experience of research studies under the leadership of other organisations.

Recommendations for next steps
myISEAN needs support to strengthen its capacity to analyse documents and policies, and use them to frame issues and advocacy messages. Strengthening flow of information from research institutes should be prioritised and easily achievable given the existing connections with CERiA and the University of Malaya. This could be through a strategic information training workshop for staff and Board members, which could include community research skills. myISEAN needs to foster its relationships with UNAIDS and WHO to increase access to global information, research, policies and guidelines relating to MSM and transgender people.
The Rap App has shown that myISEAN needs significant technical support in order to fulfil its potential as the Malaysia national network for MSM and transgender populations. The next steps highlighted in this report in terms of the technical support needs of the network are summarised below, by short, medium and long-term.

**Short-term**
- Develop a strategic plan for 2015-2017, based on inputs from members.
- Develop an advocacy strategy to include a workplan and budget, based on a theory of change and a stakeholder analysis.
- Support to develop terms of reference and portfolios for Board positions.
- Develop a communications strategy (external) and strengthen internal communication with members.
- Create a centralised record-keeping system for network documentation.

**Medium-term**
- Training in project design, workplan development and writing proposals for Board members and recruited staff.
- Develop a resource mobilisation plan including donor mapping, followed by support/mentoring in effective donor engagement.
- Mobilise diverse sources of core funding to support Secretariat staffing and operations.
- Establish a finance system including the development of a Finance Policy.
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation system, with training of staff and Board members in basic M&E.

**Long-term**
- Develop a Human Resources Manual and recruitment policies to facilitate staff recruitment.
- Develop membership guidelines, a membership MOU, and a secure membership database.
- Media engagement and communications training for Board members and staff not yet skilled in these areas.
- Consider establishment of a seat on the Board or a sub-committee to facilitate greater engagement with young MSM and transgender people, and to formalise engagement with MSM and transgender people who sell sex or use drugs.
- Develop a partner and network database.
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.