

25 April 2016

Urgent Appeal to Preserve Financing from the Global Fund for the CARICOM Region

On behalf of the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) and the Caribbean Regional Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (CRN+) we appeal to the Board of the Global Fund not to transition away from middle-income CARICOM countries. An end to Global Fund financing will have an enormous impact on the health, well-being, stability and security of communities living with or affected by HIV in the Region, especially those from key populations. In particular, the substantial gains achieved in access to medicines, care and support for the tens of thousands of people currently living with or affected by HIV in countries like Suriname, Jamaica or Belize risk being heavily undermined.

Despite unprecedented gains in reducing new infections, the level of HIV prevalence in the CARICOM region is second only to that of sub-Saharan Africa. Late diagnosis, high HIV related mortality in key populations, significant ongoing gaps in access to quality HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services, lack of harm reduction programming, as well as failures to retain people in care and achieve viral suppression remain major challenges. Further, the capacity of CARICOM countries to absorb quickly the full cost of financing their HIV responses is low; and political commitment to sustain critical programming for key populations is highly uncertain.

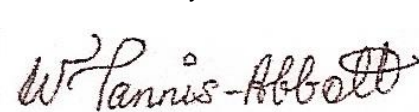
The transition to middle income country status paints an incomplete picture of social, economic, and political stability that obscures the widening inequalities key populations still face. Youth, MSM, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, sex workers, transgender people and people who use drugs in the Caribbean continue to experience high levels of poverty, coupled with widespread stigma, discrimination and violence, as well as a dismal lack of social and legal protections.

It is incumbent on the Global Fund to ensure that when countries transition out sustainable, domestically-financed HIV programmes will be able to be rolled out. Importantly, countries will need to be able to provide continued and uninterrupted quality and affordable HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, and involve, support and sustain civil society and communities of people living with HIV and key populations. Notably, the responsibility to ensure unbroken HIV treatment means mitigating the anticipated effects of higher drug prices in the CARICOM region as a result of the income category change.

The health, lives and well-being of people living and affected by HIV in the CARICOM region depend on the outcome of board decisions being made this week. We appeal for additional time, planning and consideration to avoid leaving the region adrift.

Sincerely,

Winfield Tannis-Abbott
Board Secretary



Caribbean Regional Network of
People Living with HIV/AIDS

Cecilia Chung
Co-Chair



Global Network of
People Living with HIV

Jaime Luna
Co-Chair



Global Network of
People Living with HIV