

# International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS: Strengthening the Connection between Practice, Policy and Research

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The Inaugural International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS (IIGHA) was held June 7-11, 2004 at the Kopanong Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa. Eighty-eight participants from Botswana, Canada, Lesotho, South Africa and Swaziland met with the goal of building expertise and sharing experiences on the fundamental role of gender in the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Institute brought together policy makers, programme leaders, civil society organizations, youth, researchers and people living with HIV/AIDS to deliberate on the successes and the challenges – the benefits and the obstacles – to integrating a gender perspective into work on the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The Institute created a forum for transformative learning that allowed participants to share research and experience on gender and HIV/AIDS, and to develop realistic inclusive policy recommendations. Participant country delegations, led by senior officials from the branch in government responsible for gender and health issues, reflected tremendous energy in their commitments to mainstream gender analysis and to develop strategies to address gender inequalities in all policies, programmes and research that relate to HIV and AIDS.

A number of exciting initiatives arose out of the Institute's activities. Country delegations transformed themselves into 'National Chapters, reflecting the IIGHA's tripartite structure of government, civil society and research representatives. During the Institute, each Chapter created time-bound action plans, with the aim of ensuring that links are established and strengthened between policy, practice and research for enhancing a gendered response to the HIV/AIDS challenge in each country. Furthermore, in a communiqué ratified at the conclusion of the Institute, delegates endorsed the development of "mechanisms to support ongoing consultation and collaboration at country, regional and international levels, and review progress on the outcomes of the Institute at regular intervals".



Another critical initiative of the Institute was the consensus that increased efforts must be made to mobilize males of all ages as partners in the fight against HIV and AIDS. The Men As Partners program which was developed by EngenderHealth in South Africa was presented as a model for mobilizing men to take greater responsibility for their sexual health and that of their partners. Delegates expressed widespread enthusiasm for the possibility of adapting the Men As Partners program in their own countries and included it as a key component of their action planning.



The Institute is one without walls, without borders – a catalyst for strengthening the connections between practice, policy and research in order to enhance or extend existing efforts to tackle issues of gender and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa and beyond. Accordingly, the Institute has adopted as its governing theme, the image of the “three hands” (government, NGOs and researchers) working together collaboratively, enhancing each other’s strengths, in order to effect positive social change.

### Who We Are

The International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS is an initiative of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health, Dalhousie University, made possible through close partnerships with the Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS and Health research programme at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA), and a number of other critical stakeholders in the region.



### Useful Links:

[www.commonwealth.org](http://www.commonwealth.org)

[www.hsrc.ac.za](http://www.hsrc.ac.za)

[www.sahara.org.za](http://www.sahara.org.za)



