

HDN and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance announce merger talks



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Formal merger negotiations were announced between Health & Development Networks (HDN) and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance at the XVII International AIDS Conference being held in Mexico (3-8 August 2008). The merger will create a new joint organisation with a global mandate, which will be part of the Alliance family.

The new organisation to be based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, will build on the Alliance's presence in 39 countries globally. It will also accelerate HDN's global implementation of the National Partnership Platform strategy, which will strengthen and promote the inclusion of community voices and views within HIV and TB programming. The new organisation will benefit from HDN's knowledge management, communication, information and dialogue experience, helping to share learning across the Alliance and beyond.

Nadine France, Executive Director of HDN explained: "Bringing together a substantial country presence with an increased information exchange, dialogue and advocacy capacity will facilitate more coherent civil society voices and mobilisation around AIDS and related priorities such as TB."

Local and national community responses to AIDS and TB are at the core of both organisations' strategies. Both recognise that civil society still has to fight for its place in national responses. The new organisation will take full advantage of this shared focus, similar values and common work directions, as well as build on lessons learned from recent joint initiatives, to strengthen the position of civil society in this struggle.

A single paramount reason underlies discussions for a formal alignment of the Alliance and HDN: pre-emptive creation of a strategic and optimal partnership to scale up their effective implementation and combined overall impact.

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The announcement comes in a changing environment, one that is characterised by the integration of AIDS and TB responses into the broader health and development agenda.

"Understanding and being committed to greater impact requires NGOs and other types of organisations to honestly examine how they can be most effective," commented Alvaro Bermejo, Executive Director of the Alliance. "The Alliance and HDN see this ambition as more important than preserving established organisational identities."

"This shifting environment means organisations need to adopt higher standards of accountability, respond to stricter reporting requirements and communicate better with critical and well-informed stakeholders. The planned joint organisation will strive to develop a reputation for transparency and providing reliable information about its work," he added.

The new entity will:

- * Ensure that the majority of its programmatic attention is focused on the country level, directly benefiting and involving key affected populations.
- * Fill a key role in the effective mobilisation and support of key national stakeholders and civil society constituencies
- * Foresee and make a significant, visible contribution to the changing landscape in AIDS and related areas.
- * Expand both organisations' current footprints to incorporate health

priorities such as TB and hepatitis.

"Many more organisational mergers of this kind are required in the health and development sector and should be anticipated in the future," concluded Bermejo.

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