

# St Maarten AIDS Foundation

Strategic Plan 2012-2016



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



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## Glossary

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AMFO	Antilliaanse Mede-Financierings Organisatie
ARV	Antiretroviral
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
AUC	American University of the Caribbean
BCC	Behavioral Change Communication
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCNAPC	Caribbean Coalition of National AIDS Programme Coordinators
CRN+	Caribbean Regional Network of positive people
EC	European Commission
FBO	Faith Based Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HAART	Highly Active Anti Retroviral Therapy
HCP	Health Care Professionals (Workers)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEC	Information Education and Communication
MARP	Most-at-Risk population
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (of HIV)
NA	Netherlands Antilles
NAC	National AIDS Coordinator
NAP	National AIDS Programme
NAPC	National AIDS Programme Coordinator
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NSP	National Strategic Plans
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PANCAP	Pan Caribbean HIV/AIDS Partnership
PLWHA	Person Living with HIV/AIDS
SARA	Situation and Response Analysis
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UN AIDS	Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WHO	World Health Organization

## Executive Summary

Internationally it is well known that the Caribbean has the second highest prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS next to sub-Saharan Africa. According to the United Nations, in 2009 an estimated 17,000 people in the Caribbean became infected with HIV, and around 12,000 died of AIDS. Although the highest infection rates can be found in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, St Maarten has not been immune from this epidemic.

Combine St Maarten's single pillar economy, tourism, with a liberal mentality towards sexual issues and a high turnover of its population with large groups from HIV high prevalence countries, the island is thought to have a moderate to high risk for HIV transmission.

In response to this situation, the Sint Maarten AIDS Foundation was established in 1990 under the leadership of Dr Gerard Van Osch, family physician. Formerly known as the AIDS Committee, the Foundation's objectives are to: promote the awareness among the general population about the existence of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's); prevent Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV) infection in the community; prevent and reduce the possible negative social, economic and/or personal consequences of the AIDS-epidemic; and to assist where possible with care and support for Persons Living with HIV and AIDS. The Foundation has been the oldest and most consistent NGO to operate in this field in St Maarten.

In March 2011 there were 220 persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) under care on the Dutch side of St Maarten. What is troubling, however, is that this figure is only a fragment of the real picture. For example, figures in French St Martin are considerably higher with 450 people under care. This large difference is often attributed to several factors: under-diagnosis; under-registration on the Dutch side; more HIV infected women choosing to deliver their babies on the French side; as well as a larger Haitian community utilizing the system of universal access to treatment on the French side. The island's 670 persons currently under care are thought to represent roughly one third (1/3) of the total number of persons living with HIV/AIDS in St Maarten/St Martin.

Upon closer inspection, approximately 70% of these 670 PLWHA receive Highly Active Anti Retroviral Treatment (HAART). The remaining 30% either have adequate immune systems that do not yet require treatment or are in denial/have chosen not to start treatment at this point in time. In St Maarten there is an average annual increase of about 32 patients a year since 2005 which is comparable to the situation in St Martin.

Given the transient nature of the region, it is important to note that roughly 70% of PLWHA on both sides of the island do not originate from here (including Dutch/French West Indies, the Netherlands or France). Rather this reflects the nature and extent to which the island hosts large expatriate communities.

On both sides of the island there is a standard level of care and treatment available for those living with and affected by the disease. It is encouraging to note that all medications are available for use. The French side has a multi-disciplinary team consisting of 2 physicians, counselors, nurses, psychologist, sociologist as well as administrative staff. In contrast, the Dutch side treatment is provided by only 2 physicians without the support of a multidisciplinary team. With the development and introduction of a New National Health Insurance plan, all effort has been taken to include HIV/AIDS care and treatment into the budget so a gradual expansion of the care team may be seen in the years to come, making both care and treatment more sustainable for future generations.

It is thanks to these continued efforts of non-governmental organizations as well as governments on both sides of the island as well as the early introduction of HAART on both sides of the island (1993) that a larger escalation of the epidemic was averted. Yet the work is never done.

Over the course of 2010 it became apparent that the time had come to renew the work of the Foundation; to review the Foundation's mandate and services through the creation of a new strategic plan. A visioning exercise was undertaken to examine all aspects of the Foundation's vision, mission, structure, services and impact on the St Maarten community. This discussion framework was developed out of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis exercise carried out with key Board members and stakeholders. One-on-one strategic planning interviews were then tailored to be suitable with a cross-section of constituencies ranging from those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, government agencies, Board members, volunteers, the education sector, business representatives as well as members of the faith community.

A tremendous amount of consensus flowed out of these interviews as to what the focus of the Foundation ought to be as well as steps for its future direction. To illustrate, there was unanimity in the desire for the Foundation to evolve to the next level and create immediately a permanent Secretariat complete with staff. This new structure would carry-out the Foundation's activities and increasingly develop formal benchmarks and performance measures for its programs. In the same vein, financial accountability measures and reporting mechanisms to funders would be created.

It was acknowledged that there should be universal care and treatment for PLWHA and that these individuals should be called upon to play a greater role in both the policy development and advocacy roles of the Foundation. PLWHA are also to be given more support in creating larger support networks. The Foundation itself should continue to be a leader in reducing the negative impacts of HIV/AIDS in the community by placing greater emphasis on changing attitudes held by financial institutions and insurance companies in regards to both home loans and life insurance.

A constant refrain coming out of the consultations was that while the Foundation is very strong in the area of awareness and education for the general population and youth, effort and coverage is required to develop interventions for other at-risk populations. The consultations also increased the Foundation's desire to both expand the Girl Power

program as well as to launch the long-awaited Boys Program – Real Talk - as quickly as possible.

The Foundation was lauded for its work with the business community and is being encouraged to assist them in developing both education modules and supportive workplace policies for those with HIV/AIDS. Tangent to these educational opportunities, there is also an increased necessity for the Foundation to broaden its scope of activities to formally include education of other STIs and sexual and reproductive health as part of its overall work.

The following strategic document encapsulates these outputs and includes a revised vision and mission alongside six key strategies that will define and guide the Foundation’s work over the coming years:

**Strategy 1 Strengthening Human Resources, Leadership and Support for the Foundation**

**Strategy 2 Reaching People at Risk of HIV Infection**

**Strategy 3 Influencing the Environment Affecting Most At-Risk Populations (MARPs) and People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)**

**Strategy 4 Strengthening Support Services, including Care and Treatment for PLWHA and Those Affected by HIV/AIDS**

**Strategy 5 Strengthening and Diversifying (Financial) Resources**

**Strategy 6 Inclusion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Programs**

While the Foundation is fortunate to have a good working relationship with the government’s HIV/AIDS Program Management Team and excellent liaison with other organizations working in the field, both locally and regionally, the Foundation is intent on building on its strengths of the last decade. In the coming year it will formalize operations of the Foundation by creating a supporting body - a permanent HIV/AIDS Secretariat - with full time staff to help navigate its way to ensure programs and services will be better structured, monitored and evaluated. As the Foundation moves forward with these positive changes, it has set an overarching goal for St Maarten: to see a fifty percent reduction in new HIV infections over the next five years with a corresponding reduction in other sexually transmitted infections. However, it must not be forgotten that the ultimate goal is to not only serve those living with or affected by HIV and AIDS but to also eliminate its continued infiltration throughout our community.

*St Maarten AIDS*

*Foundation*

*Vision*

The St Maarten AIDS Foundation is committed to eliminate new HIV infections as well as other STIs through comprehensive prevention education and behavior change programs while securing universal access to care and treatment for all people living with HIV/AIDS in an environment free from stigma and discrimination.

*St Maarten AIDS  
Foundation*

*Mission*

*The St Maarten AIDS  
Foundation seeks to prevent  
the transmission of HIV and  
other STIs and reduce their  
negative impact including  
stigma and discrimination  
while providing compassionate  
care, practical support  
services, and advocating on  
behalf of those living with or  
affected by HIV/AIDS*

*St Maarten AIDS Foundation's  
work is guided by the  
following values:*

*Confidentiality*

*Quality*

*Respect for diversity*

*Gender equality*

*Inclusiveness*

*Accessibility*

*Transparency*

*Trust*

*Integrity and Honesty*

*Accountability*

*Secular and non-partisan*

*Compassionate*

*Professionalism*

*Open communication*

*The Foundation also provides equal  
opportunities irrespective of HIV  
status, race, political views, religion  
and sexuality.*

## The St Maarten AIDS Foundation....

- ❖ Operates as a national, non-profit organization that serves the Dutch-side population
- ❖ Collaborates with like-minded local, regional and international organizations
- ❖ Promotes awareness and educates the public on prevention of HIV/AIDS while working to eradicate both stigma and discrimination
- ❖ Is a passionate advocate for and provides assistance to those living with HIV/AIDS
- ❖ Empowers PLWHA to be active in all policy and program development and implementation.
- ❖ Mobilizes committed, passionate volunteers and all available political, technical, scientific and financial resources in order to execute effective prevention, care and treatment programs.
- ❖ Operates innovative and impactful initiatives such as:
  - Girl Power and Real Talk
  - Informative and up-to-date website including the confidential link, *Ask Annie*
  - Free-rapid testing days
  - Care, support and treatment for those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS
  - The support group for PLWHA, H.O.P.E.
  - Sexual and reproductive programs and rights
  - Collection of dependable statistics for surveillance and monitoring of PLWHA
  - Brothel education and condom distribution
  - Migrant information/education and access to care and treatment

*“The only cure we have today is education”*

## A Review of Strengths, Challenges and Achievements

### Strengths

- Enduring organisation/still in existence/ well established activities
- Strong public education campaigns and prevention activities with a consistent message
- Perceived as 'getting things done'
- Excellent media/ public relations
- Recognised in the community
- Foundation has a wealth of knowledge
- Accomplished much with limited resources
- Passionate, consistent and committed volunteers and leadership
- Dr Gerard van Osch viewed as heart and soul of support, treatment and care
- Provision of medicine for those that are uninsured
- Compassionate care provided to those living with HIV/AIDS
- Well respected by and hold strong relationships with government, schools and the business community
- Major player on the government Steering Committee and HIV Coordinating Team
- Little bureaucracy/streamlined operations
- Effective fundraisers particularly the Stronger Together collaboration with ScotiaBank
- Effective, successful initiatives such as Girl Power, free rapid testing days, Ask Annie, H.O.P.E.
- Surveillance data

### Challenges

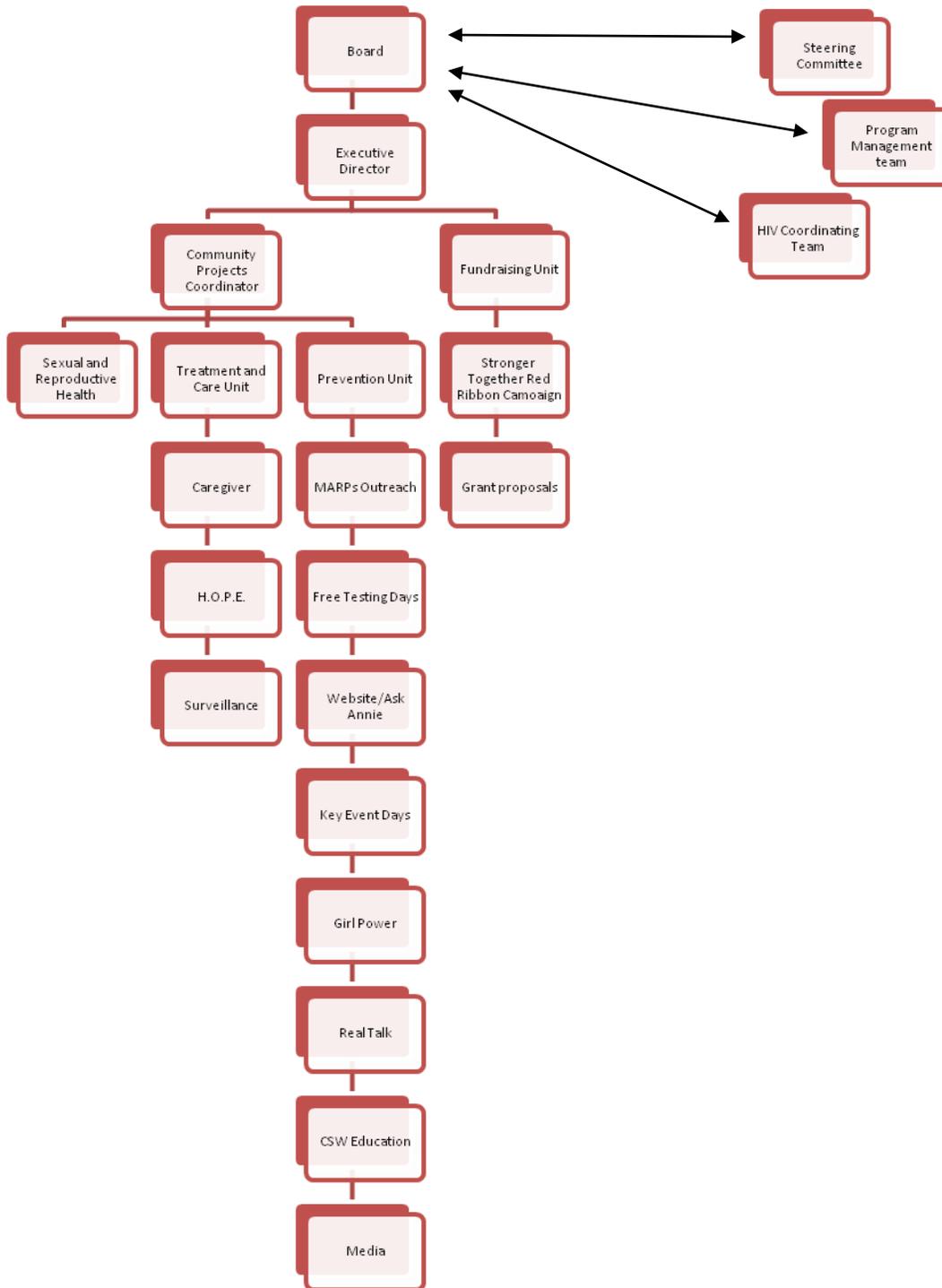
- Demand for services exceeds volunteer capacity
- Volunteer management perceived to be weak/non-existent
- Volunteers facing burnout
- Reliance on one or two key leaders
- Lack of succession planning within the organisation
- Lack of administrative capacity/100% reliant on volunteers
- Lack of readily available technical expertise for project development/grant proposals
- Lack of monitoring and evaluation
- Different funding streams not yet accessed
- Not enough program consistency year over year as a result of fluctuations in volunteer availability
- Criticism that the Foundation is slow to get new programs off the ground eg Boys program
- Negative view of HIV/AIDS still prevalent in the community in certain quarters
- Messaging not consistently communicated throughout the year
- Lack of materials in Haitian/Creole, Spanish, Chinese and Hindi nor coordinated outreach strategy to communities. New English-language materials in demand.
- Need to improve lobbying efforts for improvements in treatment and care for PLWHA
- Girl Power program does not reach enough girls
- Little being done to dispel 'myths' of HIV/AIDS in the business community
- Youth initiatives such as the youth consultations, youth media plans have not been sustained or have lapsed/little follow-through
- No assessments of volunteers have been undertaken, internal capacity
- Relationship with community and business groups
- Quality of the data received from the national lab presents incomplete picture

### Achievements

- Instituted regular epidemiology surveys that covered both sides of the island to gain better understanding of the epidemic
- Established training workshops for health care and social workers, counsellors,(Junior) AIDS Foundation members, Help-Line/Health Information Centre volunteers
- Developed successful Stronger Together fundraising campaigns that have realised a steady increase in funding over the last 5 years
- Expansion of free public testing days
- Innovative outreach program developed for young girls in order to raise self-esteem and teach responsible decision-making
- Conducted two surveys on knowledge, awareness and practices among all secondary school youth
- Annual World AIDS Day activities conducted
- Increased visibility in the community for AIDS Foundation activities
- Close collaboration with the National AIDS Program and liaison with several regional organisations
- Played a key role in the writing of the National Strategic HIV/AIDS plan
- Sensitized key influencers in government on the importance of HIV/AIDS preventions and government's involvement
- Annual candlelight memorial observances

# Appendix A

## Proposed Structure of AIDS Foundation (effective January 2012)



## Appendix B

### Code of Ethics

#### I. Personal and Professional Integrity

All staff, board members, and volunteers of the St Maarten AIDS Foundation shall act with honesty, integrity, and openness in our dealings as representatives of the organization. The Foundation promotes a working environment that represents these values and we put the needs of the organization ahead of personal interests. Above all, the Foundation respects the concept of confidentiality.

#### II. Mission

The St Maarten AIDS Foundation has a clearly outlined mission and vision statement.

Our mission is to prevent the transmission of HIV while providing compassionate care, practical support services, and advocating on behalf of those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

This is accomplished by enhancing the quality of life for HIV positive individuals, empowering people to make healthy choices to prevent the spread of the HIV virus by delivering cutting edge programs and services to individuals regardless of their background, gender, sexual orientation, or lifestyle.

All of our programs support our mission and all who work for, or on behalf of, the organization understand and are loyal to that mission and vision.

#### III. Governance

The St Maarten AIDS Foundation has a Board of Directors that is responsible for setting the mission and strategic direction of the organization and oversees the finances, operations, and policies of the organization. The Board of Directors:

- \* Ensures that its board members have the requisite skills and experience to carry out their duties and that all members understand and fulfill their governance duties acting for the benefit of the organization and its public purpose.
- \* Has a conflict of interest policy that ensures that any conflicts of interest or the appearance thereof are avoided or appropriately managed through disclosure or other means.
- \* Is responsible for the hiring, dismissal, and regular review of the performance of the Executive Director, and ensures that the compensation of the Executive Director is reasonable and appropriate. The Board with input from the Executive Director shall also be responsible for the hiring and dismissal of other staff members.
- \* Ensures that the Executive Director and appropriate staff provide the Board of Directors with timely and comprehensive information so that the Board of Directors can effectively carry out its duties.
- \* Ensures that the Foundation conducts all transactions and dealings with integrity and honesty.

- \* Ensures that the Foundation promotes working relationships with board members, staff, volunteers, and program beneficiaries that are based on mutual respect, fairness and openness.
- \* Ensures that the Foundation is fair and inclusive in its hiring and promotion policies and practices for all board, staff and volunteer positions.
- \* Ensures that the Foundation's policies are in writing, clearly articulated and officially adopted.
- \* Ensures that the Foundation's resources are responsibly and prudently managed.
- \* Ensures that the Foundation has the capacity to carry out its programs effectively.

#### **IV. Legal Compliance**

The St Maarten AIDS Foundation is committed to complying with all applicable laws and regulations of Sint Maarten.

#### **V. Responsible Stewardship**

The St Maarten AIDS Foundation manages its funds responsibly and prudently. We operate only in ways that are consistent with our mission, strategic vision, and values; our respect for our donors; and our goals of ending HIV/AIDS and enhancing the lives of those currently living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Our stewardship includes the following considerations:

- \* We invest an adequate amount on administrative needs to ensure effective accounting systems, internal controls, competent staff, and other expenditures critical to professional management.
- \* We compensate staff, and any others who may receive compensation, reasonably and appropriately in a transparent manner.
- \* We recognize the variety of factors that affect fundraising costs.
- \* We do not accumulate excessive operating funds.
- \* We ensure that all spending practices and policies are fair, reasonable, and appropriate to fulfill the mission of the organization.
- \* All financial reports are factually accurate and complete in all material respects
- \* We allocate funds through processes that are fair, reasonable, and responsive to community needs.

#### **VI. Openness and Disclosure**

The St Maarten AIDS Foundation provides comprehensive and timely information to the public, the media, and all stakeholders and is responsive in a timely manner to reasonable requests for information. All information about the Foundation will fully and honestly reflect the policies and practices of the organization. Basic informational data about the organization will be posted on our website or otherwise made available to the public. All solicitation materials accurately represent the Foundation's policies and practices and will respect the dignity of program beneficiaries. All organizational and program reports will be complete and accurate in all material respects.

#### **VII. Ongoing Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement**

The St Maarten AIDS Foundation is committed to establishing and then continuously monitoring its

program effectiveness. We are responsive to changes in our field of activity and responsive to the needs of our community.

### **VIII. Inclusiveness and Diversity**

The St Maarten AIDS Foundation has a policy of promoting inclusiveness; the diversity among our staff, board, and volunteers enriches everything we offer. The Foundation takes meaningful steps to promote inclusiveness in our hiring, retention, promotion, board recruitment, and community served.

### **IX. Fundraising**

The St Maarten AIDS Foundation is truthful in our solicitation materials. We respect the privacy concerns of individual donors and use funds consistent with donor intent. The Foundation discloses important and relevant information to potential donors.

In raising funds from public and private sources, the Foundation will respect the rights of donors, as follows:

- \* To be informed of our mission, the way the resources will be used and the Foundation's capacity to use donations effectively for donors' intended purposes.
- \* To be informed of the identity of those serving on the Foundation's governing board and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities.
- \* To be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given.
- \* To be assured that information about their donations is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by the law.
- \* To expect that all relationships between the Foundation and donors will be professional in nature.
- \* To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers or employees of the organizations.
- \* To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful, and forthright answers.