

PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS OBTAIN VOTING RIGHTS AT THE GLOBAL FUND

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Bangkok-AIDS advocates attending the International AIDS Conference taking place in Bangkok, Thailand, 11-16 July 2004 say the importance of the meaningful involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS in the response to the HIV pandemic is finally being acknowledged in concrete ways and not just in rhetoric.

At the 8th Board meeting of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the "Global Fund"), June 28-30, Board members approved voting rights for the Communities Delegation representative. The Global Fund is a public-private financing mechanism for programs targeting AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The Communities Delegation represents people infected and affected by these three diseases. Its current representative is Anandi Yuvaraj, Program Officer with the International AIDS Alliance, India, and member of the Indian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (INP+).

"The decision to give us a vote proves community advocacy works. We fought for this right, and we got it," said Rodrigo Pascal, alternate Communities Delegation representative. Pascal is also director of the AIDS group, Vivo Positivo, in Chile and one of the two representatives for Latin America on the Board of the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+). Pascal added that for people living with HIV/AIDS to have meaningful participation of this sort at the global level is a unique phenomenon, and it must be replicated everywhere, including at the local level, where it is markedly lacking.

"It was time for the Delegation to get this vote. After all, the Global Fund advocates for the meaningful involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS in national Global Fund processes," said the International Coordinator of GNP+ and Communications Focal Point for the Communities Delegation, Stuart Flavell. Flavell is also Chairperson of the Resource Mobilization Committee of the Global Fund.

"The Global Fund vote is wonderful news. But it will be even better news if it results in also improving the involvement in AIDS programs of HIV-positive people from particularly vulnerable groups," commented Mauro Guarinieri with some concern. Guarinieri is Chairperson of the European AIDS Treatment Group and a representative for the European region on the Board of GNP+. According to Guarinieri, not only does society at large discriminate against HIV-positive sex workers and injecting drug users but AIDS organizations also do. "I hope that the Global Fund vote will be the rising tide that will raise all the ships", added Guarinieri colorfully.

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