



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Gender, Human Rights and HIV

Robert Carr

Executive Director, CVCC

Co-Chair, Global Forum on MSM and HIV

Capitol Hill

September 15, 2008



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Gender

“Gender comprises widely held beliefs, expectations, customs and practices within a society that define ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ attributes, behaviours and roles and responsibilities.”

“Gender is an integral factor in determining an individual’s vulnerability to HIV infection, his or her ability to access care, support or treatment, and the ability to cope when infected or affected by HIV.”



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

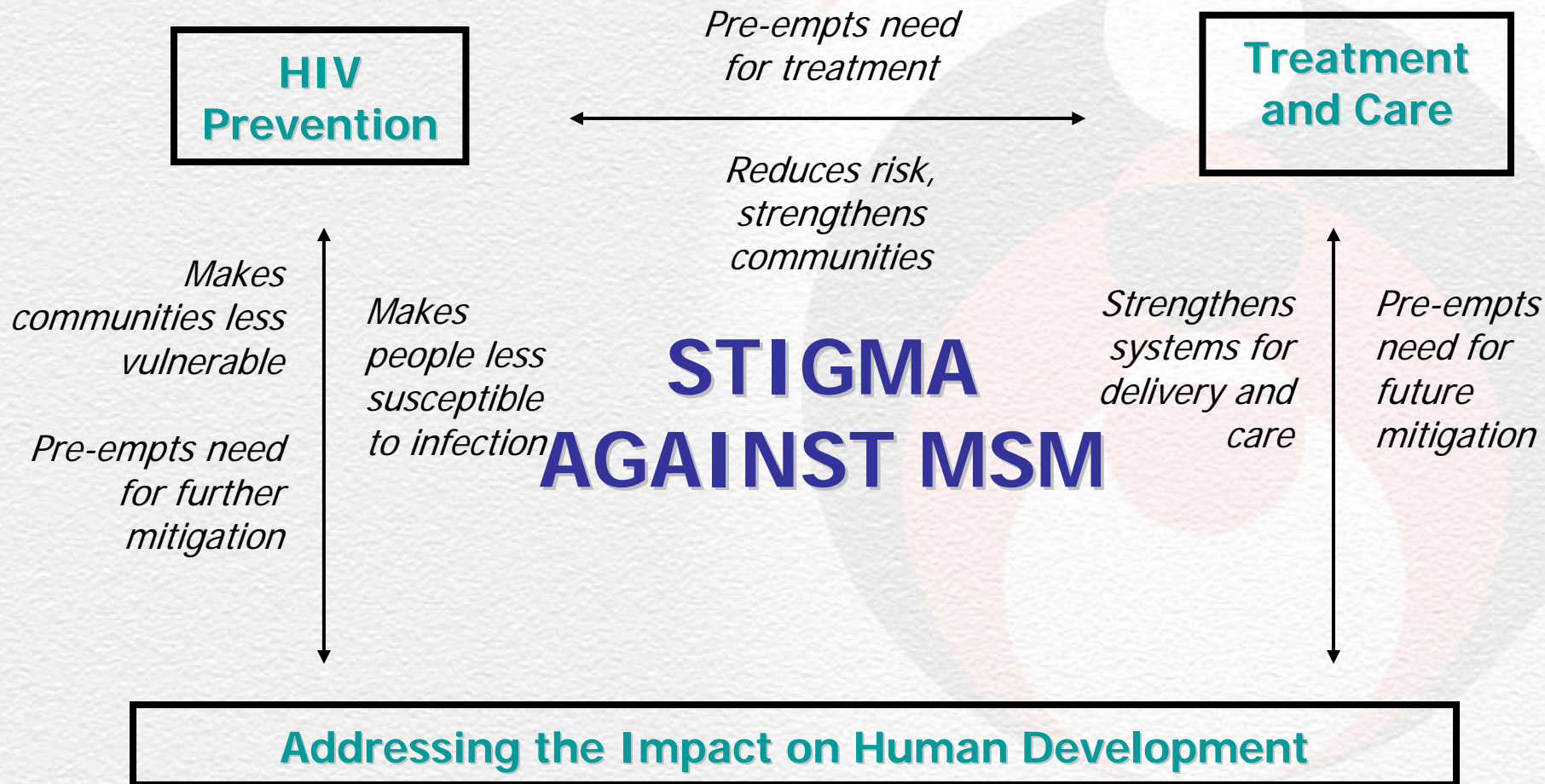
# Gender Trouble

While UNAIDS' definition is normative, perhaps the most dangerous aspect of gender is the ways in which gender norms are policed through human rights abuses.

Gender transgressions are often highly sanctioned, sometimes illegal, and in many part of the world are met with violence, often under the guise of following religious teachings, or protecting cultural purity.



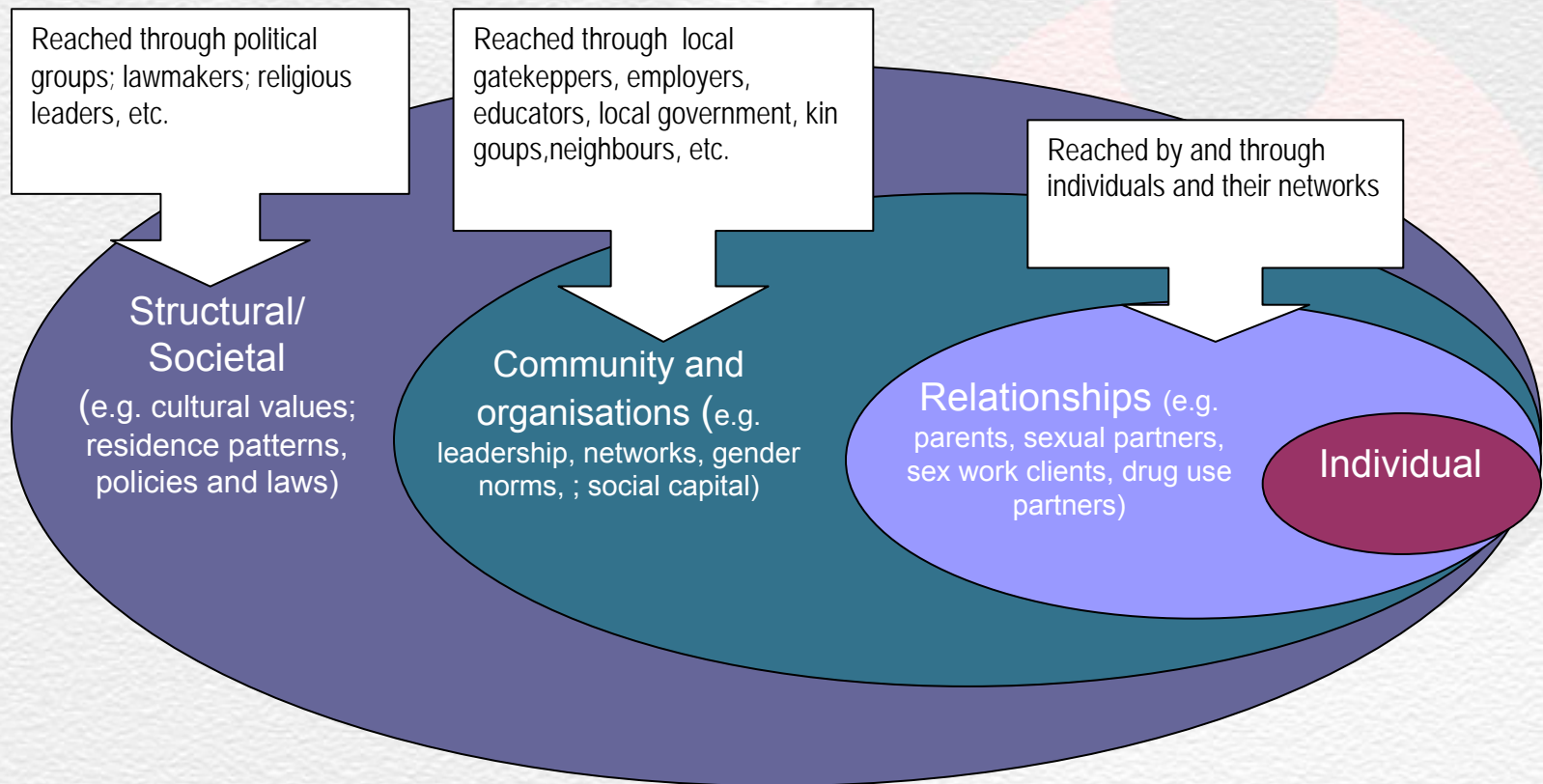
Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition





Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

Ecological models illustrate “levels” or “layers” of influence that affect individual opportunities and choices. Different stakeholders operate at these different “layers” and all must be reached using appropriate channels and activities in order to shift the barriers to universal access.





Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Political Leaders on Rights

“The Gambia is a country of believers... sinful and immoral practices [such] as homosexuality will not be tolerated in this country.” - President Jammeh, The Gambia

He avowed that he would “cut off the head” of any homosexual in the Gambia in the name of morality.



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Political Leadership on Rights

“86 member states of the United Nations and an additional 6 provinces or territorial units criminalize consensual same sex acts among adults, including 7 countries which have legal provisions with death penalty as punishment.”

International Lesbian and Gay Association, 2008



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Governance and Citizenship

- Raises fundamental questions for us of citizenship, power and the social pact that prevails in nationalist thinking:
  - “The people”
  - Nation ↔ State relationships
  - Dominant and Minority Cultures & Rights
  - Tolerance & Individual Rights vs Nationalism & Religion



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Dialogue With Key Institutions

- National HIV Control Programmes
- Police
- Court Systems
- Education System
- Media
- Church
- Local Human Rights Groups



# A Gendered Rights-Based Strategy

- Risk Reduction
  - Abstinence
  - Being Faithful
  - Condoms + Lubricant
- Vulnerability Reduction & Social Inclusion
  - Community Empowerment & Safe Spaces
  - Social Change Communication
    - Internal Community Dialogue
    - Locally-Based, Community Driven Human Rights Advocacy
  - Leaders Held Accountable Internationally



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Lessons Learned

- Structural change is a **long haul** process
  - Years, not months
  - Open ended, learning process
- Centrality of indigenous social movements
  - consensus on core principles
  - understanding of role government will/will not play



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Lessons Learned

- Nationalism/patriotism often constructs human rights/gender transformation as culturally alien to “our” ways and “our” people
  - MUST include local voices of authority localising progressive values
  - Likely to be an unfolding process



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Lessons Learned

- Supporting communities to challenge structural drivers requires facilitating and supporting strong alliances
  - Need work to sustain and manage
  - Funding for structural work is too hard to find, uneven and intermittent
  - Cost in human resources is great
  - Someone or ones have to be able to withstand/survive the political and economic pressure



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

# Taking to scale

- Community action
- Regional and national alliances
- Collective learning
- Open ended process (learning and action)
- Linking more so than simply replicating



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition

“We...need to move to comprehensive, ‘business-like’ programs to combat homophobia and strengthen human rights – and particularly gay rights – if catastrophes throughout the Global South are to be avoided.”

Dr Peter Piot, Mexico 2008



Caribbean  
Vulnerable  
Communities  
Coalition



Thank You!