

APLA: CHINA

APLA began its focus on China in late 2006, responding to troubling trends in risk behavior and infection rates among domestic men who have sex with men (MSM). As the national caseload has continued to rise, the percentage of HIV cases attributed to male-to-male sexual contact has increased eight-fold from 2005 to 2007. Without immediate, far-reaching and precisely tailored intervention, these rates will undoubtedly continue to climb.

In 2007, APLA conducted a needs assessment on the ground in China. APLA staff met with leaders of community-based organizations (CBOs) and young MSM from Lanzhou to Harbin to learn first-hand about the efforts they are undertaking to keep MSM safe and the challenges they face in the process. Those relationships with our counterparts in China have continued to this day, forming the cornerstone of APLA's strategy and programs in the region.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING

Effective prevention programming means more than basic HIV education and condom distribution.

APLA combines the agency's 25 years of experience with diverse MSM populations with a strong reverence for the conditions, culture and contributions of MSM in China to create new psychosocial programming for this unique population.

TARGETED RESEARCH

There is currently a dearth of qualitative data focused on MSM in China, leaving program designers with little evidence on which to base new prevention strategies.

We apply rigorous evaluation processes to all of our programs to ensure that the data we gather contributes to the small but growing body of original scientific literature that can inform effective program design for Chinese MSM.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Due to a pervasive language barrier, Chinese community-based organizations have few opportunities to share their work and experiences with parties outside China. CBO access to useful research and program data gathered in other countries is also extremely limited.

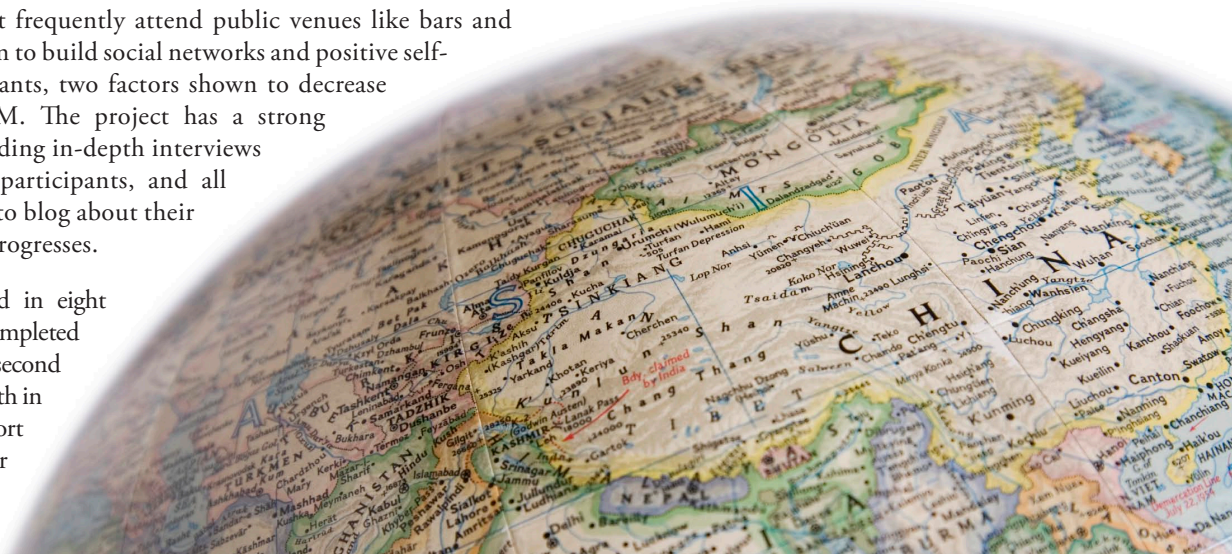
Via information exchange on the organizational level, along with the development of bilingual resource libraries and targeted trainings in Mandarin, APLA aims to reduce the negative impact of this language barrier on Chinese CBOs.

IN FOCUS: Heart Talk Support Groups

APLA International and our primary partner, the San Francisco-based foundation AIDS Relief Fund for China (ARFC), have teamed up to create Heart Talk Support Groups, a psychosocial HIV prevention program for Chinese MSM. The program collaborates with Chinese CBOs to co-design and implement a series of weekly small-group meetings with MSM from their communities.

Targeting MSM that do not frequently attend public venues like bars and cruising spots, the groups aim to build social networks and positive self-identity among the participants, two factors shown to decrease risky behavior among MSM. The project has a strong evaluation component including in-depth interviews with both facilitators and participants, and all participants are encouraged to blog about their experience as the program progresses.

The first round, implemented in eight cities across the country, was completed in December, 2008. The second round kicked off the same month in twelve new cities with the support of amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research.



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APLA
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25 YEARS