



# Warkah RIBEN MERAH



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## Youth Voices Count!

Southeast Asia & Pacific Regional MSM & TG Consultation Meeting 2010  
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The underrepresentation of the collective voices of MSM and transgender (TG) youths in the regional response to the HIV epidemic was what triggered World AIDS Campaign and Hivos to assemble 33 fabulous young MSM and TG leaders from 13 countries of the Southeast Asia and the Pacific (SEAP) region to identify key issues affecting the at-risk young population and to brainstorm 'SMART' (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound) recommendations. The Youth Voices Count (YVC) 2010 think tank convened from Sept 1 to 3, 2010 in the Thai capital of Bangkok, the other city that never sleeps.

Representing MSM and TG youths of Malaysia at the regional level was no easy task for us, as you can imagine. Being in a conference room full of equally young, vocal, enthusiastic leaders of their respective organisation, you couldn't help but feel compelled to healthily 'out-fab' or 'out-mic' each other (there was no blood spill, thank GaGa for that... or Cher for the 'dinosaurs' out there).

But in all seriousness, we believe the three-day consultation achieved what it set out to accomplish (and then some). Through rigorous group work in what felt like a million breakout sessions, five key issues faced by youth MSMs and TGs in the region were identified (see box), with recommendations to *smartly* tackle them, of course. These recommendations were then presented to partner organisations (International HIV/AIDS Alliance, APCOM, UNAIDS RST, Bangkok Counselling Service, UNESCO, ANPUD, and the Global Forum on MSM and HIV) at the end of day three who had all pledged their support to help advance our cause. The plenary sessions by speakers from various organisations and partners that work closely with MSM and TG youths in the region introduced us to innovative ideas on enhancing our online networking capacities (Fridae.com), programmes specifically addressing the needs of young PLHIVs, and opportunities to collaborate with existing regional networks such as 7 Sisters, Purple Sky Network (Greater Mekong sub-region), Insular Southeast Asian Network on MSM, TG and HIV (ISEAN), and Developed Asia Network for MSM and TG Sexual Health (DAN).

- Five key issues affecting young MSMs and TGs in the SEAP region**
1. Stigma and Discrimination
  2. Education: Lack of Support and Resources
  3. "Self" Issues  
*Issues affecting the confidence and self worth of young MSM and TG*
  4. Networking
  5. Health and Welfare: Lack of Support and Resources

It was, all in all, an eye-opening experience for the both of us. Sharing our personal stories and experiences with the other participants made us realise that we are not alone in the fight for our cause. The site visit on the second day to four HIV service delivery centres for at-risk youths around Bangkok was also particularly inspirational. We were impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the younger staff members at those sites (one peer counsellor was even as young as 19 years old!) which in turn motivated us to advocate for similar targeted services to be delivered to young MSMs and TGs in Malaysia.

We hope that the end of the three-day meeting marks the beginning of youth voices being heard in local, regional and international forums. We also hope that all of us will be able to keep the momentum going as we still have a long way to go to achieve our targets (in style!).

*P/S: Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC), in particular the MSM Cluster fully supports this initiative. Two MAC staffers, Shah and Zaki are members of the working group for this consultation. A follow up consultation meeting was held in Pattaya from Nov 7 to 9, 2010 attended by selected reps from each sub-region to review recommendations and translate them into action.*



Intipati sambutan Hari AIDS Sedunia 2010 merupakan kesinambungan tema tahun terdahulu – "Kotakan Janji, Banteras AIDS: Akses Universal & Hak Asasi Manusia". Kalendar bulan Disember dipenuhi aktiviti-aktiviti yang diterajui Kementerian Kesihatan, ahli-ahli gabungan MAM dengan sokongan rakan korporat dan Selebriti Sokongan Riben Merah. Yayasan PT memulakan sambutan Hari AIDS Sedunia dengan temasya *Red Carnival* yang berlangsung pada 27 – 28 Nov di Kuala Lumpur. Pengisian program ini berteraskan usaha-usaha meningkatkan kesedaran tentang HIV dan AIDS menerusi aktiviti-aktiviti interaktif dengan pengunjung.

Momentum sambutan diteruskan di Sabah dengan aktiviti-aktiviti anjuran dua ahli gabungan. KASIH menerusi lawatan rumah perlindungan oleh M.A.C Cosmetics, manakala SAGA menerusi Majlis Makan Malam Amal untuk mengisi dana organisasi. Kedua-dua acara berlangsung pada 1 Disember dan disemarakkan dengan kemunculan Dayang Nurfaizah, Fahrin Ahmad, Joey G, Owen Yap, dan Shah Shamsiri. Majlis pelancaran sambutan peringkat kebangsaan oleh Kementerian Kesihatan pula berlangsung di Kelantan pada 5 Disember. Usaha meningkatkan kesedaran tentang HIV penting di negeri yang mencatatkan jumlah kes jangkitan HIV tahunan tertinggi ini.

Terima kasih diucapkan kepada semua yang menjayakan sambutan Hari AIDS Sedunia 2010. Semoga usaha kita menepati wawasan MAM dan diberkati Ilahi.

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