



Summary Report of the Rapid Assessment of **Vietnam Network of MSM and Transgender**





JumpStart is APCOM's flagship capacity strengthening programme for community organisations. We work to improve, and build on an organisation's existing management and advocacy, while encouraging leadership for a community-led HIV response. The project serves as well as a catalyst for regional, sub-regional and national networks to explore their core competencies that they can build on and, at the same time, explore skill development areas that they still need. JumpStart started as a partnership of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) and APCOM.

JumpStart developed two unique tools to assess the network or organisation: the Rapid Assessment Apparatus (Rap App), a scoring tool which assesses a community organisation in its operations and performance against programmatic and organisational criteria and the Dissemination Plan Template (D-Plate), a tool to assist community organisations to use the available strategic information in doing more systematic and planned advocacy.



The Rapid Assessment Apparatus is an assessment tool joint designed by APCOM and AFAO under this initiative to assess the core competencies of an organisation or network against eleven programmatic and organisational areas. The networks undertook a facilitated self-assessment process to identify their capacity and technical needs. the findings were the bases for technical support.

Summary Report of the Rapid Assessment of Vietnam Network of MSM and Transgender
(Based on data and information collected through the APCOM/AFAO Rapid Assessment Tool, December 2014)

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The Vietnam Network of MSM and Transgender (VNMSMTG)

advocates for and represents communities of MSM and transgender people in Vietnam. Its mission is to ensure early ARV treatment for HIV positive MSM and transgender people; to counter stigma and discrimination against MSM and transgender people; and to propose reforms in existing laws on gender recognition.

VNMSMTG was founded in July 2013 to gain a stronger advocacy voice for MSM and transgender people, and to support the scale up and quality provision of MSM and transgender specific programmes and services in Vietnam. As of October 2014, the network had 102 members across 38 provinces. It is hosted by Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI).

The network performs its work through lobbying, community mobilisation and joint activities with other organisations. It promotes community-based testing, carries out research and builds the capacity of its members in the areas of governance, resource mobilisation and organisational development.

VNMSMTG was assessed in 17 key organisational and programmatic areas, using the **Jumpstart Rapid Assessment Apparatus (Rap App)**. The Rap App is one of the core tools of JumpStart, an MSM and transgender network capacity strengthening initiative implemented through a partnership with APCOM and the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO). The tool allows us to create a snapshot of the strengths and technical support needs of an organisation at a given time, based on 11 key organisational and programmatic criteria, and 6 criteria on engagement with key affected populations. The tool was completed by VNMSMTG during a facilitated self-assessment process at a two-day meeting in Ho Chi Minh City in December 2014.





TOP THREE TECHNICAL SUPPORT PRIORITIES

Fulfilment of the following technical support needs would transform VNMSMTG into a more effective and efficient organisation.

A. Strengthening capacity in policy analysis

As the voice of the MSM and transgender populations in Vietnam, VNMSMTG is expected to conduct high-level advocacy activities requiring formal engagement with government officials, UN agencies, regional and sub-regional networks, and other relevant stakeholders. The network needs to build its internal capacity for policy analysis, to ensure staff and Board members can identify key information and use it to develop advocacy messages. This includes interpretation of data that is collected from members and the MSM and transgender community. VNMSMTG needs support to build its capacity in interpreting data and analysing policies, as well as identifying accessible and relevant documents that the network can use in its work.

B. Securing core funding to build and support the secretariat

Although VNMSMTG tackles a number of issues facing MSM and transgender people, it does not prioritise its advocacy messages or have an advocacy strategy. As a result, the network does not use the platforms available to it effectively (for example its partnership with the Ministry of Health and its seat on the CCM).

It needs technical support to develop an advocacy strategy based on a theory of change, which includes identification and prioritisation of advocacy messages and development of workplans, budgets, and monitoring and evaluation. This will ensure that everyone in the network is promoting unified and clear messages.

C. Establishment of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system

VNMSMTG recognises that M&E is a powerful management tool that enables an organisation to track its progress and demonstrate the impact of a given project or programme. It is vital if funding is to be secured, and it is an important way to make the organisation accountable to its members and stakeholders. VNMSMTG needs technical support to establish its own M&E system, and training and mentoring to build staff and Board capacity.



RESULTS

VNMSMTG achieved a total score of **157/216** in the Rap App. It was assessed in 11 key areas and 6 sub-areas, both organisational and programmatic, with each area having a maximum score of 12. A summary of the data and information from each key area is outlined below.

A. ORGANISATIONAL CRITERIA

i) Governance

VNMSMTG's Board (established 2013) has seven members, elected as representatives of the three regions of the country (4 or 5 MSM and 2 or 3 transgender members). The network members also elect a Director from Hanoi and Deputy Director from Ho Chi Minh City within the Board. The governance structure does not currently include any sub-committees or advisory boards to provide focused inputs on key advocacy or programme areas. The roles, responsibilities and positions of the Board members are outlined in terms of reference signed by Board members once elected. However, there is some overlap between governance and executive responsibilities: due to lack of an established Secretariat, each member of the Board also has responsibility for specific management and programme tasks, including implementation of project activities and representation for the network.

Election of new Board members takes place every two years, but procedures are not well-established and are subject to revision based on the network's situation at the time of the election.

The Board integrates feedback from network members into its decision-making processes. However, there is no official process through which the Board communicates with members, and it is mainly ad hoc through exchange of emails. The Board does not meet regularly due to a lack of funding, and this makes it difficult to achieve the specified quorum of 4 out of 7 needed to conduct network business.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG has the basic components of good governance in place, but the Board's governance role is made more complicated by the lack of a functioning network secretariat. The network needs to **register as a network** under Vietnamese law, and needs to advocate with its partners for **funding for regular Board meetings**. An annual general meeting would strengthen the role of members in the good governance of the network, and this also requires funding. VNMSMTG needs technical support to **develop a governance manual** which defines governance operations and arrangements including the procedures for elections, the communication system between Board members and between the Board and members, and regulations to ensure a clear separation of oversight and management roles and responsibilities.

RESULTS

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ii) Staffing

VNMSMTG does not currently have any paid members of staff. The network is hosted by SCDI which provides part-time support to assist with financial management, communication and oversight. This staff member is not contracted by the network itself so does not have decision-making power.

The lack of core funding, and consequent lack of paid staff is a major barrier to the development and growth of the network. It has implications on governance, finance, programming, M&E, partnerships and membership.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG needs urgent support from its partners to access **core funding** to allow it to employ secretariat staff who will focus on strengthening the network. Without this, many of the other recommendations made in this report will not be possible.

iii) Finance

VNMSMTG uses a fiscal agent to manage its funds. It does not currently have an official bank account or an accounting system. Original receipts and other proof of expenditures are kept by the network and closely monitored on a project by project basis.

The use of a fiscal agent has caused some problems in the past with regard to reporting expenditures. To minimise confusion and increase control of the network's finances, two Board members have opened a joint bank account in their names for acceptance of small grants, subject to donor endorsement of this system. It is yet to be seen whether donors will approve this.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG needs substantial support to develop a **financial management system** within which budgets and expenses can be monitored and analysed. This would improve the likelihood of the network accessing grants, but it needs to secure core funding for a functioning secretariat first.

iv) Resource Mobilisation

VNMSMTG has actively pursued funding opportunities with several agencies at country level but so far its proposals have been unsuccessful. At present, VNMSMTG has one source of funding through VUSTA, which covers an agreement period of four years but is confirmed on an annual basis.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG needs support from an external consultant to develop a **resource mobilisation strategy** which looks at non-traditional funding mechanisms as well as planning for the long-term. The Board members and any staff recruited would benefit from **training in effective proposal development**, and the network needs support or mentoring to improve its **effective engagement with potential funding partners**.



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v) Partnerships and Networking

VNMSMTG actively develops and maintains partnerships with other organisations at the national level. It occasionally organises activities with these partners, but mostly it participates in their activities (for example national meetings to evaluate MSM advocacy activities or plan activities for the year ahead). Regular communication between the network and its national partners is conducted through email, face-to-face meetings and telephone. It meets with regional or international organisations at occasional regional meetings, conferences and workshops.

A member of VNMSM-TG Board has a seat on the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) for the Global Fund in Vietnam which provides an important platform for the network to voice the issues of MSM and transgender people. The network also has strong partnerships with national CBO/NGOs, donor agencies and partners; and regional/global networks or organisations including APCOM, APTN, APCASO, AFAO, and MSMGF. The network could improve its relationship with UN agencies at national level including UNAIDS and UNDP. The network's partnership with the Provincial AIDS Council (PAC) is not strong, and it does not provide VNMSMTG with financial support.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG needs to **engage more effectively with stakeholders** (for example through courtesy calls and information sharing). It would benefit from external support to conduct a **partner mapping/analysis** and develop a database of existing and potential partners and stakeholders. This support would include establishing ways to improve exchange of information between the network and its partners.

vi) Membership

VNMSMTG achieved maximum points in this criteria. It currently has 102 member organisations working with MSM, transgender people or both. Each member organisation has its own self-help group and individual MSM and/or transgender members.

VNMSMTG actively engages with its member organisations through the VNMSMTG Facebook page, as well as through visits conducted by members of the Board.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG needs support from an external consultant to **develop a communications system** or plan to guide information flow from the network to members and vice versa. **Membership guidelines** would also be helpful in defining the criteria for eligible members, ensuring representation across the country, establishing feedback mechanisms on issues that need decisions or consideration, and defining the scope of VNMSMTG and members roles and responsibilities. This may include an MoU or membership agreement between the network and its members.

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B) CRITERIA ON ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY AFFECTED POPULATIONS (KAP)

This section of the Rap App aims to measure the engagement and scope of the network's work with KAP, with the goal of identifying opportunities to expand coverage.

Overall, VNMSMTG has excellent engagement with KAP, including those with multiple KAP identities. It would benefit from a more formal system of ensuring consistent information flow between the network and its members and vice versa. In order to strengthen engagement with groups it is currently less engaged with, the network should consider establishing an additional seat on the Board or a sub-committee to facilitate greater engagement with young and positive groups of MSM and transgender people, and MSM and transgender people who sell sex or use drugs.

i) MSM engagement

VNMSMTG achieved the maximum score in this section. The issues facing MSM are well-integrated into organisational advocacy priorities on prevention, testing and early initiation of treatment, and human rights. Five members of the Board officially represent the MSM community. The network engages with MSM who are HIV positive, young, selling sex, or using drugs, and also collaborates with organisations focusing on MSM rights, such as LGBT rights groups.

The MSM population is well-represented in the membership and has active engagement with the network. Members are consulted in project design through email and Facebook.

In line with discussions under the communications section, the network would benefit from technical support and guidance to develop a communications plan which helps it to establish a more consistent system for information flow to and from the MSM community.

ii) Engagement with transgender people

VNMSMTG achieved the maximum score in this criteria. It has integrated the issues facing transgender people into its work through awareness raising, engagement on laws related to gender identification, and health policy work related to hormone therapies before, during and after sexual reassignment surgery. Two members of the Board officially represent transgender people. Transgender organisations compose 15% of the membership, and these members are actively engaged in the network's project design and activities. The network includes organisations which work with transgender people who are young, HIV positive, sell sex or use drugs.

VNMSMTG has also initiated a partnership with the Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTAN).

iii) Engagement with young people

The issues facing young key affected populations (YKAP) are not well-integrated into VNMSMTG's organisational advocacy work and young people are not clearly defined as a target group. Some members of the Board are young, but they do not officially represent YKAP. The network is however linked to the regional network for young MSM and transgender people, Youth Voices Count (YVC).



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iv) *Engagement with sex workers*

VNMSMTG has integrated the issues facing male and transgender sex workers into its organisational advocacy work. Some members of the Board belong to the sex worker community but do not officially represent sex workers. The Vietnam Network of Sex Workers (VNSW) is a member of VNMSMTG and is also hosted by SCDI.

There are only a small number of VNMSMTG members who identify as sex workers, all of whom are MSM or transgender people, and they demonstrate active engagement with the network.

v) *Engagement with people who use drugs (PWUD)*

VNMSMTG has integrated the issues facing PWUD into its work. There are no official PWUD representatives on the Board. However the network does have an active partnership with the Vietnam Network of People who Use Drugs (VNPUD) and the Asia Pacific Network of People who Use Drugs (ANPUD).

Although there is PWUD representation within the network's membership, many PWUD hide their identity, and present themselves only as MSM or transgender people. However, issues relating to this population are raised during consultations or through email or Facebook.

vi) *Engagement with PLHIV*

The issues facing PLHIV are well-integrated into VNMSMTG's work. There is however no official representation of PLHIV on the Board.

The network does have a small number of HIV positive members who are engaged and consulted on project design through the same means as with other key affected population members. The network has active partnerships with the Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VN+), HIV Prevention Center, SCDI, Cohest, Center for Community Health Research and Development (CCRD), and Care International Vietnam.

One of the challenges within the network is insufficient capacity to support the PLHIV and peer-support groups within the VNMSMTG membership. With increased staff capacity it would be able to provide its member organisations with more consistent technical support.



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C. PROGRAMMATIC CRITERIA

i) *Project design and management, including monitoring and evaluation*

VNMSMTG is currently implementing one project, with funding and technical support from VUSTA until 2017. This focuses on development of the network, including setting of strategic goals, vision and mission, and communication with members. The project has clear objectives and activities to guide implementation. However, as VNMSMTG has no other programme funding outside this one project it has no broader organisational work plan in place. It lacks a monitoring and evaluation system to facilitate data collection and documentation of the activities which are taking place.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG needs considerable technical support to improve its capacity in this criteria, including to **develop an M&E system** to support analysis of network activities and document lessons learned. Training for Board members and future secretariat staff on M&E would also be needed. The network would also benefit from advice from regional networks on how to **strengthen its collaboration with national LGBT groups** for joint work on sexual orientation and gender identity, and human rights.

ii) *Technical Capacity*

VNMSMTG Board members, and the SCDI staff who support the network, have strong technical knowledge on HIV prevention, care and treatment which they are able to bring to VNMSMTG's advocacy activities. Technical support is also received from SCDI and VUSTA. VNMSMTG uses the limited research papers and reports available in Vietnamese as sources of information to support its advocacy work and policy engagement.

VNMSMTG occasionally carries out training and workshops for its member organisations when invited by VUSTA.

Recommendations for next steps

VUSTA has previously carried out a capacity assessment of VNMSMTG so the recommendations from that should be taken into account when identifying the network's priority areas of technical capacity strengthening. It would benefit from advice on how to **gain consistent access to regional and global information** on HIV prevention, treatment and care services and policy developments, as well as sourcing funds or volunteers for translation of documents into Vietnamese. VNMSMTG would like to prioritise building its capacity in technical areas including **sexual orientation and gender identity**, community-based research on early **initiation of treatment**, and **human rights**.



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iii) Advocacy

The Rap app indicates that VNMSMTG does not have a clear advocacy agenda, and its capacity to mobilise around key advocacy issues is limited. It raises issues at partner and government meetings, but these activities are not documented or consistently followed up within a larger advocacy agenda.

VNMSMTG maintains relationships with the CCM and the Global Fund, however no upcoming advocacy activities are planned.

Although VNMSMTG has aspirations to conduct broader advocacy activities including production of advocacy materials, events and campaigns, its activities are limited by several challenges including: a lack of secure funding and human resources to mobilise activities; limited opportunity to engage with potential partners; limited strategic information to use as the evidence base for its advocacy; and the need to strengthen the credibility of the network.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG needs support to **develop an advocacy strategy**, ideally based on a theory of change, with the output of a detailed advocacy strategy and workplan. This strategy could be developed as part of an **advocacy training workshop**, which should include identification of target audiences, M&E for advocacy and creation of policy and advocacy materials.

iv) Communications

VNMSMTG is relatively strong in using available internal and external communication methods. Internal communication with Board members, network members and SCDI staff is regular through telephone calls, emails, social media and face-to-face meetings. The same methods are used to communicate with external partners. However, the network does not have any promotional materials or strategic documents to present to partners.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG needs external support to review its existing Communications Strategy to ensure it links communications closely with the network's strategic plan. It also needs support to **develop communications procedures** to guide internal communications between the Board and its members. It needs to urgently **secure funding** to support more regular face-to-face meetings of the Board and the network's members.



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v) Strategic Information

The network accesses strategic information from a range of sources including NGO partners, UN agencies, conferences, media outlets and online. Information is distributed internally to members and staff albeit not in a consistent manner, with much of the information shared unlikely to be relevant to the network's advocacy activities.

The network has not produced its own strategic information but some Board members have been data collectors in research studies under the leadership of other organisations.

Recommendations for next steps

VNMSMTG needs external support to strengthen its capacity to **analyse documents and policies**, and use relevant information to frame its advocacy messages. This includes building the network's capacity to collect and use relevant information from its members to influence its advocacy work (this may include **training in community research**).



TECHNICAL SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

This Rap App report provides VNMSMTG with a snapshot look at its strengths and weaknesses. It indicates that VNMSMTG is relatively strong in governance, partnerships and networking, membership, technical capacity and communications. The network is less strong in staffing, financial management, project design and management, advocacy and strategic information.

Engagement with key populations is strongest with MSM and transgender people, including those who sell sex or use drugs, but there is room for improvement in its engagement with young MSM and transgender people and HIV positive MSM and transgender people.

The Rap App has shown that VNMSMTG needs significant technical support in order to fulfil its potential as the Vietnamese network for MSM and transgender people. The next steps highlighted in this report in terms of the technical support needs of the organisation are summarised below, by short, medium and long-term.

Short-term

- Urgent support to mobilise core funding to support Secretariat staffing and operations, as well as funding to support more regular face-to-face meetings of the Board and the network's members.
- Support to develop an advocacy strategy through consultation with its members and other stakeholders, based on a theory of change.
- Support from its partners for the registration of VNMSMTG under Vietnamese law.
- Technical support to develop a governance manual to define governance operations and arrangements, including the formalisation of criteria and procedures for Board elections, establishing a communication system between Board members, and ensuring a clear separation of oversight and management roles and responsibilities.
- Develop a resource mobilisation strategy, perhaps following a training workshop in effective proposal development, then subsequent support or mentoring to improve the network's effective engagement with potential funding partners.
- Support to engage more effectively with stakeholders (for example through courtesy calls and regular information sharing).
- Support to conduct a partner mapping/analysis and develop a database of existing and potential partners and stakeholders.



TECHNICAL SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

Medium-term

- Once staff have been recruited, support should be identified for an advocacy training workshop (including identification of target audiences, M&E for advocacy and creation of policy and advocacy materials).
- Develop a financial system within which budgets and expenses are regularly monitored and analysed (including producing a Finance Policy and Procedures manual).
- Develop an M&E system to support measurement of network activities and document lessons learned, and to allow identification of areas for improvement. Training for Board members and future secretariat staff would then be needed.
- Advice from regional networks on how to strengthen collaboration with national LGBT groups for work on sexual orientation and gender identity, and human rights.
- Review VNMSMTG's existing communications strategy to ensure it links closely to the network's strategic plan (revised strategy needs to include procedures for internal and external communication).
- Develop membership guidelines to define eligibility criteria for members, ensure representation across the country, establish feedback mechanisms on issues that need decisions or consideration, and define the scope of VNMSMTG and its members' roles and responsibilities. This should include creation of a secure member database.
- Develop a Human Resources Manual and recruitment policies.
- Consider establishing an additional seat on the Board or a sub-committee to facilitate greater engagement with young and positive groups of MSM and transgender people, and MSM and transgender people who sell sex or use drugs.

Long-term

- Strengthen capacity to collect and use relevant information from its members to influence advocacy work (this may include training in community research).
- Advice on how to gain consistent access to regional and global information on HIV prevention, treatment and care services and policy developments, and identify how international documents can be translated into Vietnamese.
- Strengthen Board and any future staff's capacity in analysing documents and policies, and using information to frame the network's advocacy messages.
- Further technical capacity building/ongoing mentoring for the Board and any future staff members in sexual orientation and gender identity, community-based research on early initiation of treatment, and human rights.



Equity. Dignity. Social Justice.



*We are united in our courage to
advocacy issues that affect the lives
of men who have sex with men and
transgender people, including HIV,
rights, health and well being.*

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