



FACT SHEET

Introduction

The International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2008) is the most important gathering for the release and discussion of scientific, programmatic and policy developments in the global response to HIV/AIDS. As the largest and most diverse international meeting devoted to a global health issue, the conference brings together the movement of people responding to the epidemic to share lessons and together stake out the road ahead. An estimated 25,000 participants and 3,000 journalists are expected to attend AIDS 2008.

Conference Theme

The AIDS 2008 theme, *Universal Action Now*, emphasizes the need for continued urgency in the worldwide response to HIV/AIDS, and for action on the part of all stakeholders. The theme serves as a rallying call, reminding us that it is only through individual and collective action that we will reach the goals of ensuring universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010, and eliminating HIV stigma and discrimination.

Universal Action Now is also an important reminder that the HIV/AIDS epidemic does not exist in a vacuum. Strengthening health care systems in developing countries and addressing underlying social injustices that contribute to HIV risk and vulnerability -- such as poverty, gender inequality and homophobia -- are essential strategies in the global response to HIV. For those not yet engaged in the struggle, *Universal Action Now* is an invitation to get involved and make a difference.

Host City

México City is the most important economic, industrial and cultural centre of México. With an estimated 20 million residents, the Greater México City area (*Zona Metropolitana del Valle de México*) is the largest metropolitan area in the western hemisphere and the second largest city in world. AIDS 2008 will be held at Centro Banamex, the largest convention and business centre in México City.

AIDS 2008 will be the first International AIDS Conference ever held in Latin America and is expected to increase awareness of the disease and its impact throughout Mexico and the region. The conference is an opportunity to showcase diverse leaders and to address issues of particular relevance to Latin America, such as the need for dedicated resources, increased political leadership, and the connection between HIV and human rights issues.

AIDS 2008 Programme

Overall planning for the conference rests with the Conference Coordinating Committee (CCC). The CCC is co-chaired by IAS President and President of Fundación Huésped Dr. Pedro Cahn (Buenos Aires, Argentina) and Dr. Luis Soto-Ramirez, Head of the Molecular Virology Unit at México's Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Médicas y Nutrición Salvador Zubirán and Coordinator of the Clinical Care Committee of CONASIDA. Three international planning committees -- the Scientific Programme Committee, Community Programme Committee and Leadership

Programme Committee -- are responsible for developing programme sessions for AIDS 2008. The membership of the programme planning committees, as well as the CCC, includes representatives of scientific and civil society leaders from all over the world, including representatives from Mexico and the region.

The list of plenary speakers for AIDS 2008 is as follows:

Monday, 4 August (New Format): Panel Discussion: State of the Epidemic

Geoffrey Garnett (UK, Imperial College of London)
 Jaime Sepulveda (Mexico, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation)
 Alex Coutinho (Uganda, Infectious Disease Institute of Makerere University)
 Elizabeth Fadul (Dominican Republic, World Food Programme/Global Youth Partners)

Tuesday, 5 August:

Myron Cohen (US, UNC Center for Infectious Diseases, *Prevention Science*)
 Aueeba Kamarulzaman (Malaysia, University of Malaysia, *Substance Use and Harm Reduction*)
 Jorge Saavedra (Mexico, CENSIDA, Johnathan Mann Memorial Lecture, *Sex Between Men*)

Wednesday, 6 August:

Robert Silicano (US, Johns Hopkins University, *The Virus and the Immune System*)
 Linda Richter (South Africa, Human Sciences Research Council, *HIV and Children*)
 Bruno Spire (France, University of Marseilles/AIDES, *Prevention Strategies*)

Thursday, 7 August:

Anton Pozniak (UK, Chelsea and Westminster Healthcare NHS Trust, *Advances in Antiretroviral Therapy*)
 Rojake Odetoyinbo (Nigeria, Positive Action for Treatment Access, *Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV in Healthcare*)
 Gregg Gonsalves (US, AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa, *ART Scale Up*)

Friday, 8 August:

Chelakeya Jaramlah (Kenya, Ministry of Health, *HIV and TB*)
 Elena Reynaga (Argentina, Redtrasex, *Sex Work*)
 Edwin Cameron (South Africa, Supreme Court of Appeal, *Criminalization*)
 Zolibel Woods (Canada, International Women's Health Coalition, *Women and Girls*)

Abstract-driven Programme

The primary aim of all conference sessions is to encourage constructive dialogue and to take advantage of the opportunity for learning that AIDS 2008 offers. More than half of all sessions offered at AIDS 2008 will be abstract-driven sessions, which will be selected in April 2008, following a blind, peer-reviewed process. Abstract submissions will be accepted in five tracks representing the major areas of HIV/AIDS research:

- Track A: Biology and Pathogenesis of HIV
- Track B: Clinical Research, Treatment and Care
- Track C: Epidemiology, Prevention and Prevention Research
- Track D: Social, Behavioural and Economic Science
- Track E: Policy and Political Science

The regular abstract submission process closed on 19 February and organizers received over 10,500 submissions. Only a very limited number of late breaker abstracts will be considered later this year (see website for details; online submission accepted between 20 May and 16 June 2008). During the conference, the full text of all abstracts accepted for presentation will be available to the public through a searchable database accessible through the AIDS 2008 website.

Non-abstract Driven Programme

Developed by the three planning committees and the CCC, non-abstract driven sessions will focus attention on important and timely issues of the day. For the first time, the conference is planning six region-specific sessions. Each session will feature a range of experts from that particular region, who will help frame a discussion of key issues facing the region. As the information is confirmed, the topics and speakers for all sessions will be posted to the conference website (beginning in May). Daily Special Sessions, held during the lunch hour, will feature high-level speakers (such as Heads of State) and will be open to all delegates. One

such session will provide a report on the outcomes of the Positive Leadership Summit, a major international meeting of people living with HIV/AIDS, which is scheduled to take place in Mexico City just prior to AIDS 2008.

Programme Activities and Other Features

Programme activities at AIDS 2008 will include the Global Village, and the Cultural and Youth Programmes. Following an international call for submissions that closed on 19 Feb, a peer review process is now underway to select activities that will be part of each programme.

Established in 2004, the **Youth Programme** empowers young people by encouraging youth – including youth living with HIV – to help plan, participate in and benefit from the conference. In addition to sessions focusing on youth issues, activities will include a youth pre-conference, a website, a reception, a pavilion, and cultural activities and workshops related to youth.

The AIDS 2008 **Cultural Programme** will showcase the relationship between AIDS, art and culture. The programme will include visual arts, literature, film and video, performance art and other innovative mediums of expression. Activities will take place at the convention centre (in the Global Village and in Centro Banamex), and a more extensive programme of affiliated events is planned for offsite venues around Mexico City to link the community with the conference.

Open to conference delegates and the general public, the AIDS 2008 **Global Village** will be a space to share lessons learned, knowledge and skills, and to build coalitions and promote interactive learning among communities living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Some of the activities that will take place within the Global Village include: "Meet the Plenary Speakers" sessions; community dialogue spaces; the youth pavilion; networking zones; and NGO booths. The Global Village will be located at Las Americas Hippodrome, and will serve as the main entrance to Centro Banamex during the conference, thereby ensuring high visibility. No registration or fee is required to visit the Global Village.

The aim of the AIDS 2008 **Skills Building Programme** is to facilitate delegates' professional growth. During the week of the conference, dozens of training workshops, facilitated by HIV practitioners and experts from around the world, will be held.

The conference will also feature **exhibit booths** and **satellite meetings** hosted by commercial and non-commercial organizations. (See the conference website for more information about hosting a satellite meeting (31 March deadline) or sponsoring an exhibition booth (31 May deadline)).

Outreach and Spanish Language Access

To facilitate the participation of individuals and groups from Mexico, Latin America and across the world, conference organizers are engaged in a variety of outreach activities organized by the IAS. The conference features a fully bilingual website, and, for the first time in the history of the International AIDS Conference, all sessions held during the conference, including daily plenaries and special sessions, will offer simultaneous interpretation from English to Spanish. The Global Village will provide additional opportunities for delegates and the general public to interact and share their diverse experiences in different languages.

AIDS 2008's two-tiered fee structure is designed to strengthen the participation of delegates from low- and middle-income countries. **Register online by 7 May to avoid the last-minute surcharge.**

The International Scholarship Programme – which provided financial support to 1,000 delegates in 2006 – is open to everyone working or volunteering in the HIV/AIDS field in any country, including Mexico. **The scholarship application period closed on 26 February.**

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Online Programming

The AIDS 2008 website will feature comprehensive online programming. This includes online access to the full text of all accepted abstracts and to rapporteur reports from all sessions, as well as multi-lingual audio files and speaker slides from most sessions. Webcasts and related resources for major sessions will be provided by kaisernetwork.org. Clinical Care Options, Inc. will provide expert analyses of key scientific developments.

A new feature this year is the introduction of hubs, or remote viewing locations, where those who are unable to come to Mexico City will be able to attend local screenings of select sessions, along with local discussion. An official hub is planned for South Africa. Others, organized by conference partners and third parties, will take place in various locations around the world.

About the AIDS 2008 Organizers

AIDS 2008 is convened by the International AIDS Society (IAS), the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals. Local partners include the federal government of Mexico, the Government of Mexico City and local scientific and community leadership. International institutional partners for AIDS 2008 include:

- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and its co-sponsors, the World Health Organization (WHO) and World Food Programme (WFP)
- International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO)
- Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+)/International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW)
- World YWCA
- Asian Harm Reduction Network (AHRN)