

Monday November 21, 2011 marked the last day of the 2011 Caribbean HIV conference. Under the theme “Strengthening evidence to achieve sustainable action”, this important conference brought together more than 2700 stakeholders on November 18-21, in Nassau, The Bahamas, to focus on forging a sustainable response to the HIV epidemic in the region.



This event was the third Caribbean HIV conference in the past decade and was designed to build on successes of the previous events. This year's conference highlighted two critical and related issues affecting the HIV response in the region: sustainability and the importance of evidence in guiding strategies to attain this goal.

Presentations and discussions broached issues such as the evidence of progress made in the Caribbean, the challenges in the region to sustain the response, and critical evidence-based interventions to attain HIV-free generations. (Please download the newsletter highlighting discussions on sustainability.)

The conference reviewed the high rates of HIV infection among certain key populations like men who have sex with men and sex workers, as well as gender relations that increase vulnerability and risk, and limited strategic information. Countries and delegates were urged to increase domestic allocations for HIV services and programs, strengthen regional solidarity in resource allocation so that countries that are worse off will not be left behind, address inefficiencies, strengthen public health leadership and public-private partnerships, focus on evidence-based interventions, and renew emphasis on surveillance of new infections.

Through the Caribbean HIV Office (PHCO), PAHO has been actively involved in the organization of this important event. PAHO staff Dr. Noreen Jack was a member of the organizing committee and the PHCO team, and HIV advisors from the regional and country offices contributed to the agenda through presentations in plenary sessions related to

sustainability of the response, poster presentations, and the coordination of four special sessions on Men's Health and HIV, Strengthening Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV Linkages in the Caribbean, HIV Drug Resistance Prevention and Monitoring, and a special session on Small Island States' Challenges to Strengthen the HIV Response, with keynote speaker the Honorable Prime Minister of St. Maarten, Sara Wescot-Williams.