"How to involve PLWHAs in the fight against HIV/AIDS?":
A survey of the largest French community-based organisation's members

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Issues

Since 1984, AIDES, the largest French NGO, has been working with people affected by HIV/AIDS to identify the most appropriate solutions to their difficulties and expectations. AIDES was founded according to the principles of community-based initiatives, but 23 years after its creation, when AIDES leads programs everywhere across France with many employees, does the choice of a non-professional approach ultimately result in involvement of PLWHAs? Are we still close to the community?

Method

A cross-sectional survey was carried out in March 2007 for one month. A self-administered anonymous questionnaire was sent to all AIDES volunteers doing actions in prevention and access to care throughout France. It included questions about HIV status, motivation for involvement in AIDES… A logistic regression was performed to identify factors associated with involvement of volunteers according to their HIV status.

Results

64% of the 797 volunteers returned the questionnaire (n=511). 53% were male, the average age was 48. 45% were gay/bisexual. 25% were HIV positive, 7% were HCV positive, 11% were migrants, and 10% were active drug users. In univariate model, factors associated with involvement in AIDES were: being close to a PLWHA for HIV negative volunteers and have used AIDES' services for HIV positive volunteers. In a logistic regression, factors remaining independently associated with involvement in AIDES of HIV positive volunteers were: being homo/bisexual (OR=3,0 CI=[1,8-5,0], p<,001), co infection by HCV (OR=4,5 CI=[1,9-10,7], p<,001) and have used AIDES' services (OR=8,6 CI=[4,7-15,4], p<,001).

	Total n=511 n (%)	HIV Positive		p- value	OR(IC95%)	p- value
		No n=384 (75,1) n (%)	Yes n=127(24,9) n (%)			
Gender						
Male/Transgender	270 (52,8)	172 (44,8)	98 (77,2)	<,001		
Female	241 (47,2)	212 (55,2)	29 (22,8)			
Age						
≤ 35 years	132 (25,8)	122 (31,8)	10 (7,9)	<,001	1	<,001
36-49 years	178 (34,9)	102 (26,6)	76 (59,8)		8,4 [3,8-18,3]	
≥ 50 years	201 (39,3)	160 (41,7)	41 (32,3)		4,0 [1,7-8,9]	
Sexual orientation						
Heterosexual	281 (55,0)	234 (60,9)	47 (37,0)	<,001	1	<,001
Gay/bisexual	230 (45,0)	150 (39,1)	80 (63,0)		3,0 [1,8-5,0]	
HCV serostatus						
Positive	36 (7,0)	14 (3,6)	22 (17,3)	<,001	4,5 [1,9-10,7]	<,001
Negative	404 (79,1)	307 (79,9)	97 (76,4)		1	
Unknown/Missing	71 (13,9)	63 (16,4)	8 (6,3)		0,4 [0,2-1,0]	
Country						
France	455 (89,0)	349 (90,9)	106 (83,5)	0,020	1	0,038
FR oversea or other	56 (11,0)	35 (9,1)	21 (16,5)		2,2 [1,0-4,5]	
Previous user of AIDES' programs						
No	423 (82,8)	355 (92,4)	68 (53,5)	<,001		
Yes	88 (17,2)	29 (7,6)	59 (46,5)		8,6 [4,7-15,4]	

Motivations for involvement	Total	HIV - members	HIV + members	P value
Solidarity with PLWHA	405 (79,3)	315 (82,0)	90 (70,9)	0,007
Your own seropositivity	89 (17,4)	-	89 (70,1)	-
You are or have been close to a PLWHA	181 (35,4)	166 (43,2)	15 (11,8)	<,001
You agree with AIDES policy & lobbying	284 (55,6)	222 (57,8)	62 (48,8)	0,077
You are or have been engaged in sexual risk behavior	101 (19,8)	89 (23,2)	12 (9,4)	0,001
You take or have taken drugs	21 (4,1)	18 (4,7)	3 (2,4)	0,252
You think that your community is a HIV vulnerable group	146 (28,6)	99 (25,8)	47 (37,0)	0,015
You previously used AIDES' services for yourself or someone close to you	48 (9,4)	23 (6,0)	25 (19,7)	<,001

Conclusions

Involvement of PLWHAs and mobilisation of the civil society are key issues in the response to the epidemic. Our results show that we have to promote models of organisations where people can find answers for themselves and act for the others. We are now able to answer the question: yes, we are women, gay, migrant and drug users, we live with HIV, we live with people with HIV but most of all, we are people who stand together.