

Incorporating communicative know-how to defend frontline practices

Strategic Tools from an HIV-AIDS-related
Guide for Community Evaluation and from
Latin American Popular Education

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1. The anchoring experience

- Participating as a nurse in the collective construction of a Evaluation Guide by groups working on Aids.
- Objectives :
 - 1° To understand the dynamics of community practices related to Aids ;
 - 2° To participate in the collective production of evaluation tools
 - 3° To identify the strategies developed by frontline practices in contexts of unpredictability.

2. The challenges of community evaluation

- 1^o To assert the autonomy of groups working with HIV/AIDS in order to define their actions beyond the contractual financing : a stated mission is more than an objective.
- 2^o Make evaluation an occasion to develop a voice through which all actors involved should be heard.
- 3^o Give a voice to a practical know-how – a voice that speaks of the field, of everyday activities and efforts.

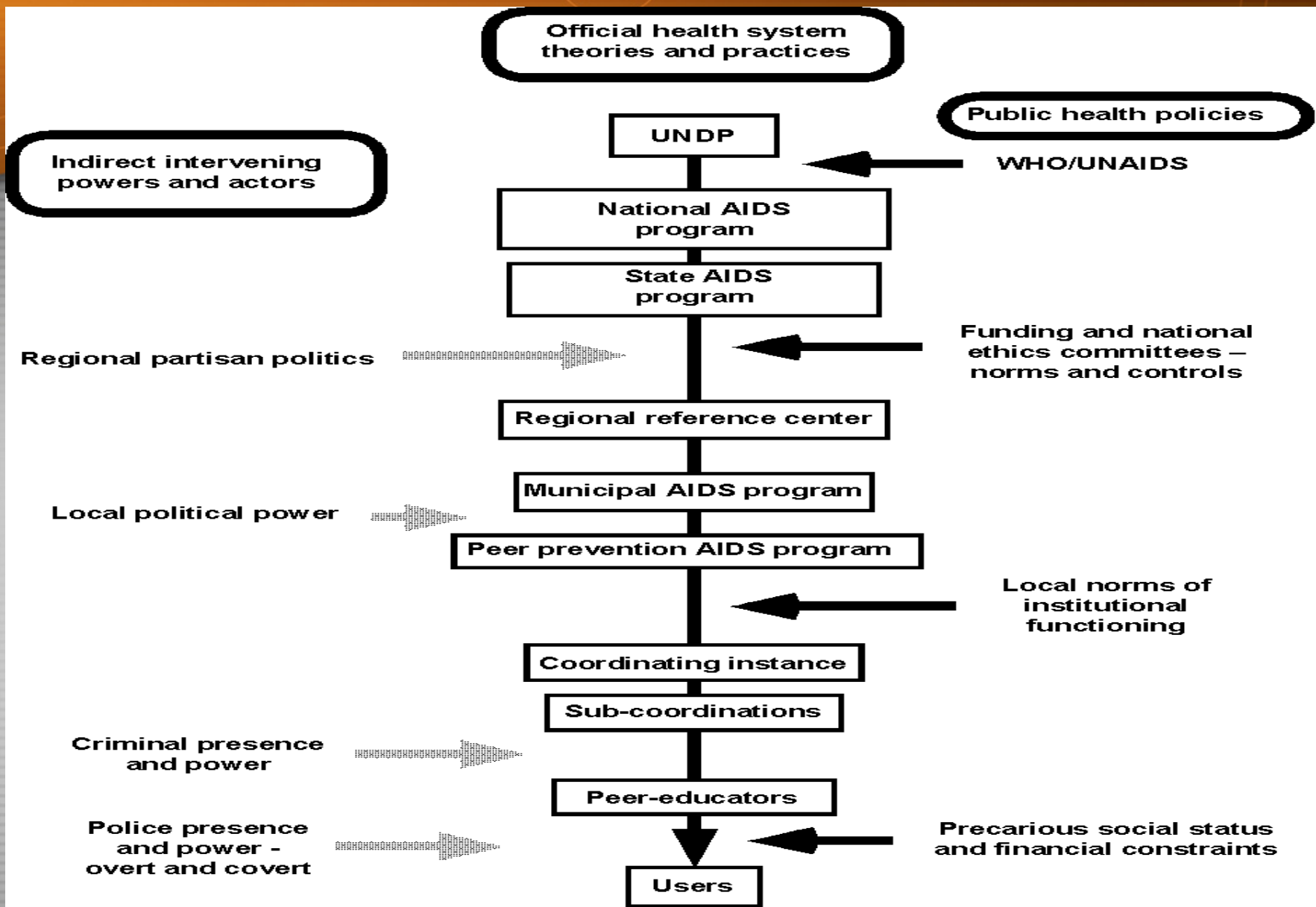


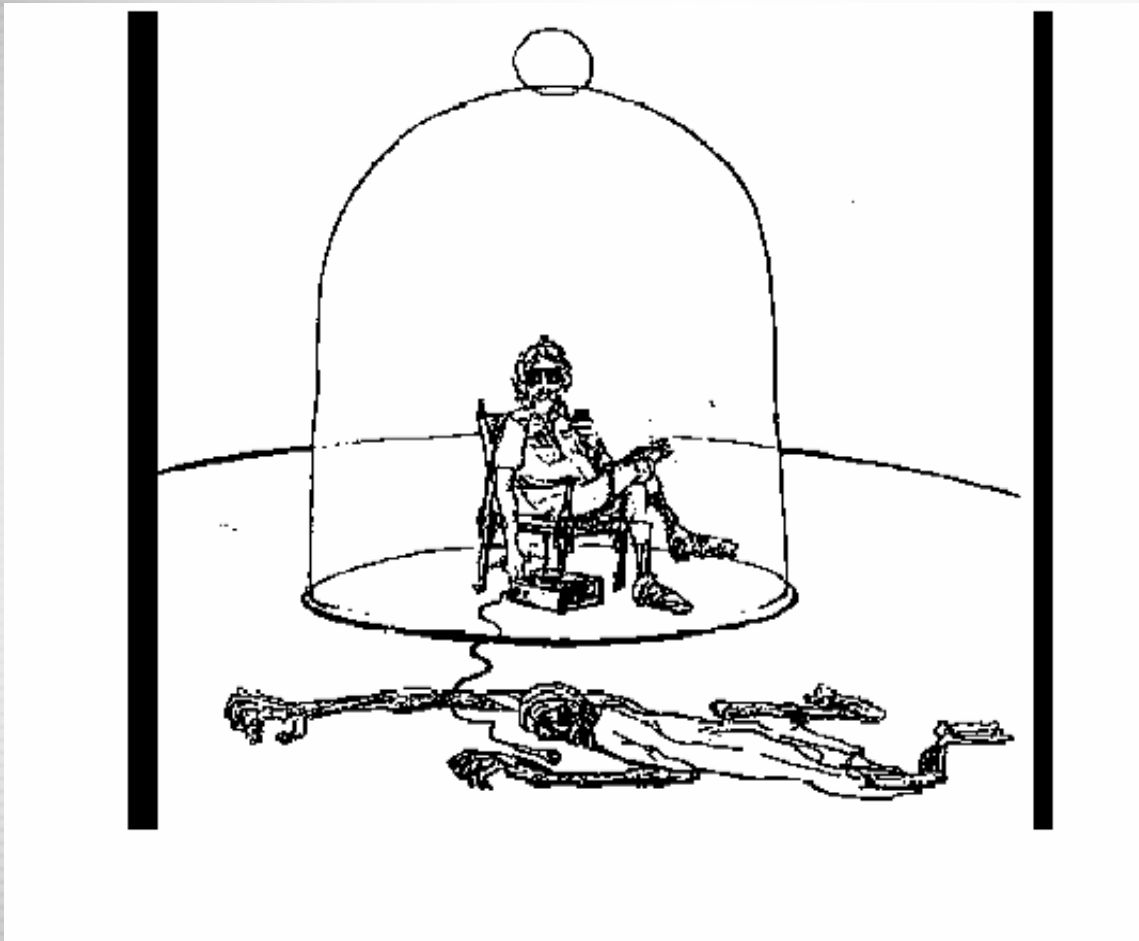
Figure 1 Formal and informal vertical relationships among local intervening actors in an AIDS prevention program : from the international organizational summits to the local level

A fireline evaluation...

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

*Anything new ? Five hours of snowing, freezing winds.
My legs are beginning to freeze, but I keep the guard, my General.
Good soldier : I am proud of you !....
(Maybe army life is hard, but it has its compensations...)...l.*

Does objectivity require indifference?



3. A first stage : reticences regarding external expert help

The deflating message : Evaluation is too complex for you ! Leave it to the experts !

The assertive revolt : This is OUR project, this is OUR experience we are talking about !

Taking control through redefining and reasserting « Who are we » !

A work group that would include all voices : the internal diversity and the external interlocutors : intervenors, volunteers, clients, administrators, financing institutions.

4. The Shared Assessment Groups :

- Ground evaluations in the everyday life of community organizations.
- Make it an occasion for regrouping and actors contributing to make community action a shared reality.
- Stimulate them to share their viewpoints and observations on the common experience.
- Reflect on the necessary ongoing self-evaluation of the action group.

5. The second phase : the Evaluation Guide

The efforts to reposition the frontline intervention at the core of the evaluation of group action :

- Enlarging the pool of those traditionally responsible of evaluation beyond the directors and the team leaders – going beyond the administrative ideology.
- Searching and incorporating the experience of the frontline (including field nurses) in their specific contributions and their own expression of their everyday action.
- Eroding the logic which separates and even opposes administrative perspectives to the activities of direct intervention.

6. The challenge of the written word of frontline professionals

- Should they reproduce the academic or the administrative discourse ?
- Explore with professionals their everyday experience as « frontline agents ».
- Explore the perceptions and the sentiments of professionals in front of the written word as a tool pertinent to both their action and contributor to the collective discourse. See in advance the formation needs;
- Be very aware of the danger of creating a subtle dependency through the evaluation tools.

7. A « popular » methodology

SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE : A SYSTEMATIZATION STRATEGY

1. What is something I do often as part of my work ?
(Choose one very concrete everyday activity).
2. What makes it pleasant or unpleasant to me ?
3. What is what I am trying to achieve for my clients by doing it ?
4. What makes me feel I am achieving this change for them ?

SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE : A SYSTEMATIZATION STRATEGY

2° To whom do we tell what we do and what we learn and how do we do it ?

8. What do I tell my agency about what I do, and through which means ? (Forms, dossiers, social histories, referral notes....)

10. What do I tell the client as to what we are doing together, what we are trying to achieve ? (Interviews, group presentations)

12. What do I tell my colleagues about what I do, how I do it, what are my strategies ?

9. What are the interests of the agency I am addressing in what I tell it ?

11. What do I think are the interests of the clients I am addressing ?

13. What are the interests I share with my colleagues and how do I try to reinforce them ?

SHARING OUR EXPERIENCE : A SYSTEMATIZATION STRATEGY

3° The road of systematization of our shared experience

My intervenor's challenges as team member :

How can I DESCRIBE, TALK about what I do ?

How can I JUSTIFY the way I go about doing it
as a part of our team effort ?

How do I suggest we DEFEND what we do and how we do it ?

How can we use this process to

REVINDICATE the means of attaining our aims ?

8. The challenges of a participatory evaluation : Making « we » and « us » meaningful realities

- Communication produces a common voice,
- The voice becomes a discourse that binds with other professionals or HIV/AIDS working groups,
- The discourse becomes dialogue that bridges the distances between frontline professionals,
- We learn to talk in order to live together, to work together, to change the world, and for sharing, justifying, revindicating... **NOBODY EDUCATES THE OTHER, NOBODY EDUCATES HIMSELF ALONE, PEOPLE EDUCATE EACH OTHER IN THEIR TOGETHERNESS, WITH THE HELP OF THEIR WORLD (Freire, 1980, p. 62).**

9. My thesis

- As nurses, we have a participatory reflection potential on HIV/AIDS that has been made evident both in the actions of community groups and public health programs.
- We integrate both curing and caring in the construction of our role, going beyond those of researcher, evaluator and observer.
- As a natural “frontline practitioner/researcher”, we can better learn and contribute when we are an actor rather than an observer of professional action.
- Our know-how is a solid base for us to contribute with our words to the social consciousness and social action in the need assessment of persons and collectives living with or around HIV/AIDS reality.

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