Challenges for the sexual health and social acceptance of men who have sex with men in Nigeria

DAN ALLMAN\textsuperscript{1}, SYLVIA ADEBAJO\textsuperscript{1}, TED MYERS\textsuperscript{1}, OLUDARE ODUMUYE\textsuperscript{2} & SADE OGUNSOLA\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1} HIV Social, Behavioural and Epidemiological Studies Unit, Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Toronto, Canada, \textsuperscript{2} Alliance Rights Nigeria, Lagos, Nigeria, and \textsuperscript{3} Department of Microbiology, College of Medicine, University of Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract Little research exists regarding men who have sex with men and sexual risk in Nigeria. Prior to the implementation of a targeted HIV/STI prevalence study, structured focus groups incorporating anonymous questionnaires were conducted with members of this population in secure locations in Nigeria. A purposive sample of men was recruited by word-of-mouth. Five focus groups were conducted with a total of 58 men. Mean age was 27 years (range 16–58); 60% had post-secondary education; 56% were employed full or part-time; 83% were Christian; 16% were Muslim; 66% selfidentified as bisexual; 31% as homosexual. Participants’ experiences were diverse, with ethnic, religious and class distinctions strongly structuring sexual expression. Same-sex community networks were hidden, with social activities taking place in non-commercial, private venues. Socially ostracized by culture, religion, and political will, the risks embodied within same-sex activity are high. For Nigeria — a nation culturally rich and religiously devout — the implications for public health policy are complex. However, these research findings suggest that immediate action is vital to mitigate the impacts of HIV and other STIs.