



Meaningful Inclusion of Civil Society in Global AIDS Monitoring (GAM)

URGENT: The 2021 review and reporting process at the country level is underway.

Join now! Be involved! Be heard!

Prepared by the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO) in partnership with Global Action for Trans* Equality (GATE)

March 2021

Greater civil society engagement has been called for in every aspect of the AIDS response, including the Global AIDS Monitoring (GAM) process. In the [Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast-Track to Accelerate the Fight against HIV and to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2030](#) (Political Declaration), countries agreed to "...provide to the General Assembly [...] an annual report on progress achieved in realizing the commitments made in the present Declaration...". In 2021 countries are expected to assess their achievements against the targets set in 2016. The reported data are utilized for national-level reviews (including the Global Fund applications and similar reprogramming efforts), regional assessments, and global analysis. Data will be included in UNAIDS, WHO and UNICEF reports in 2021.

A/RES/70/266 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030

75. Encourage and support the exchange among countries and regions of information, research, evidence and experiences for implementing the measures and commitments related to the global HIV and AIDS response, in particular those contained in the present Declaration, facilitate intensified North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as subregional, regional and interregional cooperation and coordination, and in this regard continue to encourage the Economic and Social Council to request the regional commissions, within their respective mandates and resources, to support periodic, inclusive reviews of national efforts and progress made in their respective regions to combat HIV;

Follow-up: accelerating progress



76. Request the Secretary-General, with support from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, to provide to the General Assembly, within its annual reviews, an annual report on progress achieved in realizing the commitments made in the present Declaration, and request continued support from the Joint Programme to assist countries in reporting annually on the AIDS response;

The involvement of civil society, in all its diversity, in the national consultation to develop the country report is critical because civil society can provide valuable data, especially for key populations and harder to reach groups. Civil society will also ensure that all relevant partners are engaged and play essential roles in implementation and reporting. The [UNAIDS Guidance document for the 2021 GAM](#) encourages governments to include the inputs of the "full spectrum of civil society and community—including NGOs, networks of people living with HIV and key populations, faith-based organizations, women, young people, trade unions and community-based organizations" in the GAM report.

However, data collected from 2018-2020 by ICASO on civil society participation and engagement in previous GAM processes show that very few countries supported civil society meaningful engagement. The data collected in this survey show that civil society remains an underutilized resource in reporting for the GAM. Where civil society was more involved, the GAM was judged to be more representative of the situation and more useful, such as setting national priorities. The most common way civil society contributed was in data collection, but key populations were widely underrepresented.

For this reason, it is crucial to pay particular attention to the inclusion of members of key populations in the civil society contributions to the GAM. In many countries, members of key populations are structurally sidelined. Criminalization has a knock-on effect that prevents organizations' registration run by and for members of key populations. It is crucial to create a safe environment to ensure the meaningful involvement of key populations and people who might be sought for criminal offences for their identity, occupation or behaviour.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered engagement, preventing most in-person discussions and data collection while also presenting opportunities to expand engagement using new technologies. The effect of COVID-19 on civil society engagement in GAM has not been addressed.

The review and reporting process for the 2020 period started on 15 February 2021. Countries need to send their progress reports to UNAIDS by 31 March 2021.

¹ Consider the community rejection of the use of unique biometric identifiers, because people feared the data would be used to persecute specific stigmatized groups reported here: Kelin Kenya. 2018. "Everyone Said No": Biometrics, HIV and Human Rights A Kenya Case Study. <https://www.kelinkenyana.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Everyone-said-no-.pdf>



The community sector holds the key to critical data and information that governments may not have or are unwilling to report on, particularly concerning the needs and challenges faced by key populations and those most at risk and marginalized. Community groups can bring to the table relevant and updated information that will present a more realistic picture of the country's epidemic.

Five Steps for Meaningful Inclusion in the GAM Process

These steps will ensure meaningful involvement in the 2021 Global AIDS Monitoring process by mobilizing the community sector to advocate for '[More than a seat at the table.](#)'

1. **Know that your input is essential.** UNAIDS strongly recommends the meaningful inclusion of **ALL stakeholders** in the GAM process, especially community members and members of **key populations**. The National AIDS Program or its equivalent should reach out to organizations working with and for people living with HIV, men who have sex with men, people who use drugs, sex workers, transgender people, women and young people as well as people in prison, migrants, indigenous populations and other groups based on the specificities of your country. In places where key populations face criminalization or other legal obstacles, make sure they can input into the process safely.
2. **Do not wait to be asked to participate:** Ask the **UNAIDS country director** how they facilitate civil society's input throughout the review process. Also, contact the **National AIDS Program** (or equivalent) and find out who in your country will be leading the report's preparation and try to arrange a (virtual) meeting with that person. The review and report preparation processes should involve (virtual) consultations with all stakeholders, including validating the report. Request that you (or your organization) receive "viewing rights" to the online report.
3. **Review** the relevant documents, in particular:
 - a. [Global AIDS Monitoring 2021: Indicators for monitoring the 2016 Political Declaration on Ending AIDS](#)
NOTE: Most of the national indicators apply to all countries. The behaviour indicators for **key populations at higher risk are relevant in all countries regardless of the national HIV prevalence.** (The exception is voluntary medical male circumcision.)
 - b. The [2016 Political Declaration](#) contains the commitments² and promises countries have made.
 - c. The country progress reports your government prepared in the past.

² Progress in responding to the HIV epidemic is measured against a set of [10 global commitments and expanded targets](#) established in the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. These commitments are:

1. Ensure that 30 million people living with HIV have **access to treatment** through meeting the 90–90–90 targets by 2020
2. **Eliminate new HIV infections among children** by 2020 while ensuring that 1.6 million children have access to HIV treatment by 2018
3. Ensure **access to combination prevention** options, including pre-exposure prophylaxis, voluntary medical male circumcision, harm reduction and condoms, to at least 90% of people by 2020, especially young women and adolescent girls in high-prevalence countries and key populations—gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers and their clients, people who inject drugs and prisoners
4. **Eliminate gender inequalities** and end all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, people living with HIV and key populations by 2020
5. Ensure that 90% of young people have the skills, knowledge and capacity to protect themselves from HIV and have access to sexual and reproductive health services by 2020, in order to **reduce the number of new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women** to below 100 000 per year
6. Ensure that 75% of people living with, at risk of and affected by HIV benefit from **HIV sensitive social protection** by 2020
7. Ensure that at least 30% of all **service delivery is community-led** by 2020
8. Ensure that **HIV investments increase to US\$ 26 billion** by 2020, including a quarter for HIV prevention and 6% for social enablers
9. Empower people living with, at risk of and affected by HIV to **know their rights and to access justice** and legal services to prevent and challenge violations of human rights
10. Commit to taking AIDS out of isolation through people-centered systems to improve **universal health coverage**, including treatment for tuberculosis, cervical cancer and hepatitis B and C

4. Use technology to offer input and share information. Covid-19 has presented obstacles to in-person meetings. However, the use of communications platforms presents opportunities. The use of these technologies means geography (and resources) are not obstacles: People can offer input and participate from anywhere. However, civil society partners must understand the purpose of the GAM and how reporting informs HIV-programming and services. Consider using social media and other e-technologies to share information with your peers and build common priorities and a coherent message. Virtual consultations also offer an opportunity for key populations to participate from the safety of their environment. Civil society must be involved in all aspects and all stages of the GAM: process design, data gathering, data analysis, report writing, report validation, and report dissemination, and responding to the National Commitments and Policy Instrument (NCPI).³

5. Consider drafting a shadow report.

Where civil society input is not welcomed, organizations should develop shadow reports to reflect data not included in the country report, for example, about key populations and marginalized groups. These reports can be submitted to UNAIDS by emailing aidsreporting@unaids.org.

As in previous rounds, UNAIDS will accept shadow reports, but they are not intended to be a parallel reporting process for civil society and communities: whenever possible, UNAIDS encourages integrating civil society and communities into national reporting processes, as described above. Rather, shadow reports are intended to provide an alternative perspective if: (a) it is strongly felt that civil society and communities were not adequately included in the national reporting process; (b) governments do not submit a report; or (c) the data provided by government differ considerably from the data collected by civil society and communities while monitoring government progress in delivering services. Shadow reports can be submitted through aidsreporting@unaids.org.

Some countries demonstrated terrific levels of engagement in the GAM process, with coordinated input into the process (like in Kenya⁴) and organized efforts to draft shadow reports (like in Malawi⁵ and Nigeria⁶) and to respond to the ICASO's survey to assess how civil society was involved in the GAM in 2019 and 2020. In April 2021, ICASO will launch a new edition of the survey. This survey will increase accountability and transparency and will provide support for advocacy actions in the future. **Contact** [ICASO](#) if you are interested in receiving an invitation to fill out the survey or if you want to share your experiences.

³ The National Commitments and Policy Instrument aims to measure a country's progress in developing and implementing policies, strategies and laws related to HIV. It has two sections: Part A - to be completed by national authorities; and Part B - to be completed by civil society and other nongovernmental partners. The Instrument is structured around the 10 Fast-Track commitments in the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS. Countries are required to complete a full NCPI every two years. Guidance is provided from page 123 of the guidelines for 2021 Global AIDS Monitoring provided by UNAIDS:

https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/global-aids-monitoring_en.pdf

⁴ <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/kenya>

⁵ https://hivpreventioncoalition.unaids.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FrontlineAIDS_Malawi_SR_WEB.pdf

⁶ https://frontlineaids.org/wp-content/uploads/old_site/nigeria_web_ready_original.pdf?1532087260