

Action Card ⑤

Being Effective Community Sector Representatives and Providing Support for their Role

It is important that community sector representatives operate in an effective, professional and ethical way. It is also vital that they receive appropriate support (technical, moral, etc.) from other individuals and groups within the sector.

■ Key Steps A:

Being an effective community sector representative

Once selected, community sector representatives can take several steps to help ensure that they perform their role as efficiently and effectively as possible.

These include:

- ✓ 1. Building skills and knowledge: by participating in skills-building workshops and training in areas such as public speaking and national policy making⁹.
- ✓ 2. Making time to fulfil their responsibilities: by reducing commitments to other initiatives in order to free up time to be an active representative.
- ✓ 3. Acting professionally and responsibly. [See Box 19]
- ✓ 4. Consulting and learning about the community sector, and representing the constituency, not their own interests: by regularly attending community sector meetings, being in direct communication with a wide variety of groups, being aware of existing community-level programmes and re-sources, and being able to identify and promote the sectors overall priorities¹⁰.
- ✓ 5. Keeping a balanced view and seeking out and articulating different opinions: not being too closely linked to one particular organisation and being able to identify and explain differences of opinion within the sector.
- ✓ 6. Being transparent and accountable: by declaring any conflicts of interest in advance and consulting constituents before taking a public position on an issue.

Box 19: Acting professionally and responsibly

A community sector representative needs to:

- Be prepared for meetings and read agendas in advance.
- Attend all required meetings, or send apologies in advance and ensure that an alternate representative can attend.
- Be on time for meetings.
- Behave and dress appropriately.
- Use appropriate language.
- Treat others with respect, regardless of their status or level of knowledge.
- Be prepared to speak up and advocate for the community sector from the start of debates, not just wait for votes to be taken.
- Be prepared to face and cope with ignorance or extreme views.
- Follow appropriate protocols and rules of etiquette.
- Complete tasks on time and do as thorough and high-quality a job as possible.
- Be honest and transparent, including about any issues relating to money.
- Use power responsibly and for the positive benefit of the community sector.

⁹ See Action Card ④

¹⁰ See Action Card ⑨

- ✓ 7. Taking action to consult with marginalised and vulnerable groups: by taking proactive steps to meet with and learn about groups of people living with HIV/AIDS, women or sex workers, especially those unable to engage in national consultation processes¹¹.
- ✓ 8. Consulting and reporting systematically and regularly: by proactively asking community sector groups about issues that are coming up on agendas (e.g., National AIDS Authority meetings) and providing brief, accurate verbal and written reports to constituents after meetings¹².
- ✓ 9. Communicating effectively: for example, by refining and promoting the community sectors key messages and informing groups about exactly how and when they can be involved in processes¹³.
- ✓ 10. Facilitating a better understanding of community sector issues: by educating others about the sector and raising awareness about its concerns and needs.
- ✓ 11. Being an active and influential advocate for the community sector: by being prepared to speak up in national forums and to ask probing questions about controversial issues that affect the community sector (e.g., prejudices that prevent support for marginalised communities, and bottlenecks in funding systems for NGOs)¹⁴.



¹¹ See Action Card ⑨ ¹³ See Action Card ⑥
¹² See Action Card ⑨ ¹⁴ See Action Card ⑦



Key Steps B:

Supporting the role of an effective community sector representative

Once representatives have been selected, other members of the community sector can take several steps to help them perform their role as efficiently and effectively as possible. These include:

- ✓ 1. Participating in and endorsing the selection process for representatives: for example, by mailing in their votes to an election meeting and by talking positively about those who have been democratically selected.
- ✓ 2. Ensuring effective induction of representatives: by inviting representatives to visit a project supporting marginalised and vulnerable communities and by giving them a briefing on the challenges involved in the work.
- ✓ 3. Taking an interest in and keeping up to date about the National AIDS Authority, AIDS Action Framework and M&E System: by attending NGO network meetings and by being aware of when the Action framework is being developed.
- ✓ 4. Providing input into consultations and documents: by making a contribution (in person at a meeting, via e-mail, etc.) to the development of standardised national indicators for the one agreed country-level M&E System¹⁵.
- ✓ 5. Providing evidence of the community sectors resources and needs: by providing case studies and data from NGO projects to feed into representatives contributions to the development of the national AIDS Action Framework.
- ✓ 6. Facilitating the input of other community sector groups: by organising a consultation on monitoring indicators among local community groups unable to attend national meetings¹⁶.
- ✓ 7. Being committed to consensus building: by accepting collaborative decision-making processes and being open to the possibility of making compromises¹⁷.
- ✓ 8. Holding representatives to account: by providing honest, constructive feedback if a representative is working in an inappropriate or ineffective way.
- ✓ 9. Giving moral support and positive feedback: by offering informal support if a representative is facing hostility from other members of a National AIDS Coordinating Authority.
- ✓ 10. Recognizing successes: by congratulating representatives on their hard work and celebrating their achievements.

¹⁵ See Action Card ⑨

¹⁶ See Action Card ⑨

¹⁷ See Action Card ①

Action Card 5 Coordinating with Communities

