

Section 1: Introduction to guidelines

1.1 What are the aims of these guidelines?

These guidelines aim to increase and improve the active and meaningful involvement of the community sector in the development, implementation and monitoring of coordinated national AIDS responses. This includes involvement in the ‘Three Ones’ principles¹: One agreed HIV/AIDS Action Framework, One National AIDS Coordinating Authority, and One agreed country-level Monitoring and Evaluation System.

These guidelines aim to provide practical options – including standards, structures, processes and methods – from which stakeholders can select those options that are most appropriate and useful to their own contexts.

They promote a set of universal principles, such as human rights and gender equality, that are relevant to all countries and contexts. In particular, these guidelines are underpinned by the recognition that the Greater Involvement of People Living with or Affected by HIV/AIDS (GIPA) will provide for more effective national responses to HIV/AIDS.

They also aim to support the idea that a greater degree of shared ownership of the response (among the community, private, and public sectors) is necessary to attain universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support.

1.2 Who are these guidelines for?

These guidelines are focused on the community sector: non-governmental individuals or groups working with community members who are living with or highly affected by HIV and AIDS. They will be particularly useful for supporting the community sector itself, especially its networks and coordinating groups. However, they are also designed to be used by all stakeholders with a role to play in increasing the community sector’s involvement in coordinated national responses to HIV and AIDS. [See Box 1]

In addition, these guidelines will be useful for other non-governmental sectors or broader civil society, such as labour, business, and academia. While not explicitly written for them, many of the steps and principles would be applicable in supporting their involvement.

Diversity of the Community Sector. The term ‘community sector’ covers a wide range and diversity of people, groups and institutions. The sector is not a single entity. Rather, it is a collection of different interests, opinions, capacities, resources and priorities involved in a variety of activities ranging from advocacy to service provision.

Box 1: Stakeholders

Stakeholders are people, groups and institutions with a role to play in national responses to HIV/AIDS, such as:

- Community sector
- Government
- Multilateral and bilateral donors
- United Nations agencies
- Unions
- Media
- Corporate sector
- Private foundations
- Academic institutions

¹ See Section 2.1 for more details on the ‘Three Ones’.

In each country, this 'sector' needs to be defined according to the characteristics related to the epidemic and the conditions that make certain communities more affected by HIV and AIDS².

In these guidelines, the community sector refers in particular to:

- People living with HIV, their groups and networks
- Community networks and community-based organisations, including those that involve or support key populations [See Box 2]
- Local, national and international non-governmental organisations
- AIDS service organisations
- Faith-based organisations
- NGO networks
- NGO support organisations

Box 2: Key populations

Here, 'key populations' refers to groups of people who are key to the dynamics of, and response to, HIV/AIDS. These populations include:

- People living with HIV/AIDS
- Orphans and vulnerable children
- Women and girls
- Youth
- Sex workers
- Injecting drug users
- Men who have sex with men
- Transgenders
- Migrants
- Refugees
- Prisoners

1.3 How are these guidelines linked to the broader response to HIV and AIDS?

The 'Three Ones' principles were developed in the context of a growing recognition of two particular issues: HIV and AIDS is a world-wide emergency, and responses need to be better coordinated to be more effective.

In many parts of the world, HIV epidemics are increasing dramatically, with an estimated 2.9 million AIDS deaths, 4.3 million new HIV infections and 39.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS in 2006 (UNAIDS, December 2006). Consequently, the commitments in the *Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS*, made by governments in 2001, have been extended in 2006 by new commitments to scale up responses to achieve universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010³.

Meanwhile, the global response to the epidemic has benefited from greatly improved, if still insufficient, access to financial resources, owing to new or expanded funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the World Bank, bilateral donors, and private-sector foundations.

However, experience has shown that action on HIV/AIDS needs more than increased money and commitment. It also requires greater coordination among partners to ensure that resources are not wasted and actions are not duplicated. Such recognition draws on broader initiatives to achieve greater harmonisation in international development.

² See Action Card ①

³ See Annex 2

These initiatives include commitments by bilateral and multilateral agencies in 2003 and 2005, through the OECD/DAC Rome Declaration and the Paris Declaration, respectively, to follow principles of aid effectiveness with promises to simplify, harmonize and align their support to country-driven development strategies. For HIV/AIDS in particular, a set of recommendations was developed in 2005 by the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination Among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors, all within the framework of the 'Three Ones'.

These *Coordinating with Communities* guidelines seek to support efforts to ensure that such harmonisation and alignment processes and principles, and the 'Three Ones' principles in particular, are implemented with the active and meaningful involvement of the community sector.



“...the effective implementation of the ‘Three Ones’ principles can be achieved only if the community sector is fully involved.”

Participants at a community mobilization workshop, South Sudan. © 2006 IHAA

1.4 How were these guidelines developed?

These guidelines were developed in response to requests from groups of people living with HIV/AIDS, community organisations, and groups and individuals from other sectors. These stakeholders recognised that the effective implementation of the 'Three Ones' principles can be achieved only if the community sector is fully involved. This realisation prompted the need to offer guidance on how to go about fully involving the community sector.

Partners. These guidelines were developed by the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), the African Council of AIDS Service Organizations (AfriCASO) and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance (the Alliance), with funding and support from the Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS). They are based on the practical experiences of, and lessons learned by, these organisations, their partners, and many other members of the community sector throughout the world.

Sources. These guidelines have been informed by a number of national, regional and international meetings and consultations held with the community sector on the 'Three Ones'⁴.

⁴ See Annex 1 for a timeline of these events.

Community sector organisations and individuals have attempted for decades to achieve meaningful involvement. Therefore these guidelines rely on their documented experiences and good practice. They are also based on an extensive literature review, which included reports, tools and frameworks for community sector involvement in national, multi-sectoral initiatives.

As such, they build on, and make reference to, a number of key resources. In particular, these include *Guidelines for Improving CCMs Through Greater PLHIV Involvement and Challenging, Changing and Mobilising: A Guide to PLHIV Involvement in Country Coordinating Mechanisms* – invaluable materials developed by the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) and the POLICY Project to support work in relation to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria⁵.

Review Process. Drafts of these guidelines were reviewed and enhanced by an international advisory committee, including representatives of people living with HIV, non-governmental organisations and UNAIDS⁶. The guidelines also underwent a country-level field-testing process. This involved national community organisations facilitating workshops in Nigeria (JAAIDS), Ukraine (Alliance Ukraine), and Venezuela (ACCSI) to create action plans on effective community involvement in national frameworks, bodies, and M&E. They also reviewed the guidelines for appropriateness and applicability to country situations.

1.5 What do these guidelines contain and how can they be used?

The contents of these guidelines are outlined at the beginning of this document. Exactly how they are used will depend on the country in question. For example, their use will be affected by factors such as the current capacity of the community sector's organisations and networks, and the relationship between community groups and other stakeholders. However, in any country, these guidelines can be used as:

- **A tool to assess** the current strengths and weaknesses of community sector involvement in all national AIDS coordinating bodies and processes.
- **A tool to develop a multi-sectoral action plan** to increase and improve community sector involvement in all national AIDS coordinating bodies and processes.
- **A tool for advocating** to improve and fund both community sector involvement in national AIDS coordinating bodies and processes and also community sector networking and coordination.
- **A basis for developing local or district-level guidelines** on community sector involvement in AIDS coordinating bodies and processes.

The guidelines can be used by any stakeholder wishing to gain a deeper personal understanding of the issues. They can also be used as reference material to support meetings or workshops designed to review community involvement. Specific sections can be used to guide facilitators or organisations developing action plans. The various sections and cards can be used separately to help identify the steps and actions that might need to be taken to improve community sector involvement.

⁵ See Annex 3 for a full list of resources.

⁶ See Acknowledgements.