

Taking action to support the active and meaningful involvement of the community sector

1.1. How can the active and meaningful involvement of the community sector be depicted?

The community sector's involvement in national coordination of HIV/AIDS is threefold:

1. *Within* coordination structures and systems (influencing stakeholders, making decisions, etc.).
2. *Linked* to coordination structures (receiving resources, implementing projects, etc.).
3. *External* to coordination structures and systems (acting as an independent watchdog, advocating for change, etc.).

The community sector can and must try to play all of these roles, requiring support to build its own capacity, leadership and coordination.

The 'ideal' active and meaningful involvement of the community sector has a number of common characteristics within national coordination bodies and processes, such as AIDS Authorities, Action Frameworks and M&E Systems.

Characteristics of the 'ideal' involvement of the community sector

To support community sector involvement, all stakeholders – including government and donors, and the community sector itself – need to:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	View active involvement as a right, which also entails responsibilities.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Be able to participate safely and legally.	For example, the community should be able to work with marginalised groups (such as people living with HIV, injecting drug users, and sex workers) and be able to do so without the fear of stigma, persecution or breaches of confidentiality.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Be able to select their own representatives.	For example, selection should be based on open and democratic criteria and processes agreed within the community sector.

✓	<p>Have enough representatives and influence in all relevant levels, groups and processes.</p>	<p>For example, the community sector should be able to provide a team of people with the resources, time, skills and enthusiasm to ensure attendance at all key meetings. Moreover, the sector should be able to hold lead positions (such as chairs of committees) and be involved in all steps (from needs assessment to evaluation).</p>
✓	<p>Have balanced, broad-based representation based on constituencies, not individuals.</p>	<p>For example, community representatives should reflect the diverse range of people and groups in the sector, including those that are marginalised. The community sector should also put in place democratic processes that facilitate a diversity of representation (e.g., rotational systems).</p>
✓	<p>Have effective and resourced coordination within their own sector.</p>	<p>For example, the community sector should have strong, effective and funded networks that enable it to coordinate its work.</p>
✓	<p>Be able to access adequate information and financial and technical support.</p>	<p>For example, community sector representatives should be offered training (e.g., in strategic planning) and support for succession planning (e.g., skills building for future leaders and their participation in activities).</p>
✓	<p>Work professionally, fostering a culture of equity and transparency.</p>	<p>For example, community representatives should follow the rules of formal meetings, and governments should consider data from NGOs with the same value as they do to their own. Governments should also be honest about when communities can or cannot have genuine influence, and donors should be open to criticism about how they work.</p>
✓	<p>Involvement results in influence over decisions.</p>	<p>For example, government should commit to ensuring that community sector inputs are recorded and considered on an equal level as those of other stakeholders in the decision-making process.</p>
✓	<p>Take shared ownership, responsibility and commitment.</p>	<p>For example, the community sector should be prepared to be held accountable for the results of collaborative processes they agree to and to promote those results among their constituents.</p>
✓	<p>Maintain their independence and perform a watchdog role over other sectors.</p>	<p>For example, members of the community sector should be able to meet together separately so that they can evaluate the performance of the government and others. This would include having access to relevant information (e.g., national AIDS budgets and records).</p>

✓	Work according to their sector's 'good practice'.	For example, the community sector could follow the Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV/AIDS, and multilaterals and donors should follow the recommendations of the Global Task Team ¹ .
✓	Work at an efficient, but realistic pace.	For example, governments should facilitate processes that allow the community sector to be involved in forward planning, and its representatives should regularly consult with their broader constituencies.
✓	Work towards international commitments on HIV/AIDS and development.	These commitments include the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS, the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on AIDS, Universal Access, and the Millennium Development Goals ² .

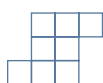
1.2. What steps can we take to support the community sector's active and meaningful involvement?

These guidelines focus on how to use these ideals as a goal, while it is recognised that the degree to which these ideals can be achieved will vary greatly from country to country.

Achieving these ideals will be influenced by numerous factors, including the degree to which:

- governments and donors are prepared to accept that the community sector has an equal place at the table;
- the community sector has an effective network and leadership;
- organisations working with marginalised groups can operate freely;
- the community sector is prepared to be involved in multi-sectoral work.

In any context, increasing and improving the involvement of the community sector in all national AIDS coordinating bodies and processes (e.g., joint reviews of the AIDS response or development of national core indicators) can involve a number of key steps. These include:



- 1.2.1 Developing terms of reference
- 1.2.2 Selecting representatives
- 1.2.3 Providing induction for members
- 1.2.4 Raising awareness

- 1.2.5 Building effective relationships
- 1.2.6 Engaging in joint decision making
- 1.2.7 Supporting decisions and actions
- 1.2.8 Monitoring and reviewing

¹ See Annex 2
² See Annex 2

Case study: Supportive environment for diverse community sector input in Brazil

Brazil's response to HIV/AIDS has benefited from consistent action from the community sector and the highest levels of government. This has translated into a strong National AIDS Programme with the authority, mandate and resources to coordinate and manage the entire national response. Supporting the Programme are several mechanisms that ensure the involvement of all relevant stakeholders:

- The National AIDS Commission: a forum of government ministries, universities, churches, researchers, enterprises, non-governmental organisations and grassroots groups.
- The Articulating Commission for Social Movements: a forum for the community sector that includes groups representing people living with HIV/AIDS, ethnic groups, women, men who have sex with men, transgenders, drug users, and young people.
- Forum for state and local government authorities.
- Expert advisory committees to provide guidance on prevention, support for people living with HIV/AIDS, vaccine research and media relations.
- UN Expanded Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, with representation from government, UN agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors and the community sector.
- The National Business Council on AIDS.

(Source: Adapted from The 'Three Ones' in Action: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here, UNAIDS, May 2005).



HIV/AIDS educator demonstrates condom usage, Mozambique



1.2.1. Developing terms of reference



All stakeholders, including the community sector, should be involved in defining and agreeing on the terms of reference for each coordinating body or process, including any working groups.

[See Box 6]

Box 6: Terms of reference

Subject	Examples of issues to be covered
The coordinating body, process or group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope: aims; objectives; remit (focus on coordinating, not controlling, the response to HIV/AIDS; monitoring ministry budgets); key responsibilities; monitoring indicators; relationship to other key bodies or processes (e.g. the Ministry of Health, the CCM for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the monitoring framework of broader development programmes). • Governance and legal framework: who will govern the body or process; how the chairs and vice-chairs will be selected; how the body or process will be reflected in legal texts. • Working practices: important principles (gender equality, GIPA); democratic processes (transparent voting procedures); practical issues (how meetings or consultations will be run, what tools will be used for collaborative decision making, how information will be communicated between members); management of conflicts of interest; and ways of holding members to account if they do not follow agreed procedures.
The members and participants of the coordinating body or process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation: which sectors will be involved; how many representatives will be allowed for each sector; when and how the selection process will take place (how it will be openly publicised), who will select these representatives; how long they will serve or be involved; how representation will be reflected in legal texts. • Roles and responsibilities: what representatives will be expected to do – both generally (ensuring that the body or process works efficiently and transparently) and in relation to their own sectors (consulting with constituents on key decisions).
The secretariat of the coordinating body or process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities: the secretariat's role; what the secretariat may or may not take decisions on; how the secretariat relates to the committee chairs; how the secretariat will work and share information with all members and participants, including the representatives of the community sector. • Administrative practices: what logistical processes will be followed (giving adequate advance notice for meetings and taking minutes); how key staff (e.g., community sector liaison officer) will be recruited; how the secretariat will communicate with all stakeholders, including the community sector.

✓	Donors commit to providing a package of financial support to ensure that all aspects of the terms of reference, including those related to the community sector, can be put into practice.	They should ensure that the secretariat has sufficient resources to produce materials in local languages, or to undertake joint and open reviews.
✓	The secretariat documents the terms of reference and makes them available to all key stakeholders, who then distribute them within their sectors.	For example, the community sector could share them via its networks and information channels (newsletters, websites) to build awareness and foster transparency ³ .



1.2.2. Selecting representatives

✓	The coordinating body and members promote good practice procedures to select representatives for all aspects and levels of its work.	This key step includes promoting diversity among its multi-sectoral members (e.g., ensuring that some are from the local/district level). It aims to ensure that the members, as a whole, can provide a comprehensive range of high-quality input and expertise.
✓	The secretariat disseminates a formal invitation to the community and other sectors asking them to self-select the agreed number of representatives.	This step might take the form of a public announcement about the renewal of the National Coordinating Authority's membership, or of consultations for the development of a national action framework. The invitation is issued in a timely manner and through a transparent process (e.g., to all relevant community sector networks, rather than to a selected few).
✓	The community sector identifies and agrees on the selection criteria and process for its representatives.	This includes outlining the personal attributes, professional experience and technical skills that are needed. [See Box 7] It also identifies the democratic and open processes that it will use to carry out its selection ⁴ .
✓	The community sector selects the agreed number of representatives.	After having confirmed its choice with the selected representatives, the sector provides the secretariat with information about who they are, who they represent and how they were selected ⁵ .
✓	The government, community sector, donors and other stakeholders acknowledge each group's selected representatives and treat them with respect and equality.	This can involve public announcements of the representatives.

³ See Action Card 8

⁵ See Action Card 3

⁴ See Action Card 1 and 2

Box 7: Selecting representatives of people living with HIV/AIDS in the Ukraine

In the Ukraine, the three community sector representatives on the country's HIV/AIDS Coordinating Authority (one non-governmental organisation and two people living with HIV/AIDS) were selected through a meeting of the sector funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). All network members could propose a candidate, with selection carried out via a majority vote. The voting could be carried out either in person or by mail (with some 100 letters received from groups unable to attend).

The All-Ukrainian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS identified that being HIV-positive was not the only criterion for its representatives. They should also:

- Have at least five year's experience of working in the area of HIV/AIDS and with people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Be aware of the national HIV/AIDS situation, including the programmes and policies of donors and international organisations.
- Be strong advocates and have good communication skills, including the ability to write reports and deliver presentations.

(Source: Adapted from a presentation at the Regional Workshop on the Role of People Living with HIV/AIDS and Affected Communities in the 'Three Ones', Moldova, February 2006).



1.2.3. Providing induction for members

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The secretariat gives a copy of the Terms of Reference to the selected representatives, including those from the community sector, to ensure that they are aware of what is expected of them.	The Terms of Reference should be made publicly available so that constituents are also aware of the roles of representatives or the expected outcomes of processes. When new processes are developed (e.g., for a joint review of the M&E system), these should also be shared.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The members of the coordinating body or process review the terms of reference during their first meeting to ensure a common understanding of the aims and operating procedures.	This step includes asking all members, including those from the community sector, to sign or verbally agree (document) to the terms of reference in order to demonstrate their commitment.

- ✓ The members are offered induction and capacity building to ensure that they can fulfil the terms of reference.

Community sector representatives (and their networks and constituents) might need technical support in areas such as advocacy, public speaking, negotiation skills, and M&E. Meanwhile, government representatives might need support in relation to collaborative planning and to understand how the community sector work⁶.
- ✓ Donors offer financial support to address the capacity-building needs of representatives, including those from the community sector⁷.

For example, to support transport costs for the collection of community data from across the country and from the community networks.



1.2.4. Raising awareness

- ✓ The members/representatives consult and mobilise their own constituencies about the coordinating body or process and seek 'buy in' about its aims, processes, etc.

For example, within the community sector, a review of the national action framework may be put on the agenda of network meetings and information could be disseminated via NGO newsletters⁸.



Image 1: sex worker, India. © 2006 Shailaja Jathi, Image 2: HIV/AIDS educator demonstrates condom usage, Mozambique
Image 3: The ACER project engaging communities in roll-out of services, Zambia. © 2006 IHAA



1.2.5. Building effective relationships

- ✓ The members of the coordinating body or process and its secretariat agree on ways to work together effectively, to build supportive relationships and to clarify roles.

Members and the secretariat should be clear about their different roles in relation to communicating with and engaging the broader community sector. [See Box 8]

⁶ See Action Card 4 and 10

⁷ See Action Card 6

⁸ See Action Card 8 and 9

Box 8: Building relations between a secretariat and the community sector

A **secretariat** can support the community sector representatives by:

- Being non-discriminatory and welcoming the involvement of all members of the community sector.
- Giving plenty of advance notice of meetings and processes.
- Providing administrative support (e.g., taking and distributing minutes of meetings).
- Making general information about the coordination body or process freely and easily accessible.
- Providing information about opportunities for the community sector to give input.
- Providing a contact point for the community sector (e.g., a partnerships officer).

Community sector representatives can support a secretariat by:

- Being understanding about the many pressures and responsibilities faced by the secretariat.
- Providing appropriate and timely information (e.g., about the process for selecting the community sector's representatives).
- Providing community resource people (e.g., experts to participate in working groups).
- Communicating information to the broader community sector via focal points, such as networks.

✓	<p>The process and meetings work at a mutually agreed and appropriate pace.</p>	<p>Enough time should be allowed for community sector representatives to consult with their constituencies, e.g. through meetings and e-mail exchanges⁹.</p>
✓	<p>Members build consensus among themselves by finding common ground and identifying joint priorities and ways of working¹⁰.</p>	<p>For example, members should review data from all sources, including the community sector, and apply mutually agreed criteria to determine priorities for the National Action Framework.</p>
✓	<p>The community sector reaches out to marginalised groups, including people living with HIV/AIDS, to help them organise their contribution to the coordination body or process.</p>	<p>For example, meetings can be organised with networks of sex workers so that they can provide input into the evaluation of the National Action Framework.</p>
✓	<p>Donors offer financial support to enable the community sector to consult and communicate with its members.</p>	<p>For example, donors can fund networks to increase the community sector's capacity to collect and review baseline data to input into the Monitoring and Evaluation System.</p>
✓	<p>The members facilitate strong connections with local HIV/AIDS coordination efforts, as well as other national bodies, action frameworks and monitoring systems.</p>	<p>For example, members can collaborate and link to district AIDS committees and the Country Coordinating Mechanism and Proposal of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.</p>

⁹ See Action Card 9 and 10

¹⁰ See Action Card 10