



## **Call for Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) to Make Funding Available to Regional Civil Society Initiatives November 6, 2008**

**Regional civil society networks are not adequately accessing Global Fund funding.**

Regional civil society networks are not adequately accessing funds from the Global Fund, as the application process is designed in favour of national level initiatives, and is not practical for regional initiatives, even though these initiatives constitute significant added value through enhanced capacity building and technical support in the drive towards Universal Access to prevention, treatment, care and support.

While tremendous progress has been made in scaling-up services at the national level, the added value of regional initiatives, which are still operating at pre-Global Fund funding levels, has not been adequately realized.

### **Added value of regional initiatives**

Many initiatives which focus on the needs of stigmatized key populations experience difficulty in getting adequate support from national governments and subsequently from UN agencies and large NGOs that depend on governmental support to maintain their presence in a country. **Regional networks have important roles in empowering national organizations of PLHIV and key populations, and advocacy groups supporting the needs of those most affected by the three pandemics.**

Civil society networks are best positioned to play an advocacy role in promoting issues of human rights, gender, sexual and reproductive health and other key areas that are crucial to the global response to HIV and AIDS. This work cannot be left to the discretion of governments, especially ones that have a long way to go to in complying with internationally approved best practices in the response to HIV and AIDS. The High Level Meeting in New York in June 2008 confirmed once again that civil society takes a pro-active approach and serves as a driving force in bringing national responses up to date with evidence-informed, scientifically proven methods in the response to HIV and AIDS.

Civil society networks at a regional and national level perform crucial 'watchdog' functions: it is recognized that independent monitoring and advocacy related to national responses is vital for their improvement. **Regional initiatives are in a unique position to monitor and advocate for improvements in national responses** and also to support national advocacy efforts.

As the rapid scale-up of HIV and AIDS programs is underway, there are many valuable skills, lessons, and information materials that can be shared between countries. Regional initiatives have been instrumental in identifying and disseminating good practices, skilled consultants, effective guidelines and other informational materials. **Regional initiatives, such as networks and knowledge hubs bring added value by helping enhance the management of knowledge and the dissemination of information, contributing to community system strengthening by working with key populations, and addressing areas that are overlooked or under-funded by the national programs.**



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### **Barriers to accessing funding from the Global Fund**

The Global Fund requires that regional proposals are endorsed by all Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) of the specific countries involved. This requirement poses many problems. Attaining approval of all CCMs in large regions can be extremely resource intensive. For example, there are 27 countries in the region of the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In addition, the implementation of cross-country grants relies on the assumption that CCMs are functioning effectively, which is often not the case.

In regions such as the Middle East and Northern Africa, where only some countries have CCMs, the regional proposal would not be able to get endorsement from countries where the national coordinating structures have yet to be developed. This leaves the key populations of these countries cut off from any services that could have been provided through the regional networks.

Many regional networks would put in a proposal with the focus on the needs of stigmatized, vulnerable groups. CCMs are often dominated by governmental representatives or large NGOs for whom good relations with government are a priority rather than the interests of grass roots communities. In countries where key populations are ignored or criminalized, regional NGO networks are the only way to reach them. Currently, there is no provision in the Global Fund guidelines to support civil society regional initiatives, in spite of their value being recognized at many international fora.

### **Recommendations to the Global Fund:**

- Guidelines for proposals from regional civil society networks as a separate category need to be developed by the Global Fund Secretariat.
- A special approval mechanism should be established for regional initiatives, not requiring separate CCM approval from each country included in the proposal. The regional initiatives should use a simplified decision-making structure like Regional Coordinating Mechanisms (RCMs) or Global Coordinating Mechanism (GCMs) built on principles of transparency and based on the representation of stakeholders. Funding for operations of such structures should be included in the proposal.
- Criteria should be designed to ensure that regional initiatives do not duplicate or encroach on national mandates, but cover key areas of HIV and AIDS response that are not adequately covered by the national programs, such as the advocacy for human rights, work with stigmatized and criminalized populations, sharing best practices for capacity building of community organizations representing PLHIV and key populations, especially in countries with concentrated epidemics. Such areas as service delivery, procurement and supply of drugs and other disease specific interventions should remain a prerogative of national programs.

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### **ICASO serves as the global host of CSAT.**

#### **CSAT regional host organizations :**

- Middle East and North Africa: Association de lutte contre le sida (ALCS), Morocco, coordinator Nadia Rafif (alcsmarrakech@gmail.com)
- West and Central Africa: African Council of AIDS Service Organizations (AfriCASO), Senegal, coordinator Kibibi M. Thomas Mbwavi (tmkibibi@africaso.net)
- East and Southern Africa: AfriCASO/Southern Africa Network of AIDS Service Organizations (SANASO), Namibia, coordinator Tongayi Mangisi (tongayi@sanaso.na)
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN), Lithuania, coordinator Gennady Roschupkin (gennady@harm-reduction.org)
- Asia Pacific: Asia-Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APN+)/7 Sisters, Thailand, coordinator Vince Crisostomo (coordinator@7sisters.org)
- Latin America and the Caribbean: AID FOR AIDS (AFA), Peru, coordinator Pablo Anamaria Cardenas (pablo.anamaria@aidforaids.org)