



**Issue Paper for the Session:
Update on 2006 High-Level Meeting on AIDS –
Review of Civil Society Reports and Engagement in
2006 High-Level Meeting on AIDS
ICASO Project to Support monitoring of the implementation of the
UNGASS Declaration of Commitment**

Background

- Based on lessons learnt and recommendations from the pilot project (2003-2004)
- Overall goal: to support country based organizations in their efforts to hold their governments accountable on the commitments
- Given the DoC also calls for the involvement of civil society in the response, this project also looked at the role civil society is playing and the challenges they are facing to be effectively involved.

The project:

- 14 countries from all regions, including the “north” – as we tend to forget that developed countries were also part of the UNGASS and are, therefore, committed to implement the Declaration.
- *KEY FEATURE OF THE PROJECT:* country researchers were independent – ICASO suggested a questionnaire, instructions and outline of country report
- The in-country processes, as the main element of this project, allowed us, through local organizations, to track the progress of implementation of the HIV/AIDS response tabled in the DoC
- The evidence collected has informed advocacy efforts to highlight serious shortcomings at country level as well as showcase significant achievements.

Results at country level:

- Some of the organizations were able to use this exercise to influence the official monitoring process at the national level.
- By participating in the ICASO-led M&E exercise, organizations were motivated, prepared and empowered to be involved in the preparation of the official governmental report.
- In addition, each ICASO-supported ‘shadow’ national report is, in its own, an advocacy tool to seek a better implementation of the UNGASS DoC, and consequently, a more comprehensive HIV/AIDS response.
- Each report paints a picture of the response to HIV/AIDS in the country and highlights the main challenges to this response.
- The reports also present what is the contribution by civil society and ends with a set of recommendations to improve the response.

Results at global level:

- Shadow reports: national reports were sent to UNAIDS as input to the Global Progress Report (which before our efforts, only included information provided by governments).
- In addition, the information and data contained in these reports were used to input into:
 - Initiative for ‘Scaling Up Towards Universal Access’ through a global consultation with civil society (convened by ICASO)
 - Several chapters of the 2006 Global Report.
- Overall report will be released prior to the UNGASS+5 meeting – will look at: Major Findings, Common Themes and Cross-Cutting Issues

General findings:

- Knowledge and use of the Declaration of Commitment by policy makers and civil society is generally low.
- Participation by civil society in the development, implementation and monitoring of national strategies remains very limited.
- Political leadership is still lacking in most countries.
- There are significant gaps between commitments made by politicians and what they deliver.
- Most developing country governments are spending a very small proportion of national budgets on HIV/AIDS.
- While access to ARVs has improved, significant challenges remain.
- Through its structures and processes, the Global Fund has made a significant contribution in many countries to improving collaboration between civil society and government, and in establishing monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Human Rights:

- ***Stigma and discrimination is commonplace, and constitute a major obstacle in the successful implementation of prevention, care, treatment and support services.***
- There is little connection between the legally guaranteed right to health and actual access to health, especially for vulnerable groups.
- There is a huge gap between what exists on paper in terms of anti-discrimination policies and what happens in reality.
- There are large gaps in the services being provided to vulnerable groups.
- Little is being done to promote the empowerment of women.
- The illegal status of sex work, combined with the high levels of stigma, means that services for sex workers are spotty and that, even where such services exist, it is very difficult for sex workers to access them.
- The illegal status of drug use – combined with (a) the stigma associated with drug use and (b) repressive law enforcement practices – dramatically limit users' access to basic health and social services.

Recommendations:

- Governments and other stakeholders should address stigma and discrimination far more aggressively than they have to date. Stigma and discrimination are a major obstacle to achieving universal access to prevention, care, treatment and support services.
- Governments should ensure that the response to HIV/AIDS is truly multisectorial, and should take action to improve coordination among the stakeholders.
- Governments should involve civil society more in the response to HIV/AIDS, to a far greater extent than has been the case to date. CSOs need to be involved in planning and policy making, program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Governments and other stakeholders should make a significant investment in civil society by strengthening the capacity of CSOs to fulfil their role in the response to HIV/AIDS.
- CSOs need to take action to improve communications and coordination within their sector.