

International Civil Society Support

Taking the civil society response to HIV/AIDS to a higher level

Annual Report 2008

In 2006 International Civil Society Support (ICSS) was founded with financial support of two Dutch NGOs, Aids Fonds and STOP AIDS NOW! The aim of ICSS is to establish enhanced collaboration between the eight global HIV/AIDS networks at the international as well as the country level. In 2008, the eight networks and International Civil Society Support (ICSS) have agreed in principle to work together and join forces in the fight against HIV/AIDS through the establishment, further development and implementation of the *Free Space Process partnership*.

The eight networks are the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+), the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC), the International HIV/AIDS Alliance (IHAA), the World AIDS Campaign (WAC), the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) and the Health & Development Networks (HDN).

Vision

Civil society plays a vital role in the fight against HIV and AIDS, at the global, the regional, the country and grass roots levels, where it contributes to the policy development, development and implementation of programs and the delivery of essential services for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and advocacy. Notwithstanding the significant efforts and activities undertaken thus far, there is still a great potential to increase the effectiveness and impact of civil society.

In practical terms, this boils down to facilitating easy and consistent access to information, increasing relevant consultation and communication capacities, strengthening organizational infrastructures and community systems, and providing the financial means for this to take place. For the most part, civil society engagement in the global HIV/AIDS response to date has been fragmented, reactive rather than proactive, poorly coordinated and not aligned by a shared vision or a common agenda; a dedicated space for in-depth, strategic and creative thinking and sharing on the roles and responsibilities of civil society in the international and national response to HIV/AIDS and health in general is lacking. The *Free Space Process* aims to provide that space.

The Free Space Process

The ultimate goal of the FSP partnership is to support scaling up and a quality improvement of civil society's response to HIV/AIDS. The Free Space Process contributes to achieving this goal through providing space for strategic thinking, creating added value by sharing each others expertise and infrastructures and addressing key capacity gaps on all levels - but particularly the country level - of the civil society architecture. In a series of consultations, the partnership identified three activity areas:

Organizing the HIV/AIDS Strategy Caucus

A space for strategic thinking and systematic linking and learning among leaders of the networks and other sectors of civil society (HIV/AIDS, key populations, and health) from the international, regional and national level, in order to develop a proactive response based on a common vision on HIV/AIDS and health.

Facilitating the Civil Society Representatives Group

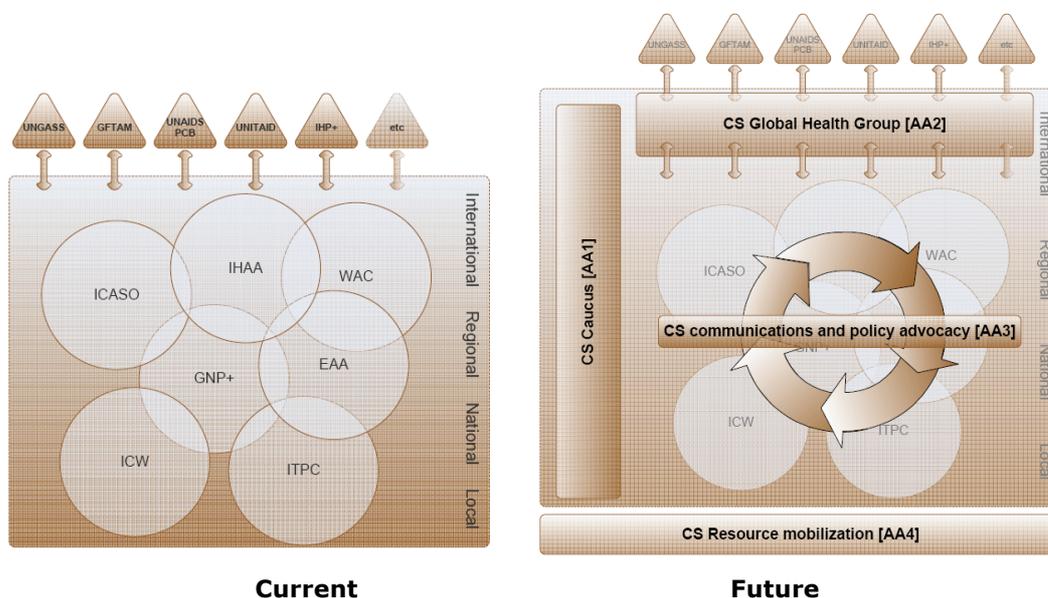
Providing stronger support to civil society representatives in the international institutions (Global Fund, UNITAID, UNAIDS PCB, GAVI and IHP+) and facilitating a process for strategic collaboration among these representatives and with a wider group of civil society stakeholders.

Strengthening Civil Society at the country level

Establishing at the country level “National Partnership Platforms” that allow civil society to strategize and collaborate on the national agenda vis-à-vis HIV/AIDS and health, and develop a shared advocacy agenda and appropriate actions.

Creating a better communications environment, supporting (young) leadership development and a shared effort in resource mobilization, are identified as cross cutting issues in all three activity areas.

Making the architecture work: current and future Civil Society Architecture



In the development and implementation of the Free Space Process, the collaborating networks and organizations seek to achieve the following results:

- A more coherent, collaborative and future oriented vision (or visions) regarding the response to HIV/AIDS and Global Health that enables a better informed and more proactive participation of civil society at national, regional and international level.
- Strengthening policy advocacy and communications capacity at the country level, starting in 4 pilot countries, through establishing collaboration between country level partners and the FSP partners.
- A more effective and interactive flow of information within civil society stakeholders and representatives at international, regional and national level.
- Establishing increased accountability within the civil society architecture as well as between civil society and other stakeholders.
- A higher level of, and better supported, participation of new and of young leaders.
- Increased access to funding streams and/or the establishment of a dedicated funding mechanism that addresses key funding needs for communications, policy advocacy and management capacity on all levels of civil society – but particularly the country level.

The Free Space Process in 2008

ICSS participates in the LAASER programme that is run by the Aids Fonds and funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs The Netherlands. In 2008 it was decided to fully integrate the activities funded by the LAASER programme in the Free Space Process. In doing so the LAASER component that focused on access to treatment has become part of the more comprehensive approach of the global HIV/AIDS and health agenda; the Free Space Process. As a follow-up to the first Free Space meeting in 2007 where the FSP concept was established and the activity areas identified, in 2008 the following activities were undertaken:

HIV/AIDS Strategy Caucus

In July 2008, the leaders of the FSP partners came together to discuss and agree on a draft FSP Action Plan as a basis of the future collaboration. This meeting was in many ways a historical one; never before have the networks met as a group to discuss the need for collaboration, the goal and scope of that collaboration and how they can contribute based on their respective advantages and specific areas of expertise. The partners agreed on the three activity areas described above, and identified their collaborative work at the country level as one of the main challenges but at the same time the highest priority.

After consultation within the networks, a follow-up meeting was held during the International AIDS Conference in Mexico to discuss how to further develop the Action Plan. Consensus was achieved on activity areas 1-2; the HIV/AIDS Strategy Caucus and the Civil Society Representatives Group. Partners agreed that further work needed to be done to define collaboration at the country level.

Civil Society Representatives Group

In September 2008, ICSS facilitated a retreat for civil society representatives to the international institutions – Global Fund, UNITAID, UNAIDS PCB, GAVI Alliance and IHP+. This was the first ever opportunity for these representatives to come together to share and strategically think about collaborative efforts. A number of roundtable discussions were held, including discussions on accountability; national level capacity; global level capacity & leadership and communications. The group agreed on two priority issues for follow-up work: improving communication among delegations and with the country level, and establishing a shared accountability framework. On both issues Working Groups have been established that will present findings and advise in 2009.

Strengthening Civil Society at the country level:

In order to move forward with establishing collaboration at the country level, a meeting was organized in October 2008 to further explore activity area 3: strengthening civil society at the country level. For this meeting FSP partners and their country level counterparts were invited. The overall focus of the meeting was on identifying strategies and models to strengthen HIV-related policy advocacy and communications capacity of civil society organizations at the national level. Participants agreed that follow-up work needed to be done on clarifying a financial framework for country level collaboration and on establishing a conceptual framework that guides support provided at country level in strengthening policy advocacy and communications capacity, including a Clearing House function. The work on the financial framework was finalized early 2009 and provides a solid basis for funding of both the collaboration between the partners as well as with country level counterparts.

IHP+ Civil Society Representatives Selection Process

ICSS was requested to convene the selection process to appoint Civil Society Representatives to the Scaling-up Reference Group (SuRG) of the International Health Partnership and Related Initiatives (IHP+). This process was organised over the period June-November 2008 resulting

in the selection of two representatives from the South and two from the North.

Mid Term Review LAASER

ICSS participated in the Mid-Term Review of the LAASER programme. The overall findings regarding the work of ICSS in this review were positive, encouraging and supportive towards the goal and innovative approach of the FSP. It was suggested to strengthen the communication of results from the FSP and explore ways to increase participation of LAASER partners.

Next Steps in 2009

Over the last couple of years we have learned that commitment and active participation of the partners are often two different things. Lack of capacity at partner organisations to provide timely input to move the programme forward was often the main cause for delay etc. With the FSP concept being developed relatively swiftly into concrete activity areas and follow-up activities to develop these with an eye to making next steps relevant and responsive to (urgent) needs experienced by partners. It is clear that active participation has increased and is now more realistic and feasible for the partners.

It is expected that the developed Action Plan will be finalized early 2009 and can be disseminated among the networks for consultation. The outcomes of this consultation will help the partners to finalize a partnership agreement around the Summer of 2009.

ICSS and the Global Fund in 2008

Over the last couple of years, ICSS has been actively involved in the Global Fund to FIGHT AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. From 2005–2007, Peter van Rooijen was the Global Fund Board Member for the Developed Country NGOs. Since then he has also been a member of the Board's Finance & Audit Committee, of which he is currently the Vice-Chair.

In 2008 Jacqueline Wittebrood was selected to be the Communications Focal Point (CFP) to the Developed Country NGO Delegation, a role she will continue to perform in 2009. In this role she is actively involved in the work of the delegation and responsible for communication and interaction of the Board and Secretariat with the delegation, as well as between the delegation and its constituency; NGOs in the developed countries. In her capacity as CFP she also participated in and organized a number of activities with relation to other civil society delegations.

Next to attending the two annual Board meetings in Geneva and India, both ICSS staff members have participated in additional Global Fund meetings that were organized during the AIDS Conference in Mexico and the Partnership Forum that was held in December in Dakar (Senegal).

ICSS was invited to join a consultation on Community Systems Strengthening organized by the Global Fund early in the year, to see how this concept could be worked out in the Guidelines for the next funding Round so that community-based organizations could best access funding for strengthening their organizations and structures to be able to scale-up and improve their response to HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria.

The three civil society delegations to the Global Fund Board (Developed Country NGOs, Developing Country NGOs and Communities) work closely together, and in order to be able to strategize about civil society in relation to the Global Fund outside of the context of hectic Board meetings, ICSS raised funds for and organized a strategy retreat for around 30 delegation members early February in Brighton, UK. This meeting gave all three delegations the opportunity to come together to discuss delegation priorities as well as joint priorities for

civil society in the Global Fund context.

As support to other civil society delegations, ICSS facilitated a process of performance evaluation of the civil society UNITAID Board members and their Alternates, for which a 360 degrees stakeholder review was developed that can also be used by other delegations. Subsequently ICSS participated in the selection committee for a newly established position of Liaison Officer for the UNITAID delegation, and gave the newly hired person a two-days training in Amsterdam to prepare him for the job.

At World AIDS Day a workshop was organized during the 12th National Conference Soa*HIV*Aids in Amsterdam, in which an update on the work of the Global Fund was presented, country level cases were discussed and misconceptions around the Global Fund were addressed.

In December the UNAIDS PCB held its Board meeting in Geneva and dedicated a one-day thematic session to its collaboration with the Global Fund. ICSS participated in a UNAIDS Working Group preparing this thematic session, and worked with the NGO PCB delegation during the Board meeting to get concrete recommendations from that session approved by the UNAIDS Board.

The Global Fund offers a unique opportunity for Civil Society at the country level to access substantial additional resources that were not available before. In order to use this opportunity to the fullest, it is key that NGOs in the North and the South are well informed and supported in establishing the appropriate collaborations at the country level. The FSP can play an important role in facilitating and supporting both the communication and information sharing as well as strengthening and support civil society at the country level.

Governance Structure and Staff

After the establishment of ICSS, it was for pragmatic reasons hosted by the Werkmaatschappij Soa Aids (WSA), a legal entity that supports both Aids Fonds and STOP AIDS NOW! Both the FSP partners and the Supervisory Board of the WSA have expressed a preference for the establishment of an independent legal entity for ICSS which could still be supported administratively – like the Aids Fonds and STOP AIDS NOW! – by the stichting WSA, thus providing a solid administrative back-up and logistical support infrastructure for ICSS in the future.

In 2008 the required preparations for this have been undertaken and it is expected that the stichting ICSS will be established early 2009. The Supervisory Board of the WSA will take on the role of the Board for this new entity on an interim basis, in order to accommodate for the composition of a fully independent, international Supervisory Board of the stichting ICSS in the Fall of 2009.

The ICSS staff consisted in 2008 of:

Peter van Rooijen (1.0 FTE)	- Executive Director
Raoul Fransen-dos Santos (0.8 FTE)	- Senior Policy Advisor
Jacqueline Wittebrood (0.9 FTE)	- Senior Policy Advisor and CFP
Nelly Lüneburg (0.4 FTE)	- Assistent

Financial Report

For its activities in 2008 ICCS received financial support from Aids Fonds, STOP AIDS NOW and Stichting DOEN. Since resorted under the Stichting Werkmaatschappij Soa Aids (WSA), the financial reporting on ICSS activities is included in the consolidated Financial Report of the

WSA, Aids Fonds and STOP AIDS NOW!. The Financial Report is available on the website of www.aidsfonds.nl and www.stopaidsnow.nl.

As of February 2009, ICCS is established as an independent legal entity under Dutch law - the Stichting International Civil Society Support. Future reporting therefore will also be separate and independent.

Contact

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