

Civil society and UNAIDS: Introduction

Civil society has played a key leadership role in the AIDS response from the beginning of the epidemic. Many diverse partners in the AIDS response have been inspired by the courage and dynamism of people living with HIV and AIDS activists over the last thirty years who have, through their intensive and persistent efforts in the face of adversity, shifted the global health and development paradigm to one that emphasises the participation of those most affected in policy and programme development.

Civil society has been critical in catalysing and shaping global, regional and national action and in lobbying successfully to mobilize politicians and donors to fund the response. People living with HIV and other civil society partners have also provided essential HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services, sometimes in the absence of a coordinated response from government and the international community, and frequently with the minimum of resources.

Partnership in the AIDS response and the principle of greater and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV (GIPA) underpin the ethos and modus operandi of UNAIDS with the aim to enhance and sustain the involvement of civil society, especially people living with HIV and key affected populations, in policy and programmatic decision-making at country, regional and global level.

Since its inception UNAIDS has worked in partnership with civil society and people living with HIV in a wide range of activities from support to nascent groups of people living with HIV at country level to inclusion of civil society on its governing body, the Programme Coordinating Board. UNAIDS advocates for an approach to partnership with civil society that recognizes civil society actors as equal partners with specific strengths, and that acknowledges and builds on these combined strengths and synergies towards a stronger, coordinated and more inclusive AIDS response.