

GUIDELINES FOR

EFFECTIVE CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATION IN NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND PLATFORMS

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1.0 BACKGROUND

Experience from the East African region has shown that representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) are important stakeholders in key policy and decision-making bodies and processes. However, meaningful participation from CSO representatives is often limited, raising concerns that community needs are not always included in key policies. Some of the limitations around CSO engagement is related to the following factors:

- Lack of capacity (particularly technical capacity) to engage in the process, hindering meaningful participation
- Lack of common agenda among CSO representation (caucus)
- Inadequate access to information on key national processes among CSOs,
- Financial constraints facing most CSOs which limits their ability to network and have good coordination
- Many CSOs are not aware of the existing opportunities for representation and are thus left out of the processes.

Despite these challenges, CSOs realize that meaningful participation in key national decision-making processes and platforms gives voice to vulnerable populations, ensures delivery of community-based services, brings urgency to resource mobilization and planning, informs program development and facilitates holding policy makers accountable for concrete results.

In response to this, CSOs have been looking at how to address the gaps, focusing on empowerment of CSOs themselves to be able to more effectively advocate to governments. On their part, CSOs have developed a set of guidelines to steer their practices for better results and improved representation in national, regional and international fora.

These Guidelines for Civil Society Representation (otherwise referred to as 'CSO Representation Guidelines') stem from the deliberations of the EANNASO Regional Consultative Meeting on 'Space for Voice' for civil society held between 30th October – 1st November 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya. The aim of the meeting was to specifically explore the question of space for civil society in decision-making processes and platforms at national level. Under the auspices of EANNASO, the gathering brought together civil society actors from 11 countries of Eastern Africa. The meeting had four (4) key objectives, namely:

1. To identify critical issues and challenges faced by civil society, which impede on its effectiveness at national level decision-making processes and platforms;
2. To share innovative approaches and good practice models to support proactive engagement by civil society;
3. To develop guidelines and strategies to be adopted by CSOs in raising their profile in various decision-making platforms; and

4. To develop advocacy strategies for taking forward identified solutions.

2.0 SPACE AND REPRESENTATION, DEFINED

Space and representation have been defined in different ways by different stakeholders. In this context, the definitions have been selected by CSOs during the consultative meeting where these guidelines were conceptualized. Space and representation were defined to mean:

- "An enabling environment and opportunity for civil society to influence decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation".
 - * "Having access as a forum whereby civil society can voice, articulate and contribute meaningfully through a three-phased approach: (1) Advocacy Opportunities, (2) Committed Leadership and (3) Contribution to Change."
- "Space means platforms, forums, avenues, and institutions that have a policy and decision-making function. Representation consists of participation in these platforms at all levels."

3.0 PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

To amplify and present a strong unified and harmonized CSO voice for a more effective contribution of the CSO constituency in decisions affecting/influencing their respective national responses. The focus of the Guidelines is not only CSOs' engagement in such processes and platforms, but also to look beyond simple issues of representation and propel CSOs and communities to foster their meaningful involvement in the conception, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes relating to HIV and AIDS.

4.0 USERS OF THE GUIDELINES

It is intended that these guidelines are adopted for use by CSOs fighting HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria in Eastern Africa. They are intended to contribute to bringing together all civil society fighting HIV, TB and malaria into one constituency.

Guideline 1

There shall be agreed upon process and criteria of appointment/selection of representatives

CSO shall develop a framework process for selection/appointment of the representatives. The process ought to be agreed upon by the wide range of stakeholders in the civil society constituency. There should be simple, clear and justifiable criteria for the selection¹. Desirably, the criteria should as much as possible, embody, inter alia, the principle of Equality and Gender Parity in representation.



Appointment shall be based on merits

Guideline 2

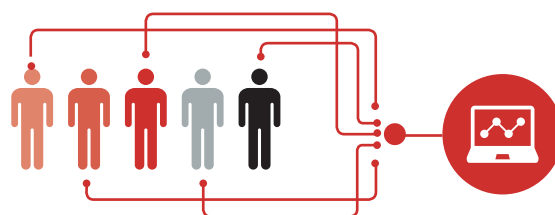
Representatives shall be appointed/selected based on merits and the competencies and capabilities warranting their appointment to such office shall be known².



Guideline 3

Clear and specific terms of reference for representatives

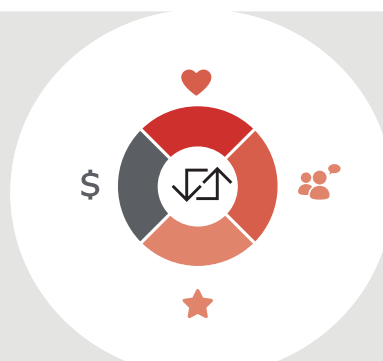
The CSO constituency shall develop clear, unequivocal terms of reference (TORs) for the representatives to be followed/carried during term in office. There should be clear objectives focusing on a specific Forum for each representative in addition to the general TORs for representation. The terms will provide guidance and direction for the representatives³.



Guideline 4

Inclusiveness of processes

The selection/appointment process shall be fair and all-inclusive taking cognizance of the various interests of the constituency⁴. Upon selection, the incumbent will be deemed to be representing the whole of the civil society and act as such in word and in deed.

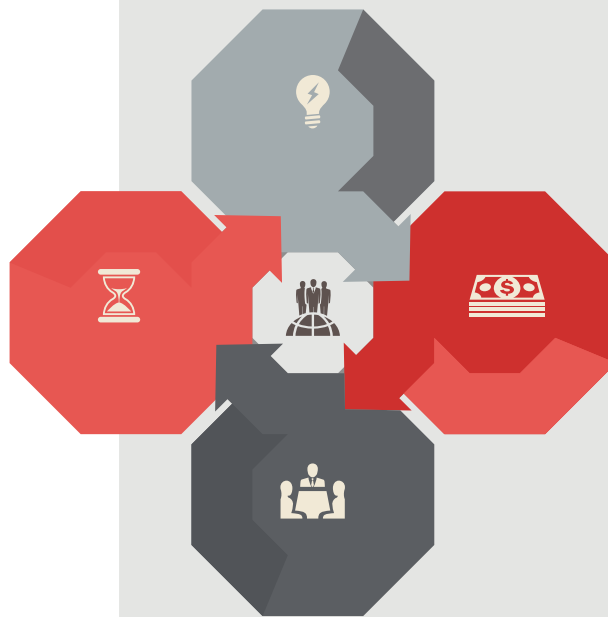


Guideline 5

Representation as an office

1) The position of representative of civil society shall be regarded as an office and shall be treated as such. In that regard, representatives should discharge their functions in relation to the said responsibility with utmost good faith, transparency, accountability and professionalism.

2) The other aspect of representation as an office is that it should exist beyond the individual occupying that office; it shall have perpetual succession such that it exists beyond the tenure of office of respective representative(s) to continue to cater for future representatives ⁵.



Guideline 6

Consultation prior to decision making



The TORs shall provide for a consultation process in which the representatives shall (as far as it is practical), consult the constituency for purposes of getting views and the stance of the constituency prior to decision-making. This shall ensure that there is involvement and

participation of CSOs in real sense and that at all times, the agenda and views of the CSO constituency is/are on the table in or during the national platforms/processes.

In that regard, the representatives shall arrange for (1) a feasible consultation mechanism meeting and (2) consulting among themselves prior to platform meetings with a view to developing and or clarifying common positions on specific matters.

In cases where there is hardly time to consult the constituency, the latter mechanism may suffice ⁵.



Guideline 7

Feedback to the constituency

The CSO constituency shall include in the TORs provisions for feeding back to the constituency. Feedback shall ensure reporting back to the constituency and keeping the constituency and communities posted on relevant decisions and processes ⁷.



Guideline 8

Use of evidence-based information and arguments in representation.

To be able to represent (and advocate) effectively, CSO representatives need to possess relevant and up-to-date (and even cutting-edge) information (and data) - local and international.



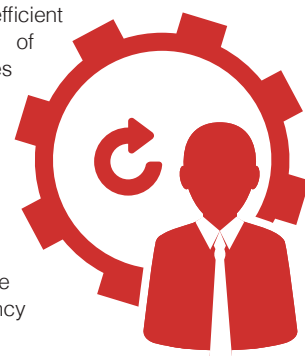
The office of the representative(s) needs to gradually acquire the capacity to conduct or commission studies and or research on relevant prevailing and emerging issues in order to support their propositions/arguments with authority⁸.



Guideline 9

The principle against conflict of interest

Personal/individual interest should not come in the way of effective and efficient representation. Representatives of CSOs shall discharge their duties as representatives in utmost good faith and avoid conflict of interest. The representatives shall put forth the interests of the overall constituency and avoid particular benefit to themselves as persons, their organization, or thematic constituency at the expense of the overall constituency⁹.



Guideline 10

Striving for sustainability of civil society representation¹⁰

The civil society constituency shall, at all times, strive and work at ensuring sustainability of the office of the representatives in order to make it constantly functional and productive. There shall be mechanisms devised and resources availed to ensure sustainability. The constituency should strive to provide representatives with necessary support they need for effective representation ranging from financial, human and physical resources to information. The CSO constituency shall look for and provide resources to the office of the representative(s), which resources should include:

Financial Resources

The constituency shall fundraise and/or support fundraising efforts for the office of the representative(s).



⋮

Human and Technical Sustainability

The office of the representative(s) shall be availed with sufficient number of skilled human resources to assist the representative(s) in their relevant day-to-day functions in their capacity as representatives.

⋮

These are the physical work aides including the equipment which would enable the office to collect, analyse and disseminate relevant information, among other tasks.

As such, the CSO constituency should strive to establish a Civil Society Constituency Support Office (for which the constituency should fundraise) to support the representatives fulfil the TORs and discharge their functions effectively.



Guideline 11

Empowering the constituency through sharing of key, relevant information of local and international nature

It is pertinent to establish a strong and practical information sharing system among the constituencies and the community at large and through the same, share important and relevant information (and knowledge) with them.



It shall be a duty cast on civil society representatives to ensure that, over and above the feedback they give to the constituency with regard to processes and decisions made, they also utilize their positions to gather relevant and up-to-date information (and knowledge) and meaningfully share/transfer the same to the constituencies.



Guideline 12

Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the representation

For effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, there needs to be a mechanism for measuring the progress effectiveness of the work of the representation of CSO within a particular time frame. A simple, straight-forward and realistic M&E framework is necessary. CSOs shall strive to develop such a mechanism.

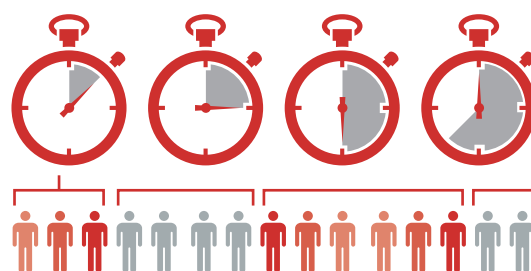
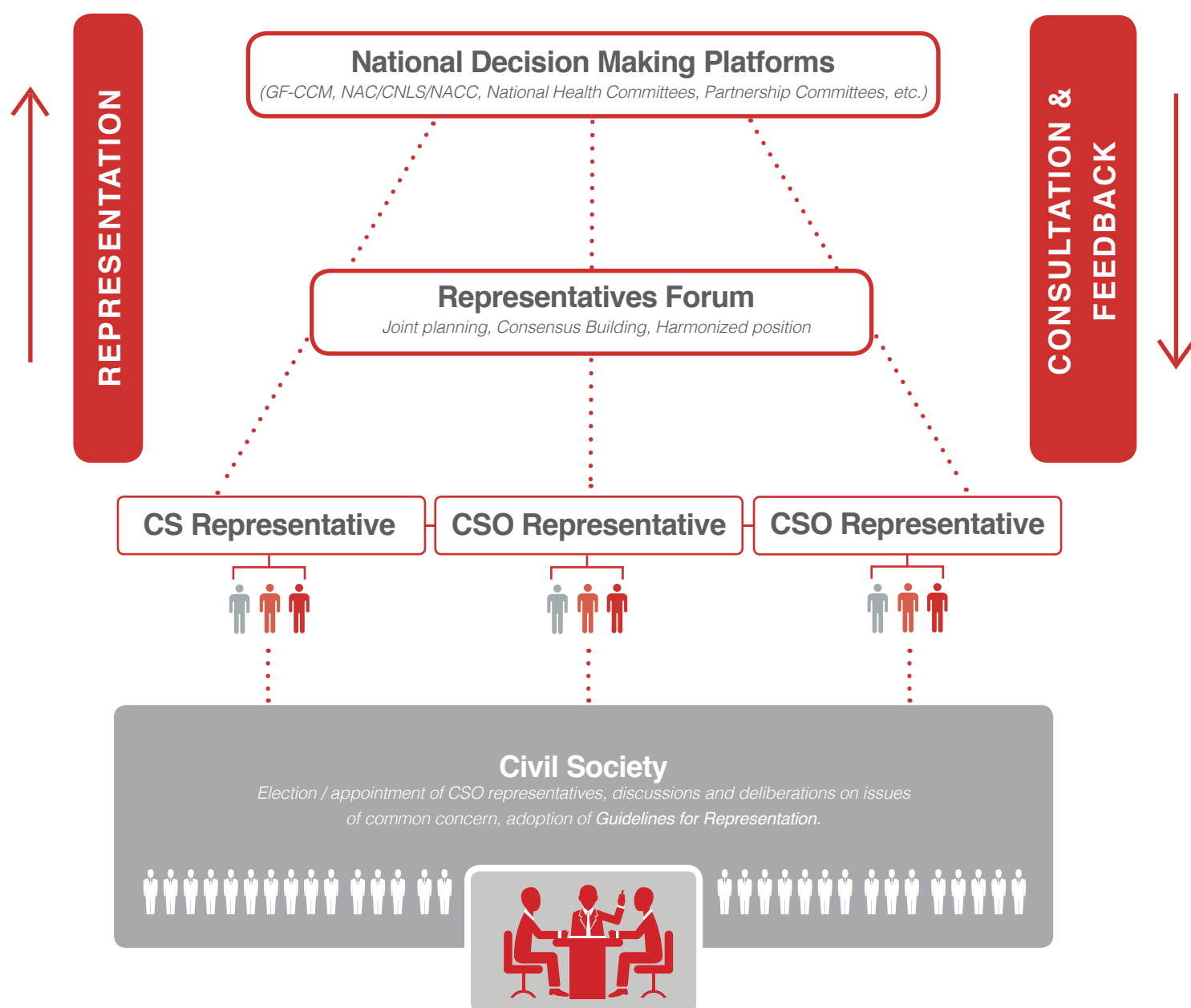
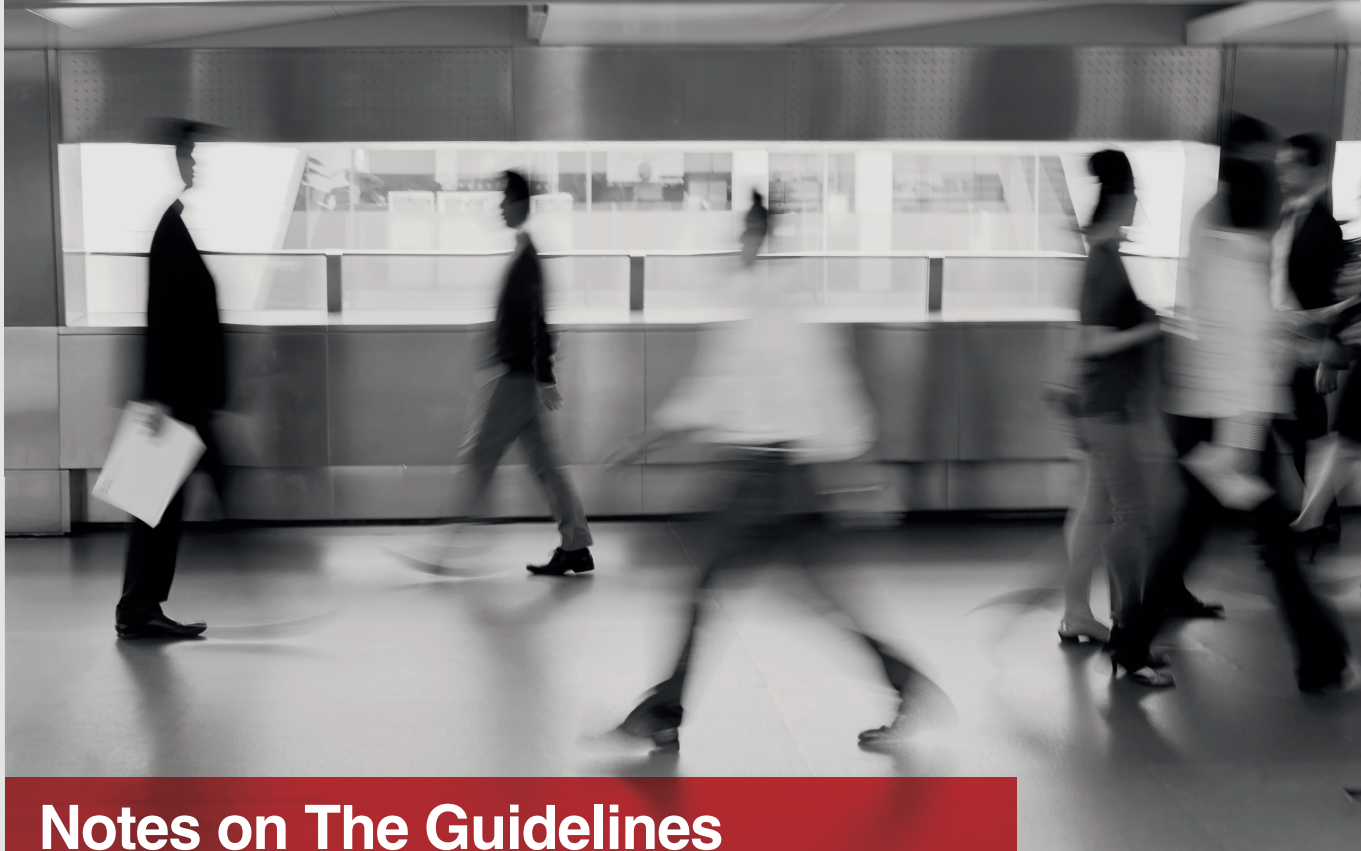


Fig.1 Illustration
Generic Representation Model





Notes on The Guidelines

¹ Agreed upon criteria and wide participation is key in ensuring legitimacy of the process and of the representatives

² Competencies of individual representatives should be considered when selecting for constituencies so that a person coming to this high-level policy making committee should be of appropriate seniority and experience in policy processes to be able to articulate constituency interests and functionally contribute to debate as an equal participant in the committee rather than just sitting on the committee with little ability to engage. CVs of nominated candidates can be assessed to ensure this. (But also consider affirmative action e.g. for women and people living with HIV if such competencies do not necessarily exist.

Develop criteria for CSOs representative, which may look into the following, among other relevant things:

- Qualities of the representative
- Ability to share the information
- Knowledge on country specific issues
- Understand the Need of sharing and representation
- Willing to volunteer
- Access to receive and send information
- Willing to receive and disseminate information
- Understand at least 10 to 15 CSOs, CBOs and/or NGOs
- Able to work with other CSOs
- Creative and a spirit to see a joint CSO response and a unified voice
- Real understanding of relevant policies.

³ The representatives should have clear terms of reference for purposes of defining to whom they are accountable and how they ensure the above are met as well as determining procedure of determining their effectiveness as representatives.

⁴ The selection process should consider including alternate representatives who are selected from the same constituency and not necessarily the same organisation. This will ensure increased participation as well as consistency in participating in meetings. Alternates may attend all the meetings of the TNCM but may not constitute the quorum or be allowed to vote when their substantive members are in attendance



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