

Civil society and community participation in the Pandemic Accord

The work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) responsible for drafting and negotiating a WHO Pandemic Accord is at a crucial moment. With 6 months remaining, it is critical that civil society and communities can bring their expertise and experience to this process in an effective and meaningful way.

Public policy-making that is informed by the rights-based participation of a diverse range of stakeholders can support decisions that are more representative of the needs and perspectives of diverse communities ultimately making them more successful. As outlined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, civil society brings a variety of voices to the table and contributes different perspectives and sets of expertise, including those very often not heard, shedding light on local concerns and priorities with solutions tailored to local needs.¹ This participation confers trust and legitimacy in the policy process, a crucial element of pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, with the resulting policies ultimately more likely to be accepted, ratified and effectively enforced.² Civil society participation is key to ensuring people are at the centre of decision-making and ultimately strengthens accountability.³

A number of civil society and community organisations have been identified by Member States as relevant stakeholders to the work of the INB (alongside organisations in official relation with WHO) and yet participation in the recent INB7 meeting remained limited to attending parts of the proceedings and making short interventions during the opening session. This is far from what participation in treaty-making processes should look like.

Moreover, the in-person participation of civil society and communities from the Global South is very limited to those who are able to get visas in time and can afford the cost of being in Geneva. Although those identified above can deliver statements virtually, they do not have the opportunity to interact with negotiators at the fringe of the official meetings and share views and ideas on what is being negotiated.

We therefore call on Member States, especially members of the INB Bureau to ensure civil society and communities (in official relation and identified as relevant stakeholders) can attend and intervene (in an unrestricted and timely way) during all INB meetings going forward including the current Drafting Groups. We also call on WHO and Member States to provide the necessary support and assistance to enable civil society from the Global South to travel and contribute to the forthcoming meetings.

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/Civic-space-treaty-making-InBrief-FINAL.pdf>

²

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/pandemics-start-and-end-in-communities-why-civil-society-participation-in-the-governance-of-the-pandemic-accord-is-critical-short-summary/>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/Civic-space-treaty-making-InBrief-FINAL.pdf>

Action for Animal Health
Africa Civil Society Platform for Health (CiSPHA)
Africa Japan Forum
Afya na Haki
Amnesty International
APCASO
AVAC
Busia Civil society Forum (BCSF)
Disability Rights India Foundation
FOUR PAWS
Friends of the Global Fight
Global Fund Advocates Network
Global Humanitarian Progress GHP Corp
Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+)
Harm Reduction International
Health Action International (HAI)
Health GAP
Innovarte
International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care
International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD)
International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC)
Pandemic Action Network
People's Vaccine Alliance
Privacy International
Public Eye
Salud por Derecho
Save the Children
Sightsavers
STOPAIDS
The People's Vaccine Alliance Asia
The Reformed Drug and Substances Abuse Initiative
Uganda Youth coalition on Adolescent SRHR & HIV (CYSRA)
WACI Health
Wemos
Wote Youth Development Projects CBO
Yayasan GEMPITA (Gerakan Mandiri Pita Merah - Red Ribbon Independent Movement)

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Jiwoo HA, Seoul National University
Mr Muhumuza Abdulkharim, Afya na Haki
Ms Sally Shackleton, Coordinator of the Civil Society Alliance for Human Rights in the Pandemic Treaty
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