



# Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism

## **SESSION 5: MAKING CITIES INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE: REGIONAL PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **People Living with and Affected by HIV Constituency Statement**

*Speaker: APCASO | APRCEM*

We, the HIV Constituency, thank the Chair, Honourable Delegates and ESCAP for the opportunity to share our ideas and the space for civil society to engage in this APFSD. Achieving the new development targets on health under the SDGs requires taking stock of the gains and challenges in meeting the millennium development goals, and learning from them. In the context of HIV, TB, and malaria, three epidemics that continue to threaten vulnerable communities in the Asia-Pacific region and other parts of the world, the new goals can have far-reaching impact in ending these epidemics if barriers to human rights, gender equity, and community empowerment are addressed. The HIV Constituency applauds the proposal from Sri Lanka and reiterates the call for an ambitious roadmap that reflects the inclusive nature of the SDGs, open to all stakeholders, including civil society. applaud the proposal of the Delegation from Sri Lanka.

HIV, TB and malaria have gained from biomedical advances that promise to put an end to these epidemics. But countries continue to grapple with their responses to these epidemics due to a continuing refusal by governments to embrace evidence-based programming, key population and community-centered responses, accountability in health and governance, and a multidimensional appreciation of social inclusion.

These manifest in several areas. Because the populations and communities that are vulnerable and affected by these diseases are marginalised, stigmatised, or criminalised, disease programs often ignore the evidence that point to the effectiveness of human rights-based and gender transformative interventions that reach and target key populations. In HIV, community-run and community-based disease programs have proven to be more effective than facility-based services in preventing infections, detecting new cases, or treating persons living with HIV, yet this evidence is impaired by stigma, discrimination and criminalisation of key populations.

This is also evident in the continuing reliance of governments on international funding to support their HIV, TB, and malaria responses, and while there has been growing commitments to increase domestic funding of country programs, these resources often go to interventions that fly against evidence-based programming or to programs that are politically palatable. This lack of ownership often diminish government accountability over public health, and hence existing mechanisms to reduce health expenditures such as universal health coverage or the TRIPS flexibilities to lower the price of quality medicines, diagnostics, and vaccines are not optimised.



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To reach the SDGs on health and sustain the gains from the MDGs, we call on the member states to:

- Address with urgency the socio-economic and legal barriers that have prevented countries from fulfilling their MDG commitments. In the contexts of HIV, TB, and malaria, this includes the removal of punitive laws that prevent key populations and vulnerable communities from accessing lifesaving health services.
- Guarantee evidence-based HIV, TB, or malaria interventions by ensuring that health programs are human rights-based, gender transformative, and key population or community-centered.
- Eliminate debilitating health expenditures by ensuring that universal health coverage are defined by social inclusion principles that view the multidimensionality of vulnerability, from poverty to exclusion based on ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity, among others.
- Demonstrate the political will to utilise existing mechanisms to promote public health. In this regard, governments should revise their intellectual property laws to incorporate TRIPs flexibilities and reduce the cost of quality medicines, diagnostics, and vaccines. Governments should also reject new trade deals such as TPP and RCEP that seek to re-introduce restrictive patents regimes that can impair public health and access to affordable quality medicines.

Justice for HIV and TB Key Populations, and those most at risk of malaria is a critical component of development justice.

Thank you.