



The Role of African Civil Society towards UNGASS 2016

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What is Civil Society?

- “the term civil society refers to a wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide range of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations”.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,contentMDK:20101499-menuPK:244752-pagePK:220503-piPK:220476-theSitePK:228717,00.html>

- In simple terms, civil society is also known as the voice of the voiceless.



Why Civil Society?

Civil Society is important in matters of our civil lives for among other things:

- ❖ Limits the power of the state in matters to do with citizens
- ❖ It plays a mediatory role between the state and the community
- ❖ It mobilizes social capital
- ❖ It Promotes tolerance,
- ✓ participation,
- ✓ Good governance
- ✓ Democracy



Working Environment for Civil Society in Africa

The issue of drug use, and drug user health, on the African continent has largely been eclipsed by other overwhelming economic, political and structural problems.

Evidence suggests that drug use, and consequential problems related to the consumption, manufacture, and trading of drugs is rapidly increasing. Poverty, drug use, and high rates of HIV infection in Africa, laced with an absence of hope, make for a devastating and volatile mix.

Civil Society finds itself operating in an environment characterized by:

- Poverty
- Inconsistent policy pronouncements
- Armed insurgents
- Corruption
- Propaganda from the state.



Role of African Civil Society

Despite the challenges noted above,



Overview of Civil Society in UNGASS2016





Civil Society Task Force

When the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs (VNGOC) and its sister committee, the New York NGO Committee on Drugs (NYNGOC), convened a Civil Society Task Force, it was an attempt to ensure that a comprehensive, structured, meaningful and balanced participation of civil society is highly observed during this process.

The taskforce is designed to secure civil society engagement and coordination in order to effectively include civil society organizations voices in the UNGASS.

The Civil Society Task Force is comprised of

- ❖ 31 members:
- ❖ A 4-member Steering Committee (consisting of officers from each of the committees),
- ❖ 18 regional representatives,
- ❖ 9 representatives of affected populations/global approaches: youth, families, drug users, recovered users, cultivators, access to essential medicines, criminal justice, prevention and harm reduction.
- ❖ Sub-Saharan Africa is presented by Nigeria and Mauritius.



African Civil Society Successes

To date:

- A total of 8 civil society consultative meetings have been concluded in Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Kenya, South Africa and Rwanda.
- Regional Groupings of Civil Society:
 - West Africa Drug Policy Network
 - East Africa Commission on drugs
 - RUN2016 in SA
 - Lobbying for the Common African Position with the AU.
 - <http://www.herald.co.zw/give-drug-addicts-a-second-chance-stamps/>



WAY FORWARD FOR AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Although it might appear too late for the UNGASS2016 in April. The war on drugs is still work in Progress.

Africa should prepare herself for drug policy reform and harm reduction thru:

- Need for more civil society coordination in Southern Africa to compliment sub Saharan Africa.
- Need for greater participation of civil society in Portuguese Speaking countries
- Need for capacity building in civil society groups in Africa
- Need for networking amongst civil society groups
- Summer Schools on human rights and drug policy should be promoted by international partner organisations
- Greater need to engage state actors and grassroots when lobbying for drug policy reform



Expectations at UNGASS2016

Be as it may, Africa through other civil society groups in the world is expecting the following outcomes from UNGASS2016:

- Use of greater data in decision-making,
- Re-evaluating indicators of policy success,
- Increased use of a public health-based approach,
- Improved access to controlled medicines,
- Harm reduction and
- Greater civil society involvement.

I thank you.