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## CIVIL SOCIETY PRIORITIES CHARTER DRIVES INCLUSIVE COUNTRY DIALOGUE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

AIDS Accountability International has released [a new brief](#) highlighting the successful use of its Civil Society Priorities Charter to ensure an inclusive and participatory country dialogue for countries in Southern Africa as they prepare concept notes to access Global Fund resources.

A core requirement for eligible countries seeking to access resources being allocated under the new funding model (NFM) is a more inclusive and participatory process leading to concept note development. Consultations must include a wide range of stakeholders, among them the civil society groups and representatives of the populations affected by the three diseases who have traditionally been left out of the strategic decision-making when it comes to applying for international assistance.

While decision-making has been concentrated in the hands of the strongest voices at the table, civil society has in places and at times contributed to its own exclusion due to its inability to speak with one voice and lack of capacity for meaningful engagement at the highest levels of discussion.

The Charter aimed to change all that, providing tools and a framework for action and improved participation based on a consensus of priorities across the civil society sector. Participation from marginalized groups including women and girls, as well as key populations including men who have sex with men, was deemed critical to the Charter development process.

What emerged was an accessible advocacy tool that guides civil society groups towards improved coordination. Civil society networks in Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe have brought their Charters, outlining key priorities for the strategic response to HIV, TB and malaria in their respective countries, to the country coordinating mechanism (CCM) in order to lay the foundation for a more inclusive

country dialogue.

In Swaziland, the Charter will be used as a reference point for development of the country's HIV/TB concept note. Swaziland is one of 38 countries submitting a joint concept note for the two disease components due to the high incidence of co-morbidity.

In Zimbabwe, the Charter helped to guide a more inclusive country dialogue for TB, according to Sebia Kwaramba of the Zimbabwe AIDS Network. Writing of the concept note is currently under way, Kwaramba added.

Gemma Oberth is a senior researcher at AIDS Accountability International, based in Cape Town, South Africa, where she manages the project Strengthening Africa's Country Coordinating Mechanisms, in partnership with the Ford Foundation. She is a member of the steering committee of Africa Health Watch: a community of practice co-founded by Aidspace which coordinates Global Fund watchdogs in East and Southern Africa

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