

MSMGF and Global Advocacy Coalition Partners Call for Improvements to 2016 PEPFAR Country Operational Plan (COP) Process

November 25, 2015

Earlier this month, the U.S. Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) in Washington, D.C. released draft [guidance](#) for the 2016 PEPFAR Country Operational Plan (COP) process. This guidance was available for [civil society review](#) for one week, at which point [MSMGF](#) (the Global Forum on MSM & HIV) and its advocacy coalition partners submitted consolidated [feedback](#) of civil society concerns. Health Gap led the drafting and finalization of the feedback document, with 18 partners providing input and endorsements, including AVAC, amfAR, and local community organizations, including MSM organizations, from Botswana, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

MSMGF and its partners **raised numerous concerns with PEPFAR's proposed 2016 COP processes regarding key populations and civil society engagement**, including: 1) Lack of protections to ensure data on MSM and other key populations are collected without political interference from local health authorities, 2) Inadequate details on how to engage local civil society prior to quarterly reviews and prior to COP submission and finalization, 3) Lack of inclusion of transgender people in targeted data collection activities, despite being defined as a key population by UNAIDS, 4) Insufficient consideration of the potential for key populations in non-prioritized subnational locations to be abandoned for service provision, 5) Lack of clarity on the timeline for sharing final approved COPs with civil society, and 6) Failure to specify a separate activity category for community mobilization, organizational capacity-building, and social support for MSM and other key populations.

Also of note, **OGAC released a tentative schedule for the next round of COP meetings and due dates in 2016**. These include initial COP submission dates of March 31st for PEPFAR countries in Asia, and April 14th and 21st for Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. COP reviews are tentatively scheduled for April 27th-29th in Bangkok (Asia countries), May 18th-20th and May 23rd-25th in Johannesburg (Africa countries, excluding Burundi and Rwanda), and June 1st-3rd in Miami (Latin America and the Caribbean, plus Burundi and Rwanda). OGAC has previously indicated that civil society will likely be invited to participate for 1-1.5 days per 3-day review in Bangkok, Johannesburg, and Miami. **However, we urge civil society to advocate to participate, rather than wait to be invited by OGAC and PEPFAR country teams.**

While we await a final version of the global COP guidance (OGAC has suggested that this will be released in January/February 2016), we remind our civil society partners of the **crucial and urgent need to:**

- 1.) Engage with your PEPFAR country team (Important: we now have contacts for most PEPFAR countries, so please write to us if you need your PEPFAR country team's contact information)
- 2.) Ensure that you receive a final version of your country's approved 2015 COP directly from your PEPFAR country team
- 3.) Plan to participate in PEPFAR quarterly review civil society meetings, set to take place starting in October 2015 (though we are aware that these are not yet occurring in many countries – **please inform us if this is the case**), and insist that the PEPFAR country team provide key populations data a minimum of 2 weeks in advance of the meeting
- 4.) Continue to communicate with other major donors and key stakeholders, such as the Global Fund and the local Ministry of Health, to align priorities for key populations programming
- 5.) Communicate with OGAC, either via your PEPFAR country team or through global civil society like MSMGF, to provide input on improvements to the civil society engagement components of the COP review process
- 6.) Be prepared in advance for the next round of COP meetings and submission due dates in 2016

Note that your local U.S. embassy can also provide guidance on additional small grants that may be available through programs such as the [U.S. Ambassador's Small Grants Program](#). For background on the new PEPFAR COP process requirements, please consult our [March](#), [April](#), and [June](#) community updates.

As always, we greatly value receiving your thoughts and feedback, which help reinforce our advocacy efforts at local, regional, and global levels. We would appreciate hearing your perspectives on how PEPFAR engagement is going at country level, including examples of successes, positive experiences, and ongoing challenges. Please communicate your feedback and any questions/concerns you may have to Nadia Rafif, Senior Policy Advisor, at nrafif@msmgf.org. We thank you kindly for your much-appreciated engagement with this critical process.

Kind regards,
The MSMGF