

Engaging Anew with the PEPFAR COP Process: 2016 Updates and New Civil Society Opportunities

February 3, 2016

2016 is here and with it a new - and potentially improved – PEPFAR Country Operational Plan (COP) process. In December, the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) published the final version of the 2016 PEPFAR COP Guidance, which incorporates some and neglects other recommendations made by civil society. **It is crucial that civil society advocates understand the key directives of the 2016 COP Guidance, remind PEPFAR teams of their responsibilities, and be prepared to report to OGAC and to their local, regional, and global civil society peers when and where PEPFAR teams fall short.**

Key Dates for Civil Society in the 2016 PEPFAR COP Process

January/early February: PEPFAR teams meet with local civil society to gather feedback on the Sustainability Index Dashboard (SID). The SID must include civil society concerns and data on key populations and human rights challenges. These data will be important reference points for the 2016 COPs.

February/March: PEPFAR teams meet with OGAC in Washington, DC to discuss preliminary COP plans. Teams from Asia meet February 23-26, teams from Africa meet March 1-11, and teams from Latin America (plus Burundi and Rwanda) meet March 15-18. Local civil society organizations may be invited to participate in these discussions.

Late March/April: PEPFAR teams required to submit draft COPs (SDS) to OGAC. Due date for Asia teams is March 31, for Africa are April 14 and April 21, and for Latin America (plus Burundi and Rwanda) is April 21. PEPFAR teams required to meet with local civil society to gather inputs and feedback in advance of submission.

Late April, May, early June: COP review meetings held in Bangkok (April 27-29), Johannesburg (May 18-25), and Miami (June 1-3). PEPFAR teams are required to include at least 2 local civil society representatives as participants in the review meetings.

Key Points for Civil Society from the 2016 PEPFAR COP Guidance

- 1) PEPFAR teams should seek the inclusion of a **diverse range of civil society organizations** in consultations, including representation from all key and priority populations
- 2) PEPFAR teams should include organizations from within and outside of the capital (e.g. by phone) and should ensure that both rural and urban interests are represented, **with the presumption to include all groups that voice interest in engagement**
- 3) **External partners will be invited to fully participate** throughout the in-country COP preparation process and during the COP Review/Approval in-person meeting

- 4) PEPFAR teams should ask local civil society to select up to **two representatives** to attend the COP review meeting, and should plan to use the U.S. Ambassador's Small Grants Program or existing implementing mechanisms to support civil society participation
- 5) For concentrated epidemic countries, it is recommended that **at least one of the representatives come from a civil society organization representing key populations**

The 2016 Guidance also outlines **four minimum steps PEPFAR teams must take to ensure meaningful engagement with civil society organizations**. These steps, as described in section 2.3.3 of the Guidance (p. 25-30), are to:

- 1) Develop a plan for engaging different organizations
 - PEPFAR teams should **ensure that organizations have a clear understanding of their role in providing input in PEPFAR processes**, including in quarterly reviews and COP development
- 2) Convene engagement meetings
 - These meetings **should occur at least quarterly** to review PEPFAR Oversight and Accountability Response (POART) data and may take place in-person or remotely, with a preference for in-person
 - PEPFAR teams **should strive to ensure that organizations have a good understanding of the data being shared with them**, which may require providing one or more training sessions
 - In addition to formal quarterly meetings, **there should be ongoing engagement and dialogue with civil society throughout the year**
- 3) Solicit written feedback
 - PEPFAR teams should solicit written feedback from organizations on proposed COP goals, budgets and targets, and current performance
 - It is the PEPFAR team's role to ensure that organizations have sufficient information about the program for this process to be meaningful**, including disseminating relevant documents and data in a timely manner
- 4) Provide written feedback
 - PEPFAR teams must provide timely written responses to any written feedback received, including informing and explaining to civil society which of their proposed COP inputs have and have not been incorporated
 - Once the COP is approved, teams should convene a meeting to provide civil society with details regarding the approved 2016 plan**

In this period, 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.) Plan to participate in PEPFAR quarterly review civil society meetings, and insist that the PEPFAR country team provide key populations data a minimum of 2 weeks in advance of the meeting

- 3.) 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
- 4.) 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

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](#). In some countries, PEPFAR implementing partners are providing sub-contracts to local civil society organizations to conduct programming, and we encourage this option be raised with PEPFAR teams for the 2016 COP.

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