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CSOs Platform on the ESA Ministerial Commitment

IAC Durban 2016 Side Meeting Report

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAI	AIDS Accountability International
AfriYAN	African Youth and Adolescents Network
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AU	African Union
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
EANNASO	Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS Services Organisations
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HIVOS	Humanist Institute for Development Co-operation
IAC	International AIDS Conference
ICASA	International Conference for HIV and AIDS in Africa
ICC	International Convention Centre
LGBTI	Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender and Intersex
RAANGO	Regional African HIV/AIDS NGOs
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SADC-PF	Southern Africa Development Community Parliamentary Forum
SANCOM	Southern Africa National Networks of AIDS Service Organisations
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual, Reproductive Health and Rights
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TCG	Technical Coordinating Group
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

Contextual Background

The historic Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Commitment was endorsed by 20 Ministers of Health and Education at the ICASA conference that was held in 2013 in Cape Town, South Africa.

This commitment has time-bound actions and targets way for actions which scaled up delivery of sexuality education and related health services, support joint action around developing programmes, sharing of information, strengthening linkages and referrals between school and health services and an overall approach which facilitates access and equity and strengthens national responses to HIV and SRH. that were agreed upon by the 20 East and Southern African member states of the African Union.

The initiative aims at securing commitment from Ministers of Education and Health from 20 Eastern and Southern African countries, to accelerate access to comprehensive sexuality education and health services for young people in the region.

In addition, the initiative is a strategic tool that brought together, for the first time, Ministries of Education and Health towards measurable and time bound targets, to strengthen HIV prevention efforts and foster positive health outcomes by advocating for access to quality comprehensive education as well as sexual and reproductive health services for young people in the ESA region.¹

As the biggest health related conference in the world, the International AIDS Conference (IAC Durban 2016) presented a tremendous opportunity to showcase the specific role of the CSOs with regards to the on-going efforts by various stakeholders in the implementation process of the targets set under the ESA Commitment.

This is more so when one considers the mere fact that it was only the second time that Africa had got another chance to host the IAC. For the record, it must be remembered that when the next IAC meeting was held in Durban in the third week of July 2016, it was exactly 16 years since the last one was held in Africa; coincidentally at the same venue (International Convention Centre (ICC) during the year 2000.

The IAC is the premier gathering for those working in the field of HIV, as well as policy makers, persons living with HIV and other individuals committed to ending the pandemic. It always presents a chance to assess progress, evaluate recent scientific developments and lessons learnt, and collectively chart a course forward.

The IAC Durban 2016 programme sought to present new scientific knowledge and offer many opportunities for structured dialogue on the major issues facing the global response to HIV. A variety of session types – from abstract-driven presentations to symposia, bridging and plenary sessions – aimed to meet the needs of various participants.

Other related activities that included the Global Village, satellite symposia, the Exhibition and affiliated independent events sought to contribute to an exceptional opportunity for professional development and networking.²

¹ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/hiv-and-aids/our-priorities-in-hiv/sexuality-education/east-and-southern-africa-commitment/>

² Source - <http://www.aids2016.org/About>

The Role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

As already alluded to, the ESA Commitment was adopted at the ICASA Conference in December 2013 and was hailed as a very progressive milestone in terms of ensuring a co-ordinated approach to addressing issues related to CSE and young people.

A regional accountability framework was developed as a tool to monitor country and regional progress towards the agreed commitments as set out in the Commitment document.

However immediate concerns were raised over its apparent lack of legal binding nature.

As part of the solution with regards to doubts over the successful fulfilment of the ESA Commitment targets, a challenge was thrown at the CSOs to play a very meaningful role in terms of the process of monitoring the implementation process

Traditionally, CSOs are highly regarded as the voice of the voiceless and are expected to help express concerns of the masses. CSOs are seen as crucial watchdogs of the broader society.

Prior to the formal adoption of the Commitment, commendable efforts were invested in terms of active consultation of CSOs. It was anticipated that CSOs would be one of the crucial stakeholders that would ensure the success of the ESA Commitment. From the onset CSOs were actively involved in the Commitment's process especially at local community levels.

Various CSOs even aligned their programme activities in line with the ESA Commitment targets

A special consultation meeting for CSOs was held in Cape Town immediately after the affirmation of the ESA commitment

Later on, the second Regional Symposium on Adolescent SRHR and HIV in Africa was held in Lusaka, in December 2014. The overall purpose of the Symposium was to ensure greater attention and commitment to addressing adolescent SRHR and HIV issues.

In addition, a Youth Pre-Symposium was organized prior to the main meeting. During this consultation, input was provided on how to strengthen young people and civil society's role in the development and implementation of the civil society Engagement Strategy for the ESA Commitment. The consultation also recommended to clearly define the intended purpose of the CSOs Engagement Strategy and identification of end user

However, it was also recognized that CSOs role was being affected by various strategic, co-ordination and administrative capacity related issues. In particular, it was also appreciated that there was a need to engage CSOs in a more systemic fashion in the ESA commitment process.

This required a robust forward-looking civil society engagement strategy which took into account the changing and varied context across the region, capacities as well as assesses lessons learned from past and current engagement initiatives and efforts.

In order to address the emerging concerns about the role of CSOs, the July 2015 Technical Coordinating Group (TCG) meeting passed a special resolution calling for a specific intervention and support meant to enhance the role of CSOs.

Subsequently, a special meeting for CSOs under the ESA Commitment was held at Sandton in September 2015. The meeting agreed that a regional coordination mechanisms be put in place responsible for implementing the regional level strategy. Countries should have consultations among country partners to agree on relevant coordination structures in country, national action plan/road map for the implementation of ESA commitment and agreement on whether a civil society engagement strategy is required or not.

Further, during the AfriYAN general assembly in 2015, a youth led accountability framework was developed with clear targets and actions.

Then in December 2015 during ICASA, a youth led accountability plenary session was held and also a special satellite session highlighting the role of CSOs under the Commitment was also held.

It can thus be argued that to date, some limited progress has been realised among CSOs on several fronts that have contributed to the achievement of the ESA Commitment targets.

The CSOs Engagement Strategy

The CSOs engagement strategy is based on the recognition of the need to systematically engage CSOs in the realization of the ESA commitment in the region, and ensuring space and voice of youth at all levels.

It is also recognized that advocacy by civil society is key to strengthen accountability by partners for the implementation of the ESA commitment which contributes to holding those in power accountable to commitments made and the monitoring of progress, as well as provides a sense of mutual goals and objectives.

Further, the civil society engagement strategy is intended to stimulate action for quality scaled up and integrated service delivery and policy responsiveness in order to reach the targets of the ESA Commitment.

Effective advocacy requires strategy, mapping and operational planning, backed by intensive coordination and brokering of partnerships that bring financing and resources to the fore.

The strategy is both regionally and nationally based.

The purpose of the CSOs engagement strategy is firstly, to outline the role of CSOs in enhancing progress towards the ESA commitment.

Then secondly, to also provide a framework for engagement in, advocacy for and monitoring of the implementation of the ESA Commitment.

The overall goal is to ensure that by 2020, governments in Eastern and Southern Africa have made significant progress towards achieving the targets of the ESA Commitments.

The strategy's key outcome seeks to ensure that CSOs in Eastern and Southern Africa are fully engaged in the implementation of and advocacy for the implementation of the ESA commitment, contributing to improving sexual and reproductive health outcomes and strengthening HIV prevention through increased

access to comprehensive sexuality education and integrated sexual and reproductive health services for young people in the ESA region.

The strategy has the following five key outputs:

1. Accountability is enhanced by consistent monitoring and reporting of the progress at country and regional level on the implementation of the ESA commitment by Governments and partners
2. Effective civil society advocacy with Government and partners for increased support for the implementation of strategies on SRHR, HIV and CSE to reach the ESA commitment targets is undertaken
3. CS and youth organizations are briefed, aware, updated on ESA commitment and effectively engaged in policy, planning and decision making platforms and advocacy efforts to consolidate and input civil society perspectives
4. Partnerships are mobilized to advocate for improved coordination of initiatives for adolescent and young people in the areas of SRHR, CSE and HIV prevention
5. Communication and information dissemination on ESA commitment strengthened.

The CSOs Platform on the ESA Commitment

The Civil Society Platform on the ESA Commitment was set up during the consultation and strategy meeting that was specially hosted for CSOs at Sandton during September 2015.

The Platform is a network of various Eastern and Southern African based CSOs who are actively involved in the promotion of a successful implementation process of the ESA Commitment on supporting sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and young people.

The long term objective of the Platform is to improve access to quality sexual reproductive and human rights for all citizens of Eastern and Southern Africa especially focusing on adolescents and young people. The medium term objective of the Platform is to create a branded, informed, dynamic and influential Pan African civil society movement that seeks to promote the successful implementation of the ESA Commitment on supporting sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and young people.

The short term objective of the Platform can be summed up in the following three parts:

- (a) Increase transparency by conducting research that creates greater transparency around the implementation process of the ESA Commitment in order to use these research findings to address the emerging gaps in terms of meeting the set targets.

- (b) Promote dialogue by creating spaces and opportunities in order to raise the profile of the issues related to the promotion of the set targets of the ESA Commitment and its successful implementation process.
- (c) Ensure action by holding leaders accountable for action required for the promotion of the set targets of the ESA Commitment and its successful implementation process.

The Platform is keen to explore opportunities for collaborative work with all other relevant stakeholders in order to promote the successful implementation of the ESA Commitment.

In order to raise its public profile and also enhance its accessibility, the Platform invested in the following among other ongoing efforts:

- (a) Set up a Google Group – Towards the end of 2015 a special Google was set up for the Platform members to interact in a more systematic and effective manner. The address of the group is aai-listserv-csplatformonesacommitment@googlegroups.com. New members can join the group by sending an email to daniel@aidsaccountability.org
- (b) Set up a WhatsApp chat group – During early 2016 a special WhatsApp chat group was set up for the Platform members to interact in a more systematic and effective manner. New members can join the group by sending a chat to +27796932579.
- (c) Set up a Co-ordination Committee – The Co-ordination Committee was derived from the de-facto core group of organisations that have been actively involved in taking the Platform forward from September 2015. The core group was formally mandated at a meeting of CSOs hosted by RAANGO at ICASA 2015 in Harare. At present, AAI has volunteered to be a co-ordination partner for the Platform. Other active organisations are AfriYAN, EANNASO, SAfAIDS and the recently set up co-ordination mechanism for all AIDS services national networks across Southern Africa, SANCOM.

The CSOs Approach for IAC Durban 2016

Since the adoption of the ESA commitment in 2013, civil society in Eastern and Southern Africa have been actively participating in the implementation process of the ESA commitment, that seeks to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes and strengthening HIV prevention through increased access to comprehensive sexuality education and integrated sexual and reproductive health services for young people in the ESA region.

IAC Durban 2016 presented a big opportunity for CSOs to converge, network, showcase, advocate and deliberate milestones achieved in the initial two years of the ESA Commitment implementation process through concerted efforts between government, partners and communities.

As such this was an important platform for advocacy to governments and therefore the CSOs Platform sought to profile the work of African CSOs as a means of advocacy towards the successful implementation of the ESA Commitment.

It was assumed that a well-coordinated and collaborative approach by all relevant stakeholders as led by CSOs during IAC Durban 2016 would help to highlight the on-going progress that has been achieved since the launch of the ESA Commitment at ICASA 2013.

IAC Durban 2016 also presented an opportunity for the project partners to explore opportunities for programme support and partnerships with other relevant stakeholders such as the broader civil society, academia, governments' officials, international development partners and also the private sector among others

Last but not least the project partners also sought to use the big platform presented by IAC Durban 2016 to solicit for more funding partners to invest on to the next phase of this initiative.

The Durban Side Event Format and Objectives

With the active funding support from the Ford Foundation, the CSOs Platform managed to host an evening side event during the IAC, on Wednesday 20th July 2016 between 6pm and 8pm. This side event was a moderated panel discussion that had the following objectives:

- Highlight the role of the CSOs in the implementation process of the ESA Commitment to the broader relevant stakeholders and prospective partners and funders.
- Provided opportunity for participants to share and listen to progress made on implementation of the project to date and identify opportunities to address gaps at community, national and regional level,
- Identify progressive ideas for advocacy around areas lagging behind.

The side event was divided into three separate sessions as follows:

1. An update on the role of CSOs with regards to the ESA Commitment implementation process;
2. A presentation on the CSOs led Accountability Framework process;
3. A highly informative expert panel discussion on the role of CSOs.

The panel discussion fell under the main theme of 'Promotion of a more effective role of the CSOs in the implementation of the ESA Commitment'. The panel consisted of three panelists that helped to lead the discussion. The panelists drawn from various stakeholders that have been actively involved in the implementation process of the ESA Commitment. These include:

1. Olive Mumba, EANNASO (Panelist)
2. Ellen Hagerman, HIVOS (Panelist)
3. Patricia Machawira, UNESCO (Panelist)
4. Tikhala Itaye, AfriYAN (Moderator)

Summary of the Durban Meeting

The side event started with some welcome and open remarks from the Executive Director of AAI, Daniel Molokele.

Afterwards, there was a brief presentation that focused on an update on the role of CSOs under the ESA Commitment by Nyasha Sithole from AfriYAN.

There after a brief presentation focusing on the CSOs led Accountability Framework Process was done by Daniel Molokele from AAI.

This was then followed by the much anticipated panel discussion that focused on perspectives on the role of CSOs in enhancing the implementation process of the ESA Commitment. The session was chaired by Tikhala Itaye from AfriYAN and a three-member panel that consisted of Ellen Hagerman from HIVOS, Olive Mumba from EANNASO and Patricia Machawira from UNESCO.

After the three panel presentations, time was then allocated for a plenary discussion. This gave the audience members a viable opportunity to raise some follow up issues and also share their own experience and perspective on the topic of discussion.

The side event then ended with some remarks on the way forward and a vote of thanks presented by Adolf Mavheneke from SAfAIDS.

Publicity and Information Strategy

In order to help raise the profile of the ESA Commitment at IAC Durban 2016, various stakeholders in the implementation process to date especially the CSOs were encouraged to showcase any relevant IEC materials/documents during the special session.

Copies of the recently published progress report document were also available on display and were shared with all the participants during the evening.

Added to that, some t-shirts and bags promoting the ESA Commitment were shared with all those attending. To ensure publicity of the event, social media especially WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter were also before, during and after the session.

Durban Outcome and Next Steps

It is hoped that the successful conduct of the side event at IAC Durban 2016 will now go a long way in boosting the profile of the role of the CSOs in the implementation of the ESA Commitment.

The other spin offs could be the emergence of new programme and funding partners. This in turn could go a long way in boosting the long term viability and sustainability of the CSOs role.

In response to the call at Durban 2016 to step up efforts for more CSOs to be actively involved with the Platform; there is need to invest in a two-pronged approach. The said dual approach will focus on both a mapping exercise and also the development of all CSOs both at regional and country levels, that are interested in contributing towards the successful implementation of the ESA Commitment.

Further, there is also another plan in place to host a special meeting for all the leading CSOs partners actively involved under the ESA Commitment process to meet at Johannesburg in early November 2016. The meeting will mainly seek to cost and develop a budget for the CSOs role in the monitoring of the implementation process of the ESA Commitment as mainly encapsulated under the Accountability Framework that was adopted in September 2015.

Funding for active participation of CSOs remains a major issue of concern. There is an urgent need to come up with a viable and sustainable resource mobilisation strategy. Unless funds start to flow, CSOs will become less and less actively involved. It is also envisaged that a day after the CSOs meeting in early November 2016, a special roundtable meeting targeting donors/funding partners will then be held.

It is thus envisaged that after the November 2016 Johannesburg meetings, CSOs will gain a renewed momentum and continue to step up their consistent role in ensuring that all the set targets of the Commitment are met by 2020.

Contact Details

For any further information on the CSOs Platform on the ESA Commitment, please do contact Daniel Molokele, Executive Director (AAI), daniel@aidsaccountability.org Cell no: +27796932579

Annexure A – Side Event Programme

Perspectives on the ESA Commitment: The Role of CSOs in the Promotion of Accountability

Date: 20th of July 2016 (5.30pm to 7.30pm)

Venue: Blue Waters Hotel (Durban)

Programme

Time	Topic	Facilitator	Format
5.30pm to 6pm	Welcome Drinks and Snacks	All	Arrival of Participants
6pm to 6.15pm	Update on the Role of CSOs Under the ESA Commitment	Nyasha Sithole	Power-Point Presentation
6.15pm to 6.30pm	The CSOs led Accountability Framework Process	Daniel Molokele	Power-Point Presentation
6.30pm to 7.15pm	Perspectives on the Role of CSOs in Enhancing the Implementation Process of the ESA Commitment	Panellists: Tikhala Itaye (AfriYAN) – Moderator Ellen Hagerman (HIVOS) Olive Mumba (EANNASO) Patricia Machawira (UNESCO)	Panel Discussion Followed by Q & A
7.15pm to 7.30pm	Way Forward and Vote of Thanks	Adolf Mavheneke (SAfAIDS)	Closure

Annexure B – Meeting Panelists Notes

Summary of the Presentation by Ellen Hagerman from HIVOS

1. It is important to build on existing initiatives and facilitating sharing of materials as well as best practices and lessons learned among and between countries within the ESA region to avoid duplication and to foster synergies
2. We should seek to learn from the successes of other advocacy programming related to similar issues that take into account the need to address an advocacy campaign for the ESA commitment at multiple levels and through multiple sectors such as the Ministry of Finance as a key decision maker. It would therefore be worthwhile to target training and sensitisation using a multi-sectoral and multi-level approach.
3. In the same vein, it is important to make inter-sectoral connections and not address the ESA commitment exclusively within the realm of education and health
4. The focus of ESA needs to be expanded to cover overlooked and more challenging areas including; sexuality i.e. LGBTI issues, Gender-Based Violence including by teachers and principals, economic empowerment
5. At this stage, we need to focus attention on pushing for the operationalisation of commitments as governments in the region are good about signing commitments but much weaker on turning commitments into action.
6. It will be important to disaggregate efforts such that tailored measures are developed to ensure we reach the most vulnerable such as child-headed households, the disabled, LGBTI etc.
7. The ESA Commitment needs to do more to address the higher hanging fruit which includes power relations, patriarchy and other cultural and religious impediments as the majority of efforts to date are focused on one-off actions that are low hanging.
8. It is important that interventions include a targeting of the decision makers and managers who hold the purse string and the power as we can empower the service deliverers but they are often prevented from making changes because of decision makers and managers
9. To convince decision makers, we need to take more steps to gather and package evidence in a format that is digestible and convincing to key decision makers
10. The region needs to develop a regional road map and plan to move the ESA Commitment together in a coordinate fashion — perhaps per sub-region (southern and eastern)
11. We need to get out of the siloed way of operating and ensure that the different sectors and different actors are sharing information more systematically and are coordinating efforts.
12. Above and beyond the ESA Commitment, we need to make linkages to other commitments made by governments at the regional, continental and global level such as the SDGs and other human rights commitments,
13. Whereas it is important that youth are aware of their rights to access youth-friendly services and to receive sexuality education, they also need to be educated that they are also responsible and accountable for their actions including being responsible for using contraceptives and other prophylactics when they are provided.
14. Specific activities, policies and interventions need to take into account the specific vulnerabilities of young girls and women which is duly demonstrated by the disturbingly high rates of HIV/AIDS amongst adolescent girls as well as high rates of teenage pregnancy which involves a much greater burden for girls.

15. We should explore linkages to the demographic dividend while being cautious about ensuring that we are creating the necessary enabling environment for youth to be able to play a role. This could include ensuring the necessary mentorship and support.

Summary of the Presentation by Patricia Machawira from UNESCO

1. The ESA Commitment partners have always accepted and recognized the important role played by Civil Society in delivery the targets of the ESA Commitment
2. Right from inception of the initiative CSOs were part of the process with CSOs representation in the High Level Group and also the Technical Coordinating Group
3. Two CSOs consultations were held in Southern Africa and East Africa, bringing together key civil society organisations to give input into the diagnostic study which informed the ESA Commitment document.
4. CSOs provided input which shaped the ESA Commitment document which was presented to government on the 6th of December 2013.
5. Civil Society representatives present at the Cape Town meetings played a critical role in the negotiations, ensuring that the language in the commitment document was not watered down and was strong enough to be used to hold government accountable.
6. CSOs played a key role in the development of the accountability framework and the ESA partners look forward to CSOs playing a watchdog role, to hold government accountable to what they committed.
7. The formation of a CSOs platform for the ESA commitment is a very important and long overdue development as the ESA Initiative will benefit from a united Civil Society movement that speaks with one voice and jointly contributes to the ESA Commitment at both regional and country level. So far this is what had been missing
8. The UN partners welcome this development and acknowledge that for Civil society to actively play their role, there is need for targeted resources to support them. In this regard the UN is keen to support CSO in their efforts to mobilise resources to support implementation of the ESA commitment
9. The UN notes the need for improved communication with CSOs to ensure that all CSOs are actively engaged and informed of key processes. We will endeavour to work with the CSOs representatives to ensure that we avoid situations where CSOs are excluded from key events.

Summary of the Presentation by Olive Mumba from EANNASO

Review of where we are coming from form and where we are going.

1. The HLM declaration has been a disappointment for those on the ground. 2 key things that affect the ESA Commitment were left out
2. Comprehensive Sexuality Education. Most governments in the ESA region are working on this in form or the other yet they don't want to acknowledge this by confirming in the declaration. Failure of including it in the political declaration shows the lack of commitment of our governments to invest in SRH information and access to services by our governments.

3. Inclusion of key population into the political declaration. This has the consequences of leaving out some population which is contrary to the theme of the SDGs which is “leaving no one behind”. Lack of inclusion of Key population has the effect of continuation of stigma and discrimination against these populations which affects access to health services and also creates hate and fear amongst the communities.

In terms of the role of CSOs in the ESA commitment

1. Coordination of CSOs at country level to ensure that communities (including adolescents and especially girls and young women) are engaged in the coordination mechanism around the ESA Commitment. Coordination entails provision of regular information, capacity development (technical support) and dialogue forums.
2. Development of shadow report to provide a people’s report on the status of implementation of the ESA commitment.
3. Repackaging and dissemination of key information, policies and strategies around the ESA Commitment to the communities for social mobilization to create awareness and create demand for health services for the adolescents and the youth and a change in attitude.
4. Advocacy on key issues that pertain CSE

Challenges faced by CSOs Under the ESA Commitment

1. There is no specific funding that supports CSOs engagement in the ESA Commitment as such CSOs engagement is fragmented and based on individual interest in ensuring there is change
2. Tokenism in engagement at country level. Communities are not engaged in the whole process rather CSOs engagement is used as a rubber stamp. CSOs and especially the youth and adolescents should be part and parcel of any decisions around ESA commitment
3. CSOs were not engaged in the country and regional reports. To ensure that the voices of the communities have been included in the reports it is pertinent that CSOs are part and parcel of the development of the country reports.

Annexure C: Co-ordination Committee Members

	Name	Organisation	Email Address
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