

PLATFORM FOR ACT-A CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Statement - Public hearings regarding a new international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response (12 April 2022)

The Platform for ACT-A Civil Society and Community Representatives, (co-led by WACI Health, Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN) and STOPAIDS) supports community and civil society representatives in the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A). The platform advocates to ensure every aspect of the ACT-A has reserved space for communities and civil society to bring their expertise, experience and voices to the COVID-19 response.

Firstly, civil society and communities need to be meaningfully engaged in the decision making structures of any pandemic preparedness and response structures or bodies. This means, having an equal seat at the table and being part of the process of ***co creating the structure itself***. Governance bodies, such as boards, need to have reserved seats for civil society and communities with equal power to make decisions. In addition we need equal intellectual partnership of low-income countries (LICs) and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The space for LMIC governments, experts, academics and communities and civil society is very limited, future pandemic preparedness and response mechanisms must ensure they are equal decision-makers, rather than be seen and included only as recipients of services.

Secondly, over the last two years, we have seen the strong role of community health systems in the COVID response. In order to be sustainable, community health systems need to be recognised as ***integral components of a national health system with full financing from domestic resources***. This can only happen when communities and civil society are at the decision making table and can allocate funding to community systems and responses.

Finally, any pandemic preparedness structures should ensure that ***health systems including community health systems, are at the core of the response***. This includes proactively planning for health systems gaps at the country level, particularly on supporting health workers and sustaining essential health services. This can, in part, be achieved by having in place health system & response connector (HSRC) teams on standby and ready for activation that can apply health systems perspectives at all stages of a pandemic.