

Terms of Reference

WHO CSO Commission Working Group on WHO Civil Society Engagement Strategy

Background

One of the objectives of the WHO Civil Society Commission is to provide recommendations for WHO Secretariat's consideration on "the elaboration and implementation of WHO engagement strategy with nongovernmental organizations, (...) as well as indicators and targets for a results framework for the strategy." ([Terms of Reference](#), Article V).

Objectives

The Civil Society Commission wants an engagement strategy that provides a strong reference for enhancing collaboration, participation, and dialogue between the WHO and civil society organizations and that is drafted in a participatory way that integrates input from a variety of civil society organizations and constituencies.

To fulfil that objective, the WHO Civil Society Commission Steering Committee has set up the Working Group on the WHO Civil Society Engagement Strategy (Working Group 3, WG3).

Scope of work

The scope of work for the working group is

- to co-develop with WHO a robust and effective strategy for the period 2025-2028 for engaging civil society organizations at global, regional and country levels in the work of WHO and a related results framework,
- in this regard, to act as a convener and facilitator of processes and mechanisms that allow a broad range of civil society organizations to engage in the making of the strategy and the results framework

Tasks and deliverables

- Set up and implement a process and mechanism that allows collecting and assessing input to the drafting of the WHO Civil Society Strategy (2025-28) and results framework from a broad range of civil society organizations and constituencies, within and beyond the membership of the WHO Civil Society Commission
- Assess the experiences and good practice of engagement strategies and mechanisms of other UN and international Organizations.
- Submit input collected to the WHO Secretariat in view of being considered in the draft strategy and results framework

Inputs collected by the working group and submitted to the Secretariat might include the following:

- Civil society reports and assessments of existing barriers and challenges to effective engagement between the WHO and civil society organizations.
- Collection of experiences and good practice of engagement strategies and mechanisms of other UN and international Organizations
- Civil society assessments of elements and drafts of the strategy proposed by the Secretariat.
- New proposals of any elements to be included in the strategy.
- Proposals for a results framework and monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the civil society engagement strategy and make recommendations for improvement.

Size and composition

The working group will consist of Civil Society Commission members. If needed, the working group invites relevant experts in the field of public health and civil society engagement to contribute to its work, subject to the WHO rules and regulations.

WHO Secretariat is the pen holder of the strategy and will participate as and when required.

To secure efficient and pointed workflow, and manageability of the group by the co-chairs and the WHO Secretariat, the size of the working group is limited to a maximum of 15-20 representatives of CSO Commission members. Working group membership is personal, not institutional.

After its constitution, it is possible that the working group is broadened by new members throughout the mandate in a process that will be managed by the co-chairs.

Required: Engagement and expertise

Working group members are expected to take part and contribute actively to the regular meetings (the meeting schedule and frequency will be determined by the Working Group members but at least quarterly), to follow up on the progress and to conduct group activities in-between the meetings to secure the output in line with the work plan.

Versatile expertise of group members will be required to deliver on the objectives of the WG, including proven experience of CSO representation in political interactions or decision-making at local, national or international governance processes, of strategy development, and technical skills in CSO engagement with international organizations. Members are also expected to have proven technical experience and knowledge of politics and practices of CSO engagement processes.

Application process

Upon the closure of the call for expression of interest to become a member of the working group, applications are reviewed by the core team of the working group with support of the Secretariat, based on the (self-reported) engagement and expertise.

During the application process, the core team will also take care to have a balanced membership of participants (self-reported) regarding gender, age, geographical area, and type of the organization including representatives of different civil society groups.

The WHO Secretariat will issue confirmations to the approved working members and inform those which could not be accommodated.

Timeline:

The draft recommendations for the WHO CSO strategy to be finalized by first quarter of 2025. Working group will set the key milestones for the process and deadlines to be followed.

Resources:

The working group will identify the necessary resources, such as budget, personnel, and technology, required for successful implementation, and propose to the Steering Committee and the Secretariat, if necessary.

Governance:

The WG will be fully constituted at its first meeting - based on the WG ToR The working group proposes two Co-Chairs to the Secretariat which will decide on their appointment in consultation with the Steering Committee

The WG will operate on a self-organized basis.

Decisions will be taken at working group meetings based on consensus.

Co-chairs

The two Co-Chairs appointed at/after the first meeting will convene the WG, initiate and facilitate meetings, represent the Working Group inside and outside the Commission, and act as link between the WG and the CSO Commission Steering Committee and Secretariat. The Co-Chairs will also provide overview, propose activities and projects, and provide guidance and feedback to project teams.

Project teams

'Project teams' can be formed as subgroups of the working group to implement concrete activities or projects. Project Teams will regularly report back to the working group on their activities and outcomes

Working Tools

The working group will hold regular meetings for steering, sharing, planning and group decisions.

Managed by co-chairs, a mailing list of WG members will be set up to provide possibility for exchange and updates, and for co-creation of a workspace for the group's documents.

Reporting and accountability

The working group shall provide regular bi-annual verbal and written reports of working group progress containing the outcome of the reviews conducted and proposed recommendations to WHO Secretariat

to the Steering Committee and the Secretariat as well as an annual report on the progress at the General meeting of the Commission

In addition, to secure accountability and timely delivery:

- draft work plans and project outlines will be submitted to SC for approval;
- draft outputs will be shared in advance with SC for review and approval.

Confidentiality:

Members to maintain confidentiality of sensitive or personal information shared during the working group discussions and activities.

Members shall not share any information or data gathered and used in the working group. The Steering Committee jointly with the Secretariat will make public information on the working group and the details or results of its work, if so decided by them.

To ensure data protection, working group members should not share details of the working group members outside the working group without their express agreement.