

Criteria For Civil Society Participation

CARAM Asia joined thirty two participants at the “Minimum Standards For Civil Society Participation Workshop” held on 13th March and 14th March 2008 in Kuala Lumpur. The workshop was a joint initiative between Seven Sisters, APCASO, CARAM Asia and the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC), with the support of UNAIDS.

This workshop was initially drafted to arm civil societies in Malaysia with a tool to encourage a minimum standard of civil society participation in Universal Access Initiatives. Thus, the document published and drafted by the Seven Sisters titled *Minimum Standards for Civil Society Participation in the Universal Access Initiative* was to be used as the base for the workshop. However, it was then highlighted that Malaysia has yet to set its universal access targets and the minimum standard exercise could not be effectively applied.

Hence, on the final day of the workshop, participants discussed action plans that can be drafted to provide the crucial data needed to report on the indicators set out by UNGASS. Participants also discussed the specific roles that civil society can play in the reporting process. All four action plans developed had a strong focus on collating qualitative data, with the MAC taking on the coordinator role.

Although the scorecards and minimum standards were not set during this workshop, it provided a solid starting point for participants to jumpstart the process of deciding upon the kind of representation that they would like to be reflected in the UNGASS Country Report as well as in Universal Access Initiatives. The workshop also created linkages between civil society and government efforts.