



# WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

## CHAPTER 8

**C**learly, gender perspectives and sensitivity to gender issues have been missing from the responses that have so far been developed to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Changes desperately need to be made in education and prevention strategies, research and development priorities, allocation of resources for treatment and social support, and in health care delivery. One of the primary reasons existing responses have failed women is that women themselves have not been integrally involved in their design and implementation. One of the most important contributions that can be made to combating the pandemic is to guarantee women's participation at all levels.

### RESPONDING WITH CEDAW

The Women's Convention places clear obligations on States parties to facilitate women's participation in every aspect of public decision-making, through its articles on public and political life and on women's representation in international fora, and through a number of the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendations.

In order to comply with their obligations under the Convention, States parties must work to ensure women's equal participation in all facets of the response to the pandemic at the local, regional, national and international levels. This includes addressing the need for women's central involvement in the development and implementation of broader government policy for combating HIV/AIDS, the design and delivery of prevention programmes, and the determination of health care priorities and strategies. Women must be ensured equal representation on national HIV/AIDS councils, on decision-making bodies related to the Global Fund, and when Governments meet to agree upon commitments at the international level. As well, States parties must not only take steps to improve women's representation in NGOs engaged in HIV/AIDS work, but they must consult closely with women's NGOs and ensure their views are reflected in Government decisions.



## WHAT THE CONVENTION SAYS

- Article 7 requires States parties to take all appropriate measures to **eliminate discrimination against women in public and political life**. Among the rights States parties are directed to ensure to women on equal terms with men are those relating to the formulation and implementation of **government policy, holding public office** and performing **all public functions** at all levels of government, and participation in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.
- Article 8 requires States parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure women the opportunity, on equal terms with men, to **represent their Governments at the international level** and to participate in the work of **international organizations**.
- In its General Recommendation on political and public life, the CEDAW Committee has noted that the obligations under article 7 encompass all aspects of public administration and the formulation and implementation of policy at the international, national, regional and local levels, and that **women's involvement in policy formulation is necessary to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender issues and to contribute a gender perspective to public policy-making**.
- In this General Recommendation the Committee has also stated that States parties have a responsibility, where it is within their control, both to **appoint women to senior decision-making roles** and, as a matter of course, to consult and incorporate the **advice of groups which are broadly representative of women's views and interests**. The Committee has also recommended that States parties take measures to encourage non-governmental organizations and public and political associations to adopt strategies that encourage women's representation and participation in their work.



- In its General Recommendation on women and health, the CEDAW Committee has recommended that States parties **place a gender perspective at the centre of all policies and programmes affecting women's health** and should **involve women** in the planning, implementation and monitoring of such policies and programmes and in the provision of health services to women.
- In its General Recommendation on HIV/AIDS, CEDAW has recommended that States parties ensure the **active participation of women in primary health care and take measures to enhance their role** as care providers, health workers and educators in the **prevention of infection of HIV**.