OSISA’s work in HIV and AIDS aims to support efforts that decrease stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS and empower others who are vulnerable to HIV infection. The HIV programme also seeks to strengthen public participation in policy-making, public expenditure monitoring, legal reform and public service delivery related to HIV and AIDS and to encourage participation by activists and civil society groups from the region in continental and global decision-making processes.

Specifically, OSISA’s HIV and AIDS programme supports initiatives that promote advocacy, networking and capacity-building in the following areas:

Public participation in policy and the law: OSISA will support organisations that seek to expand the role of civil society in decision-making processes related to HIV and AIDS at national and local levels, as well as at a SADC or regional level.

Budget monitoring and tracking in relation to funds and resources earmarked for HIV and AIDS: The global financial crisis has negatively affected the resource base for long-term HIV funding. Yet even before this shrinkage, a number of important questions had been raised about the quality of HIV interventions and the use of financial resources in the sector. OSISA is committed to supporting local, national and regional organisations that are able to track resources in
innovative ways and to call for, and cause, greater transparency and accountability in the use of these resources. OSISA supports organisations seeking to track resources from international and domestic sources, particularly where this monitoring demonstrates macro challenges faced by states and/or civil society organisations wishing to access such funding.

Capacity-building for stigmatised and marginalised groups: Despite the gains made in combating discrimination against people living with HIV in recent years, there remain significant challenges related to stigma and discrimination. Not only are people living with HIV and AIDS discriminated against on the basis of their HIV status, many other communities are considered to be ‘spreaders’ of HIV and therefore are also subjected to stigma. In particular, sex workers and men who have sex with men suffer the double stigma of being socially marginalised and perceived to be vectors of disease. Yet other social groups are also particularly vulnerable to HIV infection and its consequences. These include women, young people and children, people with disabilities, and members of certain socio-cultural and linguistic groups. Since these communities tend to be so marginalised and ostracised they often lack the skills to take on issues of HIV and AIDS in an organized and professional manner, yet they are disproportionately affected by the epidemic. OSISA supports these organisations with hands-on organisational development, strategic planning, mentorship and other forms of core support.

Monitoring service delivery: In many countries access to services to test for and treat HIV and AIDS has expanded dramatically in the last five years. Yet access for marginalised communities and groups remains a challenge because of stigma. OSISA’s HIV and AIDS programme supports projects that monitor the delivery of HIV and AIDS and health services, particularly in rural areas. In particular, OSISA is committed to helping organisations that expose discrimination and/or poor quality health services, in order to improve the practices of health workers and administrators. OSISA supports organisations working on treatment literacy, community preparedness and equitable access to anti-retrovirals and treatments for opportunistic infections, including for children. The monitoring of these services, as well as the provision of home-based and palliative care, is a core focus of this dimension of the programme.

OSISA’s HIV and AIDS programme will not fund:

- The welfare needs of communities; e.g. feeding schemes, community-gardening, micro-credit and other small-scale income generation projects that are not linked to wider advocacy strategies;
- Orphanages and other forms of long-term institutionalized care for children;
- The purchase of commodities that should be made available by the state, e.g. condoms, contraceptives, home-based care kits;
- HIV and AIDS awareness-raising workshops (especially those that seek exclusively to inform people about HIV and AIDS and are not linked to broader policy, advocacy or curriculum-based initiatives);
- Academic or research projects that have no clear linkages with practice; and,
- Regional initiatives that are not connected to national organisations, national experiences or national efforts.