

# ACCESS TO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND GROUPS OF KEY COMMUNITIES IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA: ASSESSMENT'S KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS



**Goal of the Assessment:** — to improve understanding of capacity gaps and technical assistance (TA) needs for effective participation of civil society and community groups in EECA in decision-making in the response to HIV/TB epidemics

## Key questions:

- ▶ Access of civil society (CS) to information on Communities, Rights and Gender (CRG), Technical Assistance (TA) and Global Fund (GF)
- ▶ Access to Technical Assistance on CRG issues
- ▶ Level of participation of civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (CBOs/NGOs) in GF-related processes
- ▶ Participation of CBOs/NGOs in national processes of HIV/TB response



## Methodology:

- 1 Collection and desk review of CRG-related materials
- 2 21 interviews with key informants (KI) from CBOs/NGOs from EECA sub-regions conducted via Skype
- 3 An online survey conducted (30 responses received)

Assessment period: March – June 2016.

**IN TOTAL:  
51 RESPONDENTS INTERVIEWED**

## TOTAL NUMBER OF REACHED CBOs/NGOs — 45

Balkans, Europe	6
Caucasus	4
Central Asia	7
Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine	15
Russian Federation	9
Regional networks	4

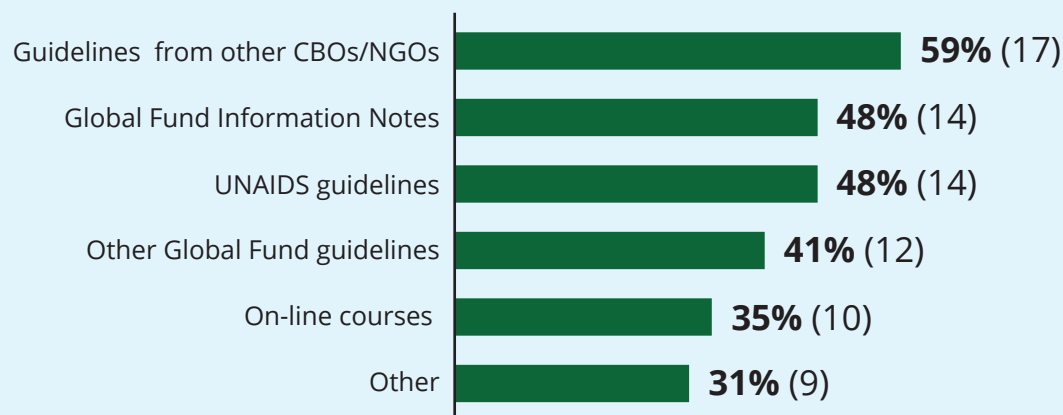
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# 1. ACCESS OF CIVIL SOCIETY TO INFORMATION ON CRG, TA AND GF

In the course of the assessment, it was found that the most commonly used informational materials were various guidelines developed by other CBOs/NGOs.

## ? What resources related to communities, human rights and gender has your organisation found useful?

Percentage (and number) of online survey respondents who mentioned the use of the resource



Information on technical support is usually received through personal contacts among people working in CBOs/NGOs and individuals who provide TA, websites of regional networks, Facebook pages and e-mailing lists.

The majority of respondents didn't have sufficient access to information on what TA is, what the opportunities to receive TA are, and where and how it can be done.

Very few respondents knew about the opportunity to receive TA on CRG-related issues from the Global Fund. Some respondents reported they have previously received TA from organizations, supported by GF, such as Alliance for Public Health, ECUO, ECOM, EHRN, Curatio International and APMG; however, such TA wasn't always focused on supporting CBOs/NGOs in GF-related processes other than program implementation.



## The mentioned reasons for poor use of GF materials included:

- 1 Language Barriers:** some GF materials were only available in English, new GF website was not completely translated into Russian; a need for other local-language materials was reported by a number of respondents.
- 2 Challenges in Navigating the GF Website:** the website navigation was perceived as not intuitive enough, respondents did not have complete information on availability of useful resources for their work on the website.
- 3 Lack of Practical Guidance:** the Global Fund guidelines were perceived as "very theoretical," or "high-level," and lacking practical information required to implement CRG-related interventions and activities with consideration of the regional/country context.
- 4 Lack of CRG-related Guidelines** focused on TB and lack of TB examples in existing ones.



*"It would be great if there was a portal where all existing resources were available: GF, WHO guides, news, printing and video, presentations, informational and educational materials on service provision – not to waste time searching."*

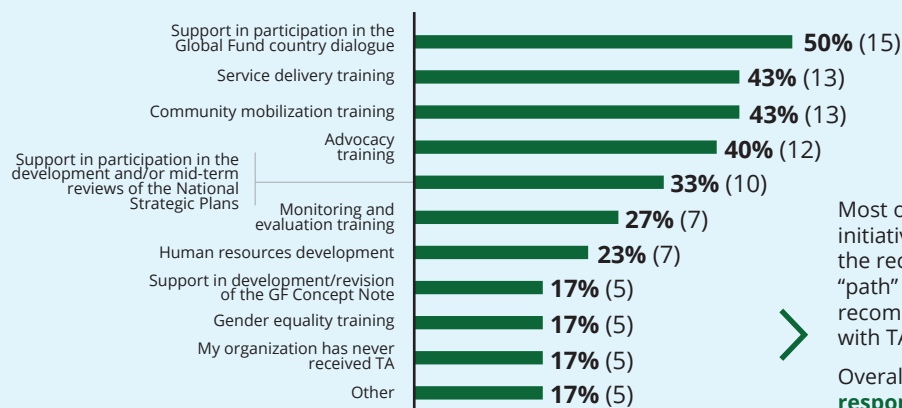
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# ACCESS TO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INCLUDING THAT WITH CRG FOCUS



### Scope of thematic areas of reported received TA:

Percentage (and number) of online survey respondents who mentioned receiving TA



Most of received TA was provided at the initiative of the TA provider, not through the recipient's request. Another kind of "path" to getting TA was through peer recommendations, personal contacts with TA providers and regional networks.

Overall, **the majority of on-line survey respondents reported that they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied** with the TA they received.

A perceived lack of key performance indicators and unified quality standards of technical assistance is considered as a gap in existing architecture of TA provision, including that for GF grants.

The most frequently cited **types of TA received** were: training and individual consultations.

Other mentioned **methods of TA** included:

- ▶ mentoring
- ▶ study visits
- ▶ desk reviews
- ▶ long-term capacity building interventions and professional education
- ▶ evaluations and situation analyses with further development of action plans
- ▶ support in conducting strategic planning for the organization



Gender-related TA was not perceived as a need and important priority by most CBOs/NGOs.

### Reasons stated for respondents' dissatisfaction with the provided TA:

- ▶ TA providers were focused on set agenda and ignored requests which appeared in the process of TA provision
- ▶ Practical follow-up after the provision of TA was not offered and/or provided

### Identified needs and gaps in TA:

- ▶ poor availability and/or insufficient collaboration with TA providers able to carry out work in Russian or other EECA regional languages,
- ▶ poor availability and level of collaboration with TA providers who understand community's needs and can provide simple, understandable, and implementable recommendations

### Structural barriers to TA access:

- ▶ poor availability of TA to organizations, which are currently not implementing GF programmes,
- ▶ the structure of GF grants poses challenges for CBOs/NGOs to access TA that is budgeted in the GF grants, because primary recipients (PRs) are not always responsive to community requests

### Interviewed organizations mostly required support on organizational development and sustainability in the context of donors leaving the region

### Top areas in which interviewed organizations expressed a need for TA:

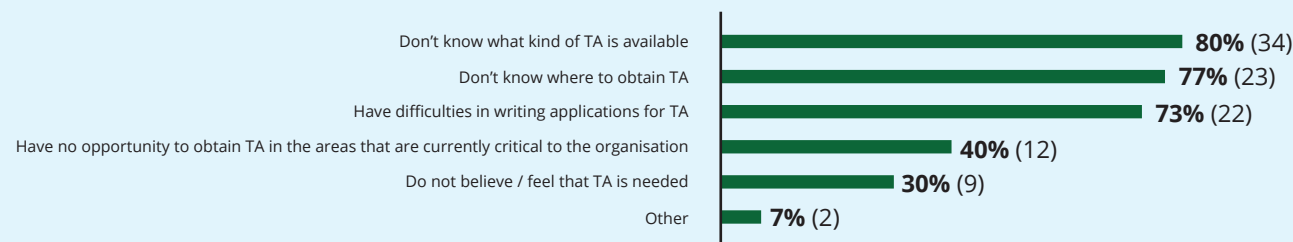
- ▶ organizational development in the context of GF leaving the region
- ▶ leadership
- ▶ advocacy (local and national levels)
- ▶ human rights protection
- ▶ programs' sustainability
- ▶ fundraising skills (including writing of funding requests)
- ▶ budget advocacy
- ▶ establishment of social entrepreneurship

## KEY CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNITIES TO ACCESS TA

?

*In your opinion, what are the main challenges CBOs/NGOs face when trying to obtain technical assistance?*

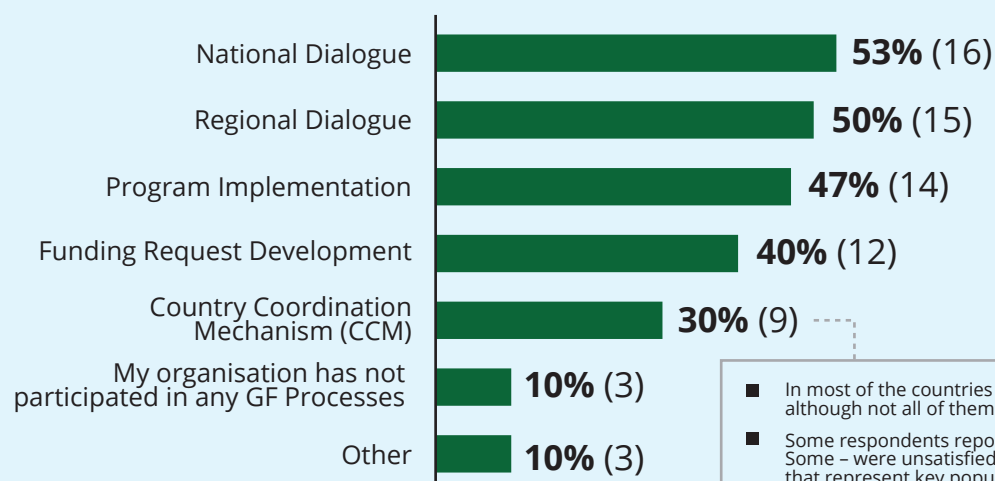
Percentage (and number) of online survey respondents who:



### 3.

## CBOs/NGOs' PARTICIPATION IN GF-RELATED PROCESSES

The majority of the interviewed CBOs/NGOs reported participation in the GF-related processes in their countries



### Key reasons for insufficient involvement of civil society and communities in GF-related processes:

- 1 no skills and experience
- 2 challenging political environment

### Key needs in TA regarding such participation included:

- 1 capacity building for analytical work
- 2 data collection skills
- 3 data processing and analysis skills
- 4 raising awareness on GF mechanisms and models of direct communication between CBOs/NGOs and GF

- In most of the countries that participated in the assessment, CBOs/NGOs reported that they participated in, or were aware of CCM activities, although not all of them were voting members.
- Some respondents reported that CCMs were "too formal" (or even "ineffective"). Some – were unsatisfied with their current CCM role, arguing that CBOs are underrepresented, especially CBOs that represent key populations (KPs):
  - their role was unclear or subordinated to that of the government representatives,
  - they sometimes lacked sufficient resources (finances, time) to fully participate in CCM activities
  - their contributions could later not be included in concept notes.
- CBO-supported activities tended to be cut during the process of grant negotiation and CBOs input into grant negotiations was minimal.

## 4.

# PARTICIPATION OF INTERVIEWED CBOs/NGOs IN NATIONAL PROCESSES

### Respondents' participation in national-level processes included:

- ▶ submission of written comments on draft National Strategic Plans (! many inputs were not included in subsequent Action Plans and were not implemented)
- ▶ participation in HIV and TB working groups and commissions
- ▶ involvement in large scale healthcare reforms

### TA Needs for CBO/NGO Participation in National Processes

Despite being aware of the challenges CBOs/NGOs face to engage in national processes, majority of the respondents did not rank participation in national strategic planning processes as important. The TA needs in this area were reported as follows:

- ▶ building dialogue between CBOs/NGOs and the government
- ▶ budget advocacy in negotiations with government agencies
- ▶ financial literacy and capacity among civil society representatives
- ▶ TA to support CBOs/NGOs to engage with government in the area of budgeting and social contracting
- ▶ leadership skills
- ▶ TA for regional networks to support participation in national processes of their representatives in countries
- ▶ TA in governmental sector – to support government agencies in their work with CBOs/NGOs

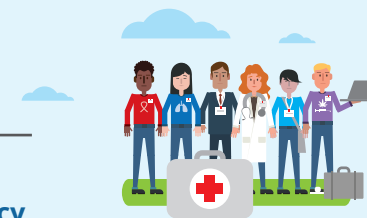


### Key barriers for participation:

- 1 weak community structures and lack of community leaders
- 2 lack of information, knowledge and expertise, including skills in data analysis and monitoring and evaluation
- 3 structural barriers, such as:
  - ▶ lack of transparency in government decision-making
  - ▶ absence of a transparent procurement system in many countries
  - ▶ financial challenges that made it difficult for CBOs/NGOs to pay sufficient attention to national processes.

CBOs representing some key populations tended to be poorly involved in national processes, due to insufficient number of community leaders ready for publicity in their countries.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS/TA PROVIDERS



1

## Develop a pool of community "peer-to-peer" TA providers who:

- ▶ are conversant in local languages
- ▶ understand communities' needs
- ▶ are specifically trained to provide TA to communities on key issues in the region (for example, transition to national funding, advocacy, cooperation with state structures, fundraising, organizational development and strategic planning, data analysis).

2

## Improve the number and quality of relevant CRG resources in local languages:

- ▶ translate key materials into Russian and other local EECA languages
- ▶ verify the quality of existing translations of guidelines and materials in Russian, and improve or re-translate as needed
- ▶ generate Russian and other local language materials on gender, starting with translation of the Global Fund key gender guidance documents
- ▶ develop/adapt/translate regionally relevant guidelines for addressing gender-issues focusing on practical advocacy guidance and on themes that are specifically relevant to the region, such as transition from Global Fund support, etc.

3

## Improve EECA CBOs' access to information about technical assistance

— establish a "one-stop-shop" e-portal, regularly updated with information about TA opportunities, links to donors' websites, documents to support TA applicants, relevant CRG resources in Russian and local languages (or links to them), etc.

4

## Provide joint TA for CBOs and governmental organizations

to facilitate coordination and collaboration between civil society and governmental organizations in response to epidemic.

5

## Strengthen TA on national level advocacy

on issues of human rights, access to services with proven efficiency for key populations and funding of response programs.

6

## Develop strategies to work with CBOs in the EECA countries with authoritarian regimes,

considering restrictions, specific for each country, with the support of regional and international communities.

7

## Establish a flexible dedicated fund for technical assistance to CBOs/NGOs

that would cover gaps in CBOs' needs, which are not reflected in current grants.

8

## Continue provision of targeted TA to CBOs/NGOs that are funded by the Global Fund to empower them to effectively participate in GF-related processes:

- ▶ training / capacity building to CBOs/NGOs on GF mechanisms, procedures and opportunities
- ▶ budget negotiation to ensure a place at the table during grant negotiations
- ▶ information and/or trainings on communication with the GF (channels, mechanisms, issues)
- ▶ feedback and evaluation mechanisms for CBOs to report out on the effectiveness of CCM work and of TA aimed at improving civil society participation in GF-related processes.

9

## Develop a standard TA quality assessment procedure and integrate it into TA delivery

and its improvement system using amount of implemented recommendations in the certain period of time as an assessment criteria.