

Communities and Civil Society Regional Meeting Report

Ensuring meaningful community engagement in Global Fund GC8 in EECA



Convened by the EECA Regional Learning Hub

17–19 March 2026 | Istanbul, Turkey

1. Background

On March 17–19, 2026, a Communities and Civil Society Regional Meeting “Ensuring meaningful community engagement in Global Fund GC8 in EECA” was held in Istanbul, Turkey. The event was organized by the EECA Regional Learning Hub hosted by the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA), with support of the Global Fund’s Community Engagement Strategic Initiative (CE SI).

The meeting aimed to strengthen the capacity of Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) members representing the non-governmental sector in EECA countries expected to submit funding requests under the Global Fund’s eighth grant cycle (GC8) in 2026. Specifically, the event was designed to help these members navigate the Global Fund’s technical and procedural guidance and to build operational capacity for developing and submitting their funding requests. Additionally, the event facilitated dialogue on regionally significant topics to support national priorities under GC8, including those identified by the Global Fund Secretariat’s EECA Regional Team.

This regional meeting brought together 18 CCM members representing non-governmental sector from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine (EECA countries expected to apply in Windows 1-3), along with regional networks, technical partners and Global Fund colleagues (who participated online).

The meeting coincided with countries in the EECA region receiving their GC8 allocation letters, which reflected reductions in overall allocation amounts as well as clear transition timelines. For all but 4 countries in the EECA region, GC8 will be the last funding cycle. Consequently, the themes of transition, sustainability and prioritization were central to the meeting.

Over the course of three days, participants discussed the new features of GC8 and their implication for the continuation of services in the EECA region, for civil society and community-led organizations and their priorities, what is most at risk, and how communities and civil society could engage most effectively to be part of decision-making guiding the transition process. Country participants also worked on practical next steps to ensure the meaningful engagement of civil society and communities’ representatives into GC8 funding request development process.

This report aims to provide a short summary of the main points arising from the meeting discussions and group work in the course of three days, offering additional insights to countries for follow-up and GC8 preparation.

Related links:

- [Meeting agenda](#)

2. The context of the meeting

Countries of EECA are entering GC8 with less funding being available, tougher prioritization between activities and an overarching focus on transition. Consequently, the challenge is no longer just determining what can be funded over the next three years and how to advocate for sustainability of these interventions after GC8. Instead, the critical question is what

interventions and activities must be protected now so that key services and community-led work do not disappear later once Global Fund's support ends. This is happening at a time when technical partners such as WHO, UNAIDS and Stop TB Partnership are experiencing their own funding cuts, resulting in significantly more limited and targeted support for the region.

Another important factor that will shape political and programmatic decisions over the course of the next three years is the shrinking civic space in the EECA region. In several countries of EECA, this trend affects not only the ability of CLOs to conduct advocacy or exist. It also affects the availability and accessibility of services for KAPs and has direct implications for the epidemic shape and growth. This context will also influence the transition from GF to state funding, as some services or advocacy activities cannot be preserved in the current repressive environment. CLOs and NGOs should therefore focus their efforts on what is realistically possible to sustain through transition.

Another important point of concern is how to ensure meaningful community engagement in EECA countries. CLOs and NGOs experienced difficulties with community engagement during grant-making and grant implementation in previous cycles. Despite stronger civil society and community dialogue in countries, and despite the large volume of technical support received and efforts invested into engagement, real influence at different stages of the grant cycle remained limited or uneven. At a time when communities, CLOs and NGOs are already under heavy pressure because of shrinking funding and political repressions, the question is whether it is worth putting so much effort into engagement when the outcomes are so limited.

Related Presentation Links:

- [STBP Presentation: Ending Tuberculosis in EECA](#)
- UNAIDS Presentation: [EECA HIV response: emerging gaps and support considerations for GC8](#)
- WHO Presentation: [Regional challenges and shifting priorities for HIV, hepatitis, STIs and TB](#)

3. Main takeaways for GC8

3.1 GC8 allocations are smaller, with tougher prioritization and stronger focus on transition

The key takeaway from the meeting was clear: **GC8 will be a much tighter allocation cycle.** There will be limited space for broad wish lists, and communities and civil society will need to be far more explicit about what their top priorities are—and why those priorities merit funding within constrained envelopes. The discussion underscored that, under GC8, proposed interventions will need to demonstrate a clear logic of impact and make a compelling case for how they contribute to better access, quality and retention in services.

Therefore, the case for inclusion in GC8 will need to be sharper, more specific, more evidence-based, and more clearly linked to results and value for money. Due to limited resources, it will be critical to maximize outcomes through prioritization, integration, targeted focus on the most at-risk populations, capacity-building for self-reliance, and expedited access to innovation.

The discussion also touched on the broader strategic shifts in the Global Fund approach. Participants saw more emphasis on prioritization, integration of HIV/TB programming into primary health systems, transition planning, and stronger justification of interventions in terms of results. In practice, this means that country partners will need to articulate a transition, sustainability and integration path for each intervention. The key question will be how to ensure transition without compromising access, quality, confidentiality, trust and continuity of care. Country partners should address what needs to happen to ensure continued access, what risks need to be addressed and how, and what conditions are necessary for program integration to succeed in real life.

Related Presentation Links:

- [Regional Priorities for GC8: Focus on EECA](#)
- [Unpacking GC8: what is new?](#)
- [Unpacking Global Fund GC8 guidance](#)

3.2 Shrinking civic space is already affecting services and program outcomes

The discussions concerning [Kazakhstan](#), [Tajikistan](#) and [Kyrgyzstan](#) demonstrated that shrinking civic space is not only about advocacy space, NGO registration format or the formal freedom of operation. It is already directly impacting the access to services, confidentiality, outreach, peer support and trust - a trend which is likely to continue throughout the next GF funding cycle.

Participants discussed fear of disclosure, reduced access to safe spaces, growing pressure on NGOs, and the need to adapt service models where public visibility has become risky. Several practical adaptation strategies were presented. Examples included reducing public visibility and shifting to more anonymous service models in Kazakhstan, partial transfer of some services into public-sector structures in Tajikistan and switching from NGO-based service provision to new licensed medical-service models in Kyrgyzstan that allow some organizations to continue working with key populations in a more restrictive environment. These examples demonstrated that alternative models cannot fully preserve access, and some service decline remains inevitable. Nevertheless, they can still help maintain at least some of the essential services for key and vulnerable populations in this challenging environment.

Related Presentation Links:

- [Shrinking civic space and marginalized communities in EECA](#)
- [Impact of Anti – LGBT Legislation on Access to Services for MSM in Kazakhstan](#)
- [Impact of the Kyrgyzstan's political changes on programs and communities](#)
- [Tajikistan: Legal Barriers and Access To Services](#)

3.3 Grant-making remains one of the weakest entry points for community engagement

This topic featured prominently during the “reality check” discussion and was a recurring theme among participants. Communities may be fully engaged and properly consulted during the funding request development stage and still lose influence later, especially after the funding request is submitted.

Participants described grant-making as the stage where the process becomes less consultative, increasingly technical, and heavily budget-driven. This is also where some community priorities are most likely to be reduced or dropped. [The case of Tajikistan](#) illustrated this challenge with particular clarity, and the subsequent discussion underscored that this represents a broader regional issue rather than an isolated country-specific problem.

For communities and civil society, in practice this means that engagement during grant-making stage needs to be treated as a separate stage of work. It required dedicated preparation, its own technical support, and much closer involvement following the submission of the funding request. The [Global Fund’s Community Engagement Technical Assistance Program](#) can also be used at the grant-making stage to help communities stay involved and improve transparency of the process.

Related Presentation Links:

- [Community engagement minimum expectations](#)
- [GF Grant – making in Tajikistan: experience of community engagement and lessons for GC8](#)
- [Community Engagement in drafting the National GC7 TB Funding Request](#)
- [TB PEOPLE UKRAINE: the role of the community in the TB response in Ukraine](#)

3.4 Transition is not only about who pays, but about what survives the transition

The session on sustainability and transition consisted of formal presentations from the Global Fund alongside case studies from the countries. The Global Fund team outlined key aspects of sustainability and transition policy, articulated transition timelines and discussed opportunities (and limitations) offered through social contracting and other domestic financing modalities. There was also a discussion on how to optimize KP programming in resource-constrained settings, based on the latest guidelines published by the Global HIV Prevention Coalition. Country examples described how service programs are adapting under domestic funding and the challenges with preserving access and quality of services.

The participants discussed the challenges in securing state funding for outreach, peer support, legal aid, community monitoring, and other functions that facilitate service entry and retention, given that domestic funding currently targets clinical interventions primarily. An additional concern was raised regarding whether state verification systems could undermine confidentiality, making services less accessible and less attractive to clients.

This means that the first task for communities and civil society is to advocate for non-clinical interventions to be included in transition planning, and to articulate their linkage to program outcomes. The second task is to identify and mitigate risks associated with transition, including domestically funded service delivery for key populations. This mitigation process must encompass safeguards for confidentiality, trust, service quality, data protection and the continued role of community providers.

Related Presentation Links:

- [Session 2.1, Transition and Sustainability of HIV and TB responses: Global Fund Presentation on GC8 Approaches](#)
- [Global Fund Presentation: Planning and managing HIV programs with key populations in GC8](#)
- [Republic of Moldova: Domestic Funding of Services for Key Populations–Payment and Contracting Mechanisms](#)
- [Kazakhstan’s Experience in sustaining and integrating services for key and vulnerable populations through Social Contracting. Preparing for transition to domestic funding GC7](#)
- [NGO support in addressing TB in Azerbaijan](#)

3.5 Community-led interventions should be positioned as essential for programmatic impact

This was a recurring topic across discussions on CLM, community systems, legal aid and human rights. Interventions such as CLM, legal support, peer support, advocacy and other community-led functions are likely to come under pressure in GC8 unless they are described much more clearly and defended with better arguments. Discussion was focused on how to achieve that in practice. The main point was that these interventions should not be presented solely as community priorities. Instead, they need to be framed as critical components of program effectiveness. That means demonstrating how they improve access, enhance retention in care, strengthen accountability, address barriers and protect the quality of the response.

CLM was a good example. The Moldova and Ukraine presentations showed that it is easier to defend CLM when its results lead to concrete program improvements — a service change, a procurement fix, a policy adjustment, or a documented response to a barrier.

Related Presentation Links:

- [Global Fund presentation for Session 2.3: Investing in community systems for improved HIV/TB outcomes in GC8](#)
- [Community Engagement Framework](#)
- [Community-Led Monitoring \(CLM\) in Moldova](#)
- [Integrating CLM into national HIV and TB responses in GC8 to improve grant efficiency and achieve national targets](#)

3.6 Gender-responsive services are especially vulnerable in a resource-constrained allocation

According to meeting participants, gender-responsive services are often among the first to be deprioritized when budgets are reduced, even though women and girls continue to face specific barriers to accessing services.

In GC8 there are two interventions under the Reducing Gender related Vulnerabilities and Barriers to HIV, TB and Malaria Services module: «*Addressing gender discrimination, and norms that pose a barrier to HIV, TB and malaria services*» and «*Preventing and responding to violence against women and girls*». The discussion centered on how to protect the activities under these interventions as well as how to integrate HIV services with sexual and reproductive health, GBV response, cancer screening referral, legal support, community-led support for women living with HIV, and services for women from key populations. Participants also discussed the need for gender-specific CLM indicators so that these barriers do not remain invisible.

Conclusion from this discussion was that gender-responsive services should be positioned as essential to contributing to improved programmatic outcomes and grounded in the needs and realities women and girls face.

Related Presentation Links:

- [Successful examples of integrating GBV response into prevention, care and support services in EECA countries](#)

3.7 Human rights work institutionalization on paper is not enough

Human rights work, legal aid and paralegal support are not automatically protected when countries are transitioning from donor's support to national funding. In fact, they are often among the first interventions to be questioned when funding becomes constrained.

The examples from Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine showed two practical ways of protecting legal support in transition. In Kyrgyzstan, the focus was on formal institutionalization of paralegal support through changes in law, certification and regulation. In Ukraine, the focus was on building referral and cooperation mechanisms between community-based legal support and the state free legal aid system. Both examples showed the same thing: formal recognition alone does not guarantee sustainability. If financing is not secured, if trusted community entry points are weakened, or if people do not feel safe using these systems, legal support may remain institutionalized on paper but become much less effective in practice.

For GC8, the practical conclusion for countries on an accelerated transition path could be to identify realistic approaches to adapting these enabling interventions and embedding them into existing domestic structures. This includes capitalizing on complaints mechanisms in health facilities, partnering more actively with Ombudsman institutions, training social workers to provide basic legal literacy and initial legal support, and building stronger links with the state

free legal aid system. The aim is not just to formalize these interventions, but to ensure they remain functional, trusted and accessible in practice.

Related Presentation Links:

- [Global Fund presentation: Human Rights in a sustainable HIV Response](#)
- [Promotion of Paralegal Aid Mechanism in Kyrgyzstan](#)
- [Establishing effective mechanisms ensuring access to legal aid for KVPs and PLHIV in Ukraine](#)

4. What country partners need to do next

The roadmap exercise on Day 3 provided concrete next steps. The task for participating teams from each country was to come up with a targeted set of clear actions, timelines and responsibilities. The priority objective was not to produce a perfect action plan, but rather to establish a more practical understanding of the immediate next steps after participants return back home.

Across the different roadmaps, the same immediate priorities came up again and again:

- To organize country-level consultations with CS representatives as soon as possible;
- To agree between the communities on a smaller number of priority interventions for the including into funding request;
- To clarify the composition of the working groups with a specific focus on communities’ representatives;
- To become better prepared for engagement during the grant-making stage;
- To keep communities informed during both funding request development and grant making stages;
- To use the available technical assistance as early as possible.

The country partners developed different action plans based on local contexts, their experience with GC7 and insights gained during the first two days of the meeting:

Country group	Main immediate next steps	Main issue to watch
Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief communities on the outcomes of the meeting; • Consolidate community proposals at an early stage; • Actively participate in the technical review and drafting process; • Ensure community actors can review and comment on the final funding request text before submission. 	Community participation may be restricted at the final drafting stage, especially if conflict-of-interest rules related to SR participation are applied in a way that limits civil society involvement.
Tajikistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch rapid consultations; 	Grant-making and later revisions may happen with limited visibility for

Country group	Main immediate next steps	Main issue to watch
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide regular updates during the funding request development stage; • Maintain the active involvement of service organizations throughout the process; • Sustain consultation with communities following TRP comments to ensure revisions incorporate meaningful community input. 	<p>communities unless communication stay active throughout.</p>
Kazakhstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better ensure representation of communities; • Leverage available technical assistance; • Gather stakeholder proposals through structured consultations; • Nominate community representatives through formal, transparent mechanisms; • Maintain engagement throughout the subsequent budgeting stages and post-TRP revisions 	<p>Community priorities may be hardest to protect during budgeting and grant-making, even if they were initially included into the funding request.</p>
Azerbaijan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clearer formal entry points for meaningful community engagement; • Define strategic priorities at an early stage of the process; • Mobilize targeted technical assistance and structural support were required; • Leverage meetings with decision-makers to push for the integration of the identified priorities into the funding request. 	<p>Formal participation may remain weak unless communities secure clear access to the process from the start.</p>
Kyrgyzstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the selection process and mandates for the Principal Recipient (PR) and corresponding expert groups; 	<p>Lack of clarity around structures and roles may weaken meaningful community involvement if not addressed early.</p>

Country group	Main immediate next steps	Main issue to watch
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure formal community representation within those governance structures; • Maintain an open, inclusive, and transparent country dialogue process; • Sustain broad information-sharing process through all available communication channels. 	
Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage existing platforms and technical working groups to refine interventions proposed for the inclusion into the funding request; • Maintain continuous communication and engagement with community stakeholders; • Mobilize targeted technical assistance to effectively support meaningful community engagement into the funding request development; • Sustain operational momentum by working through already established coordination channels. 	Existing structures are an advantage, but priorities still need to be sharpened early so that community positions remain visible later in the cycle.

5. Key learning needs identified

The meeting highlighted several key learning needs of the participants from among the civil society and communities' representatives, which are presented below.

First, there is a clear need for a stronger understanding of grant-making process. Participants repeatedly pointed to grant-making as the stage where community influence becomes weakest. This means that communities need much better preparation not only for funding request drafting, but also for budgeting, reprioritization and post-submission negotiations.

Second, the discussion showed that communities are increasingly expected to engage with transition, social contracting, domestic financing and integration into state systems, they are often ill-prepared for the practical implications of these processes. What is needed here is not only more technical knowledge, but also more practical support, cross-learning initiatives, and concrete case studies from across EECA and other regions of how to protect confidentiality, trust, service quality and continued access for key and vulnerable populations during transition.

Third, the meeting demonstrated that communities still require greater support in learning how to more effectively articulate why community-led, rights-based and gender-responsive interventions are essential. One of the recurring difficulties is that communities do not always possess a clear and convincing way to demonstrate the direct connection between these interventions and program results. This means that technical partners and support providers still have an important role in helping communities make that connection more clearly.

Fourth, the meeting underscored the value of practical exchange between civil society representatives from different countries, particularly regarding the adaptation of services and community engagement in restrictive environments. This part of the program proved highly valuable because participants were able to discuss and learn from the real examples, not only general concerns and theoretical assumptions. For capacity building purposes, it would be useful to continue providing a space for communities from EECA countries to exchange concrete approaches to confidentiality, safer service models, reduced public visibility, legal protection and preservation of essential community functions.

Finally, the roadmap exercise demonstrated that communities need to strengthen their capacity for country-level coordination and priority-setting. One of the most challenging operational questions is how to achieve consensus across different communities on a unified set of priorities within a highly compressed timeframe. This process must remain participatory and fair, even though it is evident that budget constraints and accelerated transition will prevent a significant number of interventions from being included in the final funding request.

6. Key recommendations for GC8 and the immediate period ahead

6.1 For the Global Fund

The Global Fund should continue supporting meaningful engagement of communities at all stages of the country dialogue process, with a specific focus on grant making stake, as the most challenging one. This was repeatedly identified as the stage where transparency decreases, and community priorities are most likely to be narrowed or dropped. Support options for community engagement at this stage should therefore be made visible early and used in a more systematic way.

More guidance and support should be provided to communities in implementing countries to assist them with the prioritization process during the funding request development stage. This includes ensuring the proper justification and budgeting of all interventions proposed for inclusion.

Additional efforts are required to ensure that communities understand the Global Fund's key strategic shifts, its approach to accelerated transition, and recommended focus on integration of key population services into primary health care.

6.2 For the Learning Hub and technical partners

The EECA Regional Learning Hub and other technical partners should continue to provide focused support in the areas that participants identified as most difficult: grant-making, transition planning, costing and budgeting, and framing of community-led interventions in terms of programme results. This support needs to come early enough to influence national processes, not only after priorities have already been narrowed. They should also continue to create space for practical exchange between countries, especially on shrinking civic space, adaptation of service models, CLM, legal support models, and ways of embedding enabling interventions into domestic structures.

6.3 For governments, CCMs and other national stakeholders

Governments, CCMs and other national stakeholders should approach transition more realistically. The key question for the government is how to make sure that transitioned interventions remain usable in practice. Transition planning should therefore address confidentiality, realistic tariffs, service quality, data protection, complaints mechanisms, and continued secured role for community-based providers.

National stakeholders should also make more deliberate space for community engagement during grant-making and later revisions.

6.4 For communities and civil society

Communities and civil society should prepare for meaningful engagement at all stages of the GC8 process, not only at the stage of funding request development. This means earlier coordination, choosing the priorities, stronger preparation in grant-making, and more active use of technical assistance.

They should also continue strengthening how community-led, rights-based and gender-responsive interventions are presented in national processes. These interventions need to be positioned more clearly as necessary for access, retention, service quality, accountability and programme results.

In countries facing accelerated transition or growing political pressure, communities and civil society should not focus on preserving existing interventions, but rather on adapting them in realistic ways so that the most essential functions can continue under more difficult political and financial conditions.

Annex 1 Evaluation

A total of 21 participants completed the evaluation form. Overall, the results indicate a highly positive assessment of the meeting. Scores were consistently strong across both substantive and organizational dimensions, with especially high ratings for technical support, participation and safe space, facilitation and group work, logistics, and peer learning. The relatively lower scores still remained positive and were mainly linked to the complexity and readability of some presentations and materials rather than to dissatisfaction with the meeting as a whole.

1 Achievement of expected results

Participants rated the extent to which the expected results of the meeting had been achieved on a scale from 1 to 10. The average scores were as follows:

- Understanding of the GC8 process and technical guidance, including key changes from GC7: 8.7/10
- Clarity of participants' roles and planned activities in funding request development and meaningful community engagement, including a draft roadmap for engagement: 9.2/10
- Understanding of key thematic areas and strategic investment priorities of the region in GC8: 9.1/10
- Peer learning, exchange of experience, partnership development, and strengthened communication and cooperation with each other, the Global Fund Secretariat, technical partners and EECA LH: 9.7/10

These results suggest that the meeting was particularly successful in strengthening peer learning, cooperation and practical readiness for the next stages of GC8. The comparatively lower score for understanding the GC8 process and technical guidance aligns with qualitative comments indicating that some Global Fund presentations and slides were difficult to follow and too technical in style.

2 Overall quality of the meeting

Participants also rated the overall quality of the meeting across key dimensions. The average scores were:

- Meeting agenda (balance, duration, clarity, time management): 9.1/10
- Presentations/materials (relevance, clarity, usefulness): 9.1/10
- Facilitation and group work (instructions, support, outputs): 9.7/10
- Participation and safe space (inclusion, respect, confidentiality): 9.8/10

- Technical support (audio/visual, online connection, interpretation): 10.0/10
- Logistics (travel, accommodation, venue, catering): 9.5/10

The highest-rated aspect of the meeting was technical support, which received a perfect score from all respondents. Participation and safe space, facilitation and group work, and logistics were also rated particularly highly. The relatively lower scores for agenda and presentations/materials remained strong overall, but are consistent with comments requesting simpler language, more readable slides, more physical presence of some presenters, and slightly more time for the programme.

3 Qualitative feedback: strengths and areas for improvement

The qualitative feedback was strongly positive overall. Participants described the meeting as informative, useful and well organized. Several respondents explicitly thanked the organizers and noted that similar meetings should be held more often. The exchange of experience between countries was repeatedly highlighted as particularly valuable, and a number of respondents indicated that all sessions had been useful or that each session contained something important. Country examples, community presentations and practical group work were seen as especially helpful in making abstract GC8 issues more concrete and actionable.

At the same time, the feedback also pointed to several areas for improvement. The most consistent concern related to the style of some Global Fund presentations: respondents noted that some presenters were difficult to understand, that slides were too complex or not sufficiently readable, and that future presentations would benefit from simpler language and clearer guidance on priorities for communities and civil society organizations. There was also feedback that the meeting felt too short, that some Day 1 sessions without presentation support were harder to follow, and that greater in-person participation by some presenters would be welcome in the future.

4 Key follow-up actions planned by participants

The open-ended responses indicate that participants left the meeting with a clear intention to move rapidly into country-level follow-up. The most frequently mentioned next steps included refining and implementing country roadmaps, participating actively in funding request drafting and national dialogue processes, joining or strengthening working groups, consolidating community positions at country level, and informing CCM secretariats and other relevant stakeholders about key issues raised during the meeting. Several respondents also referred to presenting the results of the Istanbul meeting back to national communities and organizing additional consultations or advocacy meetings.

Overall, these responses suggest that the meeting succeeded not only in increasing understanding, but also in shifting participants toward practical planning and action. The emphasis was not merely on participation, but on more strategic, coordinated and evidence-based participation.

5 Follow-up support most needed

The strongest request in the follow-up support section was for continued technical assistance. Participants referred to support for drafting and justifying interventions, promoting civil society and community priorities in the new application, obtaining feedback on specific priorities, and supporting community involvement during country dialogue and grant programming processes. There were also calls for assistance in justifying gender-related services, more general advisory and technical support, and, in a few cases, financial support.

Taken together, these responses show that participants do not see the meeting as a stand-alone event. They expect continued accompaniment as country processes advance, especially in areas repeatedly identified during the meeting as difficult: prioritization, grant-making, technical framing of community-led and rights-based interventions, and ongoing advocacy to keep community priorities visible through later stages of the cycle.