

EECA Constituency of the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria calls for an urgent joint action of the World Bank and Global Fund to strategic, long-term response to COVID-19

The new coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, is an extraordinary shock to the global economy, which disproportionately affects the economies of developing countries and its health systems. This pandemic also affects the implementation of the National programs, including those supported by the Global Fund on HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria – epidemics with a combined mortality of almost 3 million patients per year.

Considering that the economies of many countries depend on SMEs, trade, services and remittances, the COVID-19 crisis resulted in restrictions, lockdowns and border closures will have a huge negative impact on fragile economies of the countries. It is highly important to call for adequate consideration of the vulnerability of the countries, so all the governments should consolidate efforts and define stimulus measures to mitigate national and regional economic impacts.

It is expected that the majority of the countries will face economic recession and significant economic challenges. Related to economic recession, we should indicate that many countries that are currently UMIs may be downgraded.

In addition, the countries are facing structural changes within Ministry of Health - health budgets where MOH are prioritizing and reallocating funds from “areas with low priority” to high priority programs/projects/activities. E.g. MOH of some countries have reallocated funds foreseen for the CSO/NGO grant scheme to Emergency fund for the COVID-19. Country reactions like this may directly affect HIV and TB Programs, in particular if this is the case during the application phase that requires increased co-financing commitments.

Due to the above described challenges and expected global economic crisis, we are calling the World Bank to urgently provide the Global Fund with the most accurate economic data in order to enable an extraordinary review of the eligible countries. We are urging the Global Fund to conduct an extraordinary eligibility review immediately, in order to effectively respond to the COVID-19 and economic crisis. We are deeply concerned with effects of the crisis over the health systems in developing world. If the Global Fund doesn't conduct the extraordinary eligibility review, but decides to wait for the next cycle to review eligibility, we will once again fail to proactively and timely support people and countries in need and subsequently will face much greater challenges. The Global Fund should revisit the World Bank classification of countries and review economic indicators while drafting the new list of eligible countries for GF allocation.

While minimizing risks to GF core programs and strengthening health systems it should be noted that the Global Fund is also mindful of its responsibility as a major actor in the broader health agenda. The Global Fund is therefore committed to a swift, nimble and pragmatic approach in supporting the health systems in the implementing countries in their fight against COVID-19 and maintaining the core services to the targeted population.



Together, we can acknowledge and appreciate the massive progress made, and we can share collective determination to accelerate efforts to end these epidemics. As the Global Fund always emphasize, we all must step up the fight, through increased innovation and collaboration and improved execution to address some of the major challenges. In order to ensure sustainability of the success we achieve during this long period of time and to maintain high program outcomes, it is important to focus on reducing incidence and scaling-up effective prevention efforts by investing in key and vulnerable populations

Finally, we are very thankful to the Global Fund for emergency funding to help mitigating and addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic while working very closely with governments across the region to minimize loss of life, and strengthen health systems.