**RAIN OR SHINE: Meaningful Engagement in Global Fund Processes During COVID-19**

**A Global Civil Society and Community Roundtable**

**5 November 2020 • 2:00pm-4:00pm (GMT+2:00)**

Convened by the Six Regional Platforms for Communication and Coordination, part of the Community, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiative

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**Concept Note and Draft Agenda**

**BACKGROUND**

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse the extraordinary gains made by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria partnership in the fight against the three epidemics. A Global Fund survey covering 106 countries suggests that approximately three-quarters of current HIV, TB and malaria programs have been impacted.[[1]](#footnote-1) In high burden settings, HIV, TB and malaria-related deaths over 5 years may be increased by up to 10%, 20% and 36%, respectively, compared to if there were no COVID-19 epidemic.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Evidence emerged that the COVID-19 pandemic was having a particularly detrimental effect on civil society and community organizations, many of which were not prepared to cope with the disruption caused by COVID-19 to their operations.[[3]](#footnote-3) Governments and funding partners were failing to recognize and utilize local civil society organizations’ skills, experience and networks in response to COVID-19.

From April to June 2020, the Global Fund held a series of virtual civil society roundtable events to better understand how COVID-19 was affecting services and to identify innovations in grant implementation. Civil society implementers shared successful strategies. Participants learned about telephonic psychosocial support for sex workers in South Africa, scaled-up take-home doses of opioid substitution therapy for people who use drugs in Ukraine, and increased incentives paid to Integrated Community Malaria Volunteers in Myanmar to motivate them to continue reporting data in the current context.

While service delivery disruptions from COVID-19 were a major concern, so too were barriers to effective community engagement in Global Fund-related processes. In a May 2020 statement, the Global Fund’s Technical Review Panel (TRP) acknowledged the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on direct disruptions to service, while warning of the longer-term risks associated with the erosion of health-related human rights and community engagement.

COVID-19 struck at a time when new Global Fund grants were being designed for the 2020-2022 funding cycle. Between March and August 2020 – when lockdown restrictions were most severe – 148 HIV, TB and malaria funding requests were due for submission to the Global Fund. In addition, 82 countries developed funding requests to the Global Fund’s COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM). All funding requests, including C19RM, are required to be developed through inclusive and transparent country dialogue with a broad range of stakeholders including key and vulnerable populations. With lockdowns, social distancing, and a very real health risk from any kind of physical gathering, COVID-19 stymied traditional approaches to community consultation and country dialogue.

In April 2020, the Global Fund issued guidance on how to hold a virtual inclusive country dialogue. The Global Fund’s Community, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiative ­– a US$16 million investment to support civil society and community organizations to meaningfully engage in Global Fund processes – also adjusted its support to COVID-19 realities. Innovations in Global Fund community engagement during the pandemic are many, but these have not yet been widely shared. The Global Fund has a unique depth of experience and mechanisms for the engagement of communities and civil society to fight infectious diseases. Lessons from Ebola outbreaks in Africa demonstrate that supporting community engagement and community-led responses will be critical in the fight against COVID-19.

Building on the regional civil society roundtables to date, a global civil society roundtable is planned for 5 November 2020 to consolidate learning on meaningful community engagement in Global Fund-related processes amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Share information from civil society and community-led surveys and case studies on the specific COVID-related barriers that impede meaningful engagement in Global Fund-related processes, and how these can be overcome.
2. Highlight good examples of effective community engagement in Global Fund country dialogue during COVID-19 for HIV, TB, malaria and C19RM funding requests submitted in Windows 1-3, and make recommendations for Windows 4-6 applicants.
3. Promote cross-regional learning and exchange, so that civil society and community organizations may replicate or adapt effective community engagement strategies.

**PARTICIPANTS**

Up to 300 participants from civil society and community groups from the six regions, members of Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs), Global Fund Secretariat staff, technical partners, and other stakeholders interested in meaningful civil society and community engagement.

**LANGUAGE**

English, with translation of key points into Arabic, French, Spanish and Russian in the chat box.

**LINK**

Join Zoom Meeting <https://theglobalfund.zoom.us/j/99272602334?pwd=c2xuQVdvUlpPU2srWnI1bGNHQnptUT09>

Meeting ID: 992 7260 2334

Passcode: 408943

**DRAFT AGENDA**

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| **Time** | **Topic** | **Speaker** |
| 2:00-2:10 | Welcoming Remarks | Kate Thomson, Global Fund  |
| 2:10-2:40 | **SESSION 1****“Information is Power: Understanding barriers, amplifying voices”** * Key populations at the center of the response: A community-led survey to ensure key populations’ voices drive COVID-19 service adaptations in HIV Global Fund grants in MENA **(5-7 minutes)**
* Sustaining the gains: A case study of community responses to COVID-19 in the LAC region and in the context of Global Fund transitions **(5-7 minutes)**
* When stars align: What COVID-19 can teach us about the importance of investing in community systems strengthening **(5-7 minutes)**
* Community engagement in the C19RM funding request development processes: Insights from a rapid Global Fund survey **(5 minutes)**
 | MENA Platform LAC Platform Asia-Pacific Platform Jack Macallister, Global Fund |
| 2:40-3:00 | Q&A and discussion | Gemma OberthGlobal Fund |
| 3:00-3:30 | **SESSION 2****“Against all odds: Stories of effective engagement in times of COVID-19”*** A community-led C19RM: How communities fought (and won) for stigma and discrimination activities in Botswana, and community-led monitoring (the C-Tracker App) in South Africa **(5-7 minutes)**
* Civil society leadership and coordination of virtual technical groups during the preparation of Russia’s Window 3 HIV funding request **(5-7 minutes)**
* Supporting meaningful community engagement in grant-making negotiations in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mali and Niger – the national country dialogue facilitator model **(5-7 minutes)**
 | Anglophone Africa Platform EECA PlatformFrancophone Africa Platform |
| 3:30-3:50 | Q&A and discussion | Gemma OberthGlobal Fund |
| 3:50-4:00 | Closing Remarks and Way Forward | Gavin ReidGlobal Fund |

1. Global Fund (2020). Mitigating The Impact Of Covid-19 On Countries Affected By HIV, Tuberculosis And Malaria. Page 8. <https://bit.ly/33uFBeE> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hogan, A. B., Jewell, B., Sherrard-Smith, E., Vesga, J., Watson, O. J., Whittaker, C., ... & Baguelin, M. (2020). The potential impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on HIV, TB and Malaria in low-and middle-income countries. *Imp Coll Lond (01-05-2020)*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. @AfricanNGOs and EPIC-Africa (2020). Report: The Impact Of Covid-19 On African Civil Society Organizations Challenges, Responses And Opportunities. Page 4. Online at <https://bit.ly/3ivq4PZ> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)