



## **Developing Country NGO constituency at the 44th Board Meeting: Strengthening Community Systems is the key to our success**

The Developing Country NGO constituency participated actively at the 44th Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria held virtually on 11 and 12 November 2020. We urged the Board and Secretariat to focus intensely on reversing the effects of Covid-19 on the HIV, TB and malaria response and to robustly assess the ever-evolving risks of further disruption of services for people living with HIV and affected by TB or malaria. We also called for Global Fund's next Strategy to have Community Systems Strengthening at the core of all areas of the Strategy for 2023 and beyond, as outlined below.

### **Covid-19 and Business Continuity:**

The Developing Country NGO constituency expressed concern that the bigger picture analysis of the ever-evolving risks is not sufficient to inform and course-correct the work of the Global Fund or to allow the Board to provide oversight. While modelling that illustrates the current disruptions in HIV, TB and malaria services are available, we called for real-time evidence from countries on what the true impact and risks are.

"At the previous Board Meeting, we were using data from modelling studies to assess the negative impact of Covid-19. Now these impacts are the reality, with implications measured not in figures, but on impact on human lives. We cannot simply accept that we have lost the gains made in the HIV, TB and malaria responses, and must focus on getting back on track," said Andriy Klepikov, Board Member for the Developing Country NGO constituency.

Many other social and structural barriers to us reaching our mission still exist, such as criminalisation of key populations and other human rights barriers, and our focus on Covid-19 should be primarily on mitigating the impact on the three diseases. It is also critical to ensure uninterrupted service provision and programming on the ground, especially for key populations. The Global [State of Harm Reduction 2020](#) reports that harm reduction service delivery has been disrupted by the pandemic and we must address this.

We are also concerned about the exclusion of communities and civil society in the Covid-19 Response Mechanism (C-19 RM). A survey on civil society and community engagement regarding C-19 RM worryingly shows that: one third of respondents were not involved in the concept note drafting at all; half the respondents and one third of Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) members did not see the final draft of the application; and that the proportion of funding for communities and civil society was very low. We strongly called for the Secretariat, especially the CCM hub, to look into the barriers for meaningful inclusion, and to address them urgently.

### **Sustainability, Transitioning and Co-financing:**

The Report by the Executive Director highlighted that Covid-19 has created challenges for Sustainability, Transition and Co-Financing (STC). We called for a halt to any planned transitions for countries, until the approach to sustainability has developed a new strategy and realistic plan that takes into account the new context, especially with regard to:

- Transitioning, and the impact of the economic crises most countries are facing and how this will impact their income classification and most importantly their ability to sustain the gains of the fight against the three diseases

- Ability and willingness to sustain key population services.
- Human rights and involvement of communities and civil society in decision-making.
- Access to medicines and other health products and the impact of the disruptions in supply chains globally, and how this increases countries' dependence on solidarity supply mechanisms

### **The Next Strategy:**

The Global Fund is developing the next Strategy for 2023 and beyond, through Board consultation, an online consultation process and Partnership Forums. The Developing Country NGO constituency reiterated that the Global Fund must maintain sharp focus on HIV, TB and Malaria and that the Fund was not created to address the most infectious diseases, but to specifically address HIV, TB and malaria. We suggested strongly that the Fund not extend the mandate beyond these three diseases.

We strongly advocated for prioritisation and investment in Community Systems Strengthening to be at the core of the next Strategy.

“At the center of the development of the next Global Fund Strategy must be Community Systems Strengthening (CSS). Before there were institutions, there were communities who organised and supported each other as we saw with Covid-19. There is consensus of the need and value of community systems strengthening as a way of achieving our strategic goals. We strongly believe that we now, as a Board, need to move to addressing *how* we can do this,” said Carolyn Gomes, Alternate Board Member of the Developing Country NGO constituency and member of the Global Fund’s Strategy Committee.

The many ways that the Global Fund can translate its high-level support for CSS into action at country level include:

- Incentivise and support countries to request adequate resources for all aspects of community systems and response (in line with 2016 UN political declaration on ending AIDS target that at least 30% of service delivery is community-led).
- Creating indicators and targets to track coverage and outcomes for the main sub-elements of Community Systems Strengthening such as community-led monitoring.
- Making dual track financing a requirement to guarantee resources to civil society and communities, and strengthen community leadership. Where possible, resources should go to local community organisations and NGOs instead of repeatedly supporting the same international NGOs or UN partners.
- Restore regional/multi-country grants which make effective use of regional expertise and are critical for civil society to do difficult human rights-related work that will not be done by the Government partners involved and cannot be done safely by local organisations, including in non-eligible countries.

We look forward to working closely with civil society and communities as we prepare for the Partnership Forums in early 2021.