



THE GLOBAL FUND'S COMMUNITY, RIGHTS AND GENDER (CRG) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The example of Technical
Assistance provision in Kazakhstan
(2019–2020)

SUMMARY

According to many activists representing key populations (KPs), the engagement of community members in the development of the recent country proposal to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) in response to HIV and TB in Kazakhstan was not meaningful enough. At the same time, in recent years, the Global Fund has focused more on cooperation between community organisations and government agencies. When, in late 2019, the Kazakhstan Union of People Living with HIV (PLWH) came forward with an initiative to **strengthen the engagement of KPs in the development of the country proposal for the HIV Global Fund grant for 2021–2024**, the Secretariat of the Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan supported this idea.

In December 2019, the Kazakhstan Union of PLWH decided to seek support from the [Global Fund’s Community, Rights and Gender \(CRG\) Technical Assistance \(TA\) Programme](#) implemented within the [Global Fund CRG Strategic Initiative](#). **After several rounds of discussions, the expected results, methodology and plan of technical assistance were agreed by four key stakeholders:** local community organisations of Kazakhstan (represented by the Kazakhstan Union of PLWH); the Ministry of Health; the CCM; and the UNAIDS representative and the Global Fund Portfolio Manager for the Republic of Kazakhstan, respectively. Provision of technical assistance was approved by the CRG Department of the Global Fund Secretariat in January 2020. The Eurasian Coalition for Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (ECOM) — one of the [24 organisations pre-selected by the Global Fund in late 2019 as a TA provider](#) within the TA Programme — was selected to provide technical assistance. In the course of TA provision, a broad consultation was organised with the representatives of all key populations, including PLWH, to define the priority interventions to be included in the new country proposal, **with most interventions and activities offered by the communities included in the final version of the proposal that was submitted to the Global Fund.**



The budget for technical assistance provided within the Global Fund CRG Programme to Kazakhstan was USD27,500. Technical assistance was delivered during February-May 2020.

Key stages of technical assistance

November – December 2019	November – December 2019	February – May 2020	June 2020
Development and submission of the TA request	Approval of the request by the GF CRG Department, selection of the TA provider, preparation and approval of the Terms of Reference (ToR), selection of the consultant	Provision of TA by the consultant in accordance with the ToR	Submission of the report by the TA provider to the GF Secretariat on the results of TA provision
Total TA budget: USD27,500		Technical assistance provider: ECOM	

WHY WAS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REQUIRED?

Planning of the national programmes requires the ability to transform the knowledge of people’s needs into objectives and activities to be implemented within the programme, skills to set the priorities taking into account budget restrictions, and readiness to coordinate the needs of KPs with the plans to develop the national healthcare system. Many community-based NGOs in Kazakhstan have extensive experience in providing help and support to people affected by HIV, **but do not have sufficient experience in strategic planning at the country level.** That is why their engagement in the development of country programmes and proposals is often limited to the submission of information on the needs of affected populations to government agencies. That is what happened in 2016, when the previous proposal from Kazakhstan to the Global Fund was prepared almost exclusively by representatives of the Ministry of Health and international organisations, with community members not being systematically engaged in the process.

The national government has made efforts to allow the development of medical services for PLWH, while such components as prevention, social support for PLWH and KPs, as well as a budget for the funding of NGOs, still need to be strengthened. Furthermore, there are still some cases of discrimination and rights violations against KPs and PLWH in Kazakhstan. Such prevention and support interventions, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), social support for low-income populations and opioid agonist therapy (OAT), are not well developed.

The TA requested within the Global Fund CRG Programme was supposed to help the communities to integrate the above-mentioned needs of KPs and PLWH within the objectives of the new Kazakhstan proposal to the Global Fund, as well as to analyse the possibilities to scale-up cooperation between the government sector and community-based organisations in the country.

WHAT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WAS PROVIDED AND HOW WAS IT ORGANISED?

Support in preparing a TA request was provided by the [EECA Regional Civil Society and Community Support, Coordination and Communication Platform](#), which is operating within the Global Fund's CRG SI (in the EECA, the Platform is hosted by the [Eurasian Harm Reduction Association \(EHRA\)](#)).

After the TA request was approved, the CRG Department of the Global Fund Secretariat **selected the provider of technical assistance** based on the content of the request as well as technical profiles, competencies and experience of pre-selected TA providers.

ECOM was selected as a provider of TA within this request and announced a call for proposals to engage a consultant. The Terms of Reference for the TA provider, as well as selection of the consultant and the goals of TA provision, were discussed and agreed with the national partners seeking the TA.

The TA objectives, which were in line with the request of the Kazakhstan Union of PLWH, stipulated that the consultant had to be able to organise a lot of meetings within a short period of time and create conditions to coordinate opinions, positions, experiences and needs of people representing different KPs and living in different parts of the country. In addition, **it was essential for the consultant to understand the cultural and administrative environment of the country and to know local KP and PLWH organisations and their experience in implementing activities.**

The main TA objective was to organise the process to develop recommendations and suggestions from different KPs as well as PLWH to be included in the new Global Fund HIV grant proposal from Kazakhstan.

The agreed approach to achieve this objective included a number of stages:

1. Informing a broad range of community representatives about the development of the new proposal, about the opportunities for community engagement in this process and about the government recommendations to be included in the proposal;



2. Organising a discussion about the community priorities to be included in the new proposal (when the community needs are transformed into the objectives and activities to be implemented within the country proposal); and,
3. Agreeing the community priorities with the government vision.

In the course of TA provision, a number of one-day group consultations were organised with activists and heads of NGOs (separately for each KP) as well as individual meetings with representatives of government agencies and international organisations. An external consultant not only organised and conducted those meetings, but also prepared a description of the community suggestions to be included in the proposal and ensured the agreement of such suggestions with the vision and priorities of the government.

To streamline the consultations and to make them productive, the starting point of all discussions was the objectives set forth in the National HIV Programme. The participants discussed how the objectives they agree on can be better achieved, how communities can contribute to their achievement, how to change the objectives about which the communities are concerned and which objectives should be added. Furthermore, representatives of the Ministry of Health, UNAIDS and the CCM were invited to the community meetings as advisors (with no right to vote when making decisions). They helped to coordinate the ideas suggested by communities with the National Programme.

TA RESULTS

In general, the activities were conducted in line with the initial plan and within the set timeline: **all the parties – both the Kazakhstan Union of PLWH and the CCM, as well as the Ministry of Health – complied with their obligations and created the conditions for productive work of the consultation participants.** All the participants of the community meetings filled in evaluation forms in which they stated that they had a great opportunity to share their suggestions and rated their satisfaction with the consultations as “above average” or “high”. Some activists from among the key populations stated that compared to the previous country dialog (in 2016) this country dialog engaged many more representatives of different communities. It is important to note that all the consultations were held in a face-to-face format prior to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were introduced in the country.

It should also be noted that communities played an active and, often, even a key role in the development of the TA request and in the process of TA delivery. It was a PLWH organisation which initiated the TA, defined the key TA objectives, agreed those objectives with all the partners representing government agencies and international organisations and ensured the engagement of representatives of all KPs and PLWH in the consultation process. The TA was also provided by a community-led organisation – ECOM. It was the cooperation of **community-based organisations with government agencies, the CCM and international organisations which allowed the development of a quality consultation plan and its full implementation.**

The following general results of the community consultation process to develop suggestions for the new country proposal of Kazakhstan to the Global Fund within the HIV component in 2020 can be defined as follows:

1. Community representatives were able to prepare the recommendations agreed among the communities and with the National Programme to be included in the new country proposal to the Global Fund.
2. All the community recommendations defined as critical were included in the main funding request. **The recommendations not listed as “critical” were included in Prioritised Above Allocation Request (PAAR).**
3. Community representatives learned more about the essence and the mechanism of operation of the National HIV Programme, primarily related to the issues affecting the interests of relevant communities.
4. Community representatives learned more about the operation of the Global Fund and found out how communities can be engaged in the development and implementation of the projects supported by the Global Fund; and,
5. The Kazakhstan Union of PLWH and the CCM gained experience in organising and conducting a broad dialogue engaging a large number of people (in 2019-2020, over 100 activists and NGO managers were engaged in the country dialogue from KPs and PLWH), while community activists gained experience of participation in such consultations as well as coordination and promotion of their interests and priorities in the area of HIV within the national programme.

LESSONS LEARNED

Drawing the conclusions, it can be said that the key to success in the provision of the TA described above was the willingness of community-led organisations to not only request the required assistance, but also to actively and thoroughly engage at all the stages when such TA was prepared and delivered, as well as to cooperate with national partners representing different sectors.

Of note are the following positive lessons:

- + When there are no required technical resources or potential experts, seeking external technical assistance in a timely manner allows the achievement of expected results of acceptable quality and within the required timeframe.
- + Engagement of the party requesting TA in the process of TA preparation and provision at every stage, as well as coordination with all other stakeholders, is the prerequisite necessary to achieve positive outcomes of the TA provision.
- + Using the potential of the CCM, and in cooperating with government agencies, community organisations can participate in the country dialogue in an effective and constructive manner and ensure that their suggestions are included in the country proposal to the Global Fund.
- + Engagement of an external consultant allows community consultations to occur within the country dialogue in a more structured manner and avoids potential conflict; and,

- + The sharing of information with a broad range of community members and **selecting participants for consultations, taking into consideration the economic diversity of various regions of the country, as well as gender and behavioural differences of key populations, together with the diverse experience of activists and NGOs representing different communities**, allows the development of recommendations that are relevant for the whole country and which take into account the priority needs of KPs and PLWH.

Apart from these positive lessons, there are challenges, as follows:

- **To engage communities in consultations within the country dialogue to develop proposals to the Global Fund, community activists should be informed about the operation of the Global Fund as well as the national HIV response and about the possibilities for communities to participate in such processes in advance; it is especially important for those KP representatives who engage in such consultations for the first time.**
- Consultations require more time and prior discussions: conversations in online chats are insufficient to coordinate and agree on different issues, needs and opinions of different communities; and,
- For the purpose of consultations, trans people were put in one group with MSM which complicated the discussion for both communities as their needs and social conditions are not always the same. There should be separate meetings for trans people within the country dialogue.



One of the tasks of the EECA Regional Platform is to raise the awareness of civil society and communities about technical assistance opportunities under the Global Fund's CRG TA Programme, and to assist the interested parties in the development of quality TA requests for CRG Technical Assistance.

Therefore, if you have any questions about filling out the application form, or if you need advice on the possible content and/or quality of the request, please contact the Regional Platform. Starting from 2021, applicants must always contact the CRG Regional Platform in their region for assistance in shaping the request prior to submission to the Global Fund.

Contact the EECA Regional Platform:
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