

Rain or Shine II: Community Engagement in the Global Fund's COVID-19 Response Mechanism in 2021

A Global Civil Society and Community Roundtable
27 January 2022 • 3:00-5:00 (Central European Time)
Convened by the Six Regional Platforms, part of the Community, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiative

CONCEPT NOTE AND DRAFT AGENDA

Background

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to hamper global progress on ending HIV, TB and malaria, and persisted as a major public health threat in its own right. As of December 2021, there have been nearly 275 million COVID-19 cases and more than 5 million deaths. COVID-19 is associated with an 18% reduction in TB diagnoses between 2019 and 2020, which has reduced access to treatment and led to a 7% increase in TB deaths.¹ The pace of HIV testing declined almost uniformly, leading to fewer people living with HIV initiating treatment in 2020 in 80% of countries.² After steadily declining over 2000-2019, malaria case incidence rose 5% and malaria deaths increased 12% in 2020. An estimated 47,000 (68%) of the additional 69,000 deaths were due to service disruptions from COVID-19.³

In April 2020, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund) established a COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM). In that year, C19RM made \$759 million available in funding to 88 countries and 5 multi-county grants. C19RM helped ensure that funds and commodities were available in country to respond to COVID-19 and mitigate its effects on HIV, TB and malaria.

To date, over US\$4 billion have been awarded to more than 100 low- and middle-income countries to fight COVID-19, adapt HIV, TB and malaria programs, and urgently reinforce fragile systems for delivering health services. This funding is on top of the US\$4.2 billion a year the Global Fund provides to countries to fight HIV, tuberculosis and malaria.

However, a September 2020 survey conducted by the Global Fund's Community, Rights and Gender (CRG) Department found that less than half (46%) of civil society and community respondents, 80% of whom were members of their Country Coordinating Mechanism, were consulted on what priorities should be included in the C19RM requests. As a consequence, just 3% of C19RM and grant-flexibilities funding was allocated to communities and civil societies activities and just 2.8% to key and vulnerable populations.⁴

Despite obstacles, many communities *did* mobilize and engage in C19RM and other Global Fund-related processes during COVID-19 – come rain or shine. Eight regional roundtables were organized in 2020, followed by a global civil society event hosted by the Global Fund's six CRG Regional Platforms in November 2020.⁵ Altogether, more than 1,000 civil society and community representatives shared their

¹ WHO (2021) Global Tuberculosis Report 2021. Page 1. Online at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240037021>

² UNAIDS (2021) 021 World AIDS Day report — Unequal, unprepared, under threat: why bold action against inequalities is needed to end AIDS, stop COVID-19 and prepare for future pandemics. Page 12. Online at https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2021_WAD_report_en.pdf

³ WHO (2021) World Malaria Report 2021. Page xv & xvi. Online at <https://endmalaria.org/sites/default/files/World%20Malaria%20Report%202021.pdf>

⁴ Office of the Inspector General (2021) Audit of COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM). Slide 8. Online at https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/10793/oig_gf-oig-21-008_report_en.pdf

⁵ Watch the session recording online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qD_ho51z_uE

challenges, innovations and lessons learned, to continue the delivery despite COVID-19. Re-enforcing national-level support and harnessing technology worked well, while time restrictions and limited influence over decisions hampered civil society's effectiveness.

In April 2021, the Global Fund launched a second round of C19RM funding, this time providing countries with allocations until December 2023. In total, \$3.1 billion was awarded to 107 countries and 14 multi-country grants.⁶ Learning from the past, as soon as the allocations were announced, the CRG Department motivated for an additional \$2.1 million from the C19RM Investment Committee to support meaningful community engagement in the development of C19RM funding requests. The rationale was clear; there is definitive evidence that community involvement is key in health priority setting and yields more positive outcomes.⁷ The existing architecture of the CRG Strategic Initiative would be leveraged to support this work, including 4 Global Fund Secretariat staff, 6 technical assistance providers, 12 key and vulnerable population networks, and 6 regional civil society platforms.

In a very short space of time (April-June 2021) the CRG Strategic Initiative and its partners were able to deliver 38 short-term technical assistance assignments and support community consultations in 64 countries. The technical assistance focused on community needs assessments to inform C19RM grants. Communities in country report positive results from the CRG Strategic Initiative's support. In Uganda, key population priorities were consolidated by the CCM, many of the requested interventions were taken on board, including \$5.0 million for community, rights and gender activities. In Bolivia, the CCM Chair actively participated in the community consultation and 12 community priorities worth \$1.7 million were approved for C19RM funding. In Ukraine, women living with HIV were able to secure \$750,000 for four key activities, including psych-social support for HIV-positive pregnant women. In Indonesia, two thirds of community recommendations were covered in the proposal along with the proposed budget allocation.

Now is an opportune time to reflect on community engagement in C19RM in 2021, take stock of challenges and lessons learned, and prepare for what lies ahead. This second global civil society roundtable event – Rain or Shine II – will bring together civil society and community groups from across the different countries where the Global Fund invests to share experiences and strategize for the future.

Objectives

1. Share experiences and take stock of lessons learned from community engagement in C19RM funding request development in 2021.
2. Discuss how civil society and community groups can remain engaged throughout C19RM grant implementation, including what kinds of technical support are available for this.
3. Strategize about how to ensure civil society and community groups are effective during country dialogue for the 2023-2025 allocation period (NFM4), based on learning from C19RM.
4. Continue to define civil society's comparative advantage in pandemic preparedness and response, in line with the Global Fund's new strategy for 2023-2028.

Participants

- CRG Strategic Initiative partners
- Civil society and community groups engaged in C19RM processes at country and regional level
- Civil society members of Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs)
- Global Fund Secretariat staff (CRG Department, GMD, CCM Hub, etc.)
- Technical partners (UNAIDS, Stop TB Partnership, WHO, RBM Partnership)

Languages

- The roundtable will be conducted in English. Simultaneous translation will be available in Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish.

⁶ Global Fund (2021) Funding Approved for COVID-19 Response. Online at https://data-service.theglobalfund.org/viewer/covid_approved_funding_report

⁷ Haldane, V., Chuah, F. L., Srivastava, A., Singh, S. R., Koh, G. C., Seng, C. K., & Legido-Quigley, H. (2019). Community participation in health services development, implementation, and evaluation: A systematic review of empowerment, health, community, and process outcomes. *PloS one*, 14(5), e0216112. Online at <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0216112>

Format

- The roundtable will be hosted virtually, on Zoom.

Please register in advance for this meeting:

<https://eannaso-org.zoom.us/joining/register/tZctceGprjMpHtFjlbcoqi483aLXXjmy1dsA>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Suggested Background Reading

Please follow this link to access a prepared library of background resources on community engagement in C19RM: [Background Reading](#)

DRAFT AGENDA		
Time	Session	Speaker
3:00-3:05	Welcoming Remarks	Kate Thomson Head of Community Rights and Gender Department, Global Fund
3:05-3:15	Results from the Global Fund's 2021 C19RM Community Engagement Survey	Olive Mumba Advisor on COVID-19 Community Engagement, Community Rights and Gender Department, Global Fund
3:15-3:20	Lessons learned from community engagement in C19RM in Latin America and the Caribbean	TBD LAC Regional Platform
3:20-3:25	Lessons learned from community engagement in C19RM in Eastern Europe and Central Asia	TBD EECA Regional Platform
3:25-3:30	Lessons learned from community engagement in C19RM in Asia-Pacific	TBD Asia-Pacific Regional Platform
3:30-4:00	Q&A, Discussion and Reflection - Experience sharing	Gemma Oberth CRG Regional Platforms Coordinator CRG Strategic Initiative, Global Fund
4:00-4:05	Lessons learned from community engagement in C19RM in Anglophone Africa	TBD Anglophone Africa Regional Platform
4:05-4:10	Lessons learned from community engagement in C19RM in Francophone Africa	TBD Francophone Africa Regional Platform
4:10-4:15	Lessons learned from community engagement in C19RM in the Middle East and North Africa	TBD Middle East and North Africa Regional Platform
4:15-4:20	Lessons learned from key populations' community engagement in C19RM	TBD Key Populations Networks
4:20-4:50	Q&A, Discussion and Reflection - Experience sharing - Next steps & how to stay engaged	Gemma Oberth CRG Regional Platforms Coordinator CRG Strategic Initiative, Global Fund
4:50-5:00	Closing Remarks	Gavin Reid Community Engagement Lead, Community, Rights and Gender Department, Global Fund