ehra

eurasian harm reduction association

Regional Platform
EECA

REPORT

ON THE RESULTS OF EECA REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY SURVEY ON THE WORK OF THE EECA REGIONAL PLATFORM

2022

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE STUDY

This report describes the results of a survey of civil society representatives, including community representatives and partners, about their experiences with the EECA Regional Platform for Support, Coordination and Communication of Civil Society and Communities (the 'Platform') and recommendations for its improvement.

The views of 49 respondents were analysed, including representatives of non-governmental organisations that have received technical assistance through the Global Fund's Community, Rights and Gender Technical Assistance Programme (Global Fund CRG TA Programme) under the COVID-19 Response Framework (C19RM); partners involved in the implementation of Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund's CRG Strategic Initiative (SI); providers of technical assistance under the Global Fund's TA CRG Programme; key recipients of Global Fund HIV and TB multi-country grants; members of certain Delegations to the Global Fund Board; staff of the Global Fund Secretariat's CRG Department; and major EHRA partners from key population (KP) networks.

Data were collected during June to August 2022 through semi-structured interviews and an online survey in two languages (Russian and English).

This report consists of three sections describing the experiences of respondents with the EECA Regional Platform and analysing the Platform's existing approaches to ensure that community representatives have access to relevant information and available technical assistance and to motivate them to participate in Global Fund processes. Each section ends with recommendations on how to change or improve the Platform's work in 2022–2023.

This report contains qualitative and quantitative data as well as quotes from interviewees.

This report was commissioned by the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA), upon which the EECA Regional Platform project is based.

ABBREVIATIONS

C19RM	— COVID-19 RESPONSE FRAMEWORK
CCM	— COUNTRY COORDINATING MECHANISM
COVID	— CORONAVIRUS DISEASE
CRG	— COMMUNITY, RIGHTS AND GENDER
CSO	— CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION
ECOM	— EURASIAN COALITION ON HEALTH, RIGHTS, GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY
EECA	— EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA
EHRA	— EURASIAN HARM REDUCTION ASSOCIATION
HIV	— HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS
ITPCRU	— INTERNATIONAL TREATMENT PREPAREDNESS COALITION EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA
KP	— KEY POPULATION
NGO	— NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION
PLATFORM	— EECA REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR SUPPORT, COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNITIES
Q&A	— EQUESTION AND ANSWER
SI	— STRATEGIC INITIATIVE
TA	— TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
TB	— TUBERCULOSIS
TBEC	— TUBERCULOSIS EUROPE COALITION
THE GLOBAL FUND	— THE GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA

STUDY OVERVIEW

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The study's **overarching goal** was to learn about the experiences of civil society, including community and partner representatives in the EECA region and beyond, in interacting and collaborating with the EECA Regional Platform. The study also **aimed** to gather suggestions and recommendations for improving or changing the Platform's work in 2022–2023.

Objectives:

1) To find out what communication channels beneficiaries are using and how to change the Platform's current communication approach to improve civil society's access to information about the Global Fund;

2) To identify how the Platform can improve civil society participation in Global Fund processes;

3) To explore how the Platform can improve civil society's access to technical assistance, including assistance available through the Global Fund's CRG TA Programme; and,

4) To find out how the Platform can help increase its relevance in the EECA region.

Methodology

The following methods were used for data collection:

1. Semi-structured interviews in Russian and English using a unified questionnaire adapted to the following categories of respondents:

- NGOs that received TA with EECA Platform support under the Global Fund's CRG TA Programme/C19RM in 2020–2021 (4 interviews);

- Partners involved in the implementation of Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund CRG SI in the EECA region (3 interviews);

- Technical assistance providers under the Global Fund's CRG TA Programme with experience in providing TA under the Programme in the EECA region during 2020 – 2021 (1 interview);
- Key recipients of Global Fund HIV and TB multi-country grants in the EECA region (1 interview);
- Delegations to the Global Fund Board (1 interview);
- The CRG Department of the Global Fund Secretariat and the EECA Regional Team at the Global Fund Secretariat (1 interview); and,
- Key EHRA partners in the region from network organisations representing the interests of KPs (3 interviews).

2. A bilingual online survey (in Russian and English) was available to all interested civil society and community representatives in the EECA region; SurveyMonkey was used for this purpose.

There were thirty-five respondents to the online survey. Twenty-seven of them answered the questions in the Russian language, and eight in English. The following people participated in the survey:

В онлайн-опросе приняли участие 35 респондентов. Двадцать семь из них отвечали на вопросы на русском языке, а 8 на английском. В опросе участвовали:

- Representatives of key populations: 18 people (51.4%);

- Members of Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs): 15 people (42.9%);

- Representatives of NGOs receiving TA from the Global Fund: 4 people (11.4%);

- Representatives of NGOs involved in the implementation of Global Fund grants: 17 people (48.6%);

- Representatives of NGOs involved in the implementation of Global Fund multi-country grants: 7 people (20%);

- Representatives of NGOs not involved in the implementation of Global Fund grants: 8 people (22.9%);

- Representatives of organisations involved in implementing Global Fund CRG initiatives: 3 people (8.9%); and,

- Representatives of regional or global network organisations representing KP interests in the EECA region: 10 people (28.6%).

The study was organised by the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA) under the EECA Regional Platform for Communication and Coordination project with support from the Global Fund.

RAISING COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF THE GLOBAL FUND AND ITS PROCESSES

One of the goals of the EECA Regional Platform is to raise awareness of the Global Fund and its processes among community representatives by providing regular access to specialised information for various audiences. To achieve this goal, the Platform uses the following communication channels:

- **Website**
- **Facebook page**
- **Facebook group**
- **Twitter: @EecaInfo**
- **Thematic regional mailing lists, including an EHRA mailing list in Russian and English, TBEC, ITPCru, and a Platform mailing list (since 2022).**

With these resources, the following was achieved in 2021:

- **129 publications in English and Russian on the Platform's website;**
- **429 posts/tweets on social media from the Platform's accounts (Facebook, Twitter); and,**
- **128 thematic mailings to 2,350 recipients (via mailing lists).**
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A common source of information for all subgroups of respondents is the mailing list through which they receive information about Global Fund processes. However, respondents noted that these mailings mostly contained specific information that could be understood by representatives of communities and organisations already involved in Global Fund processes. At the same time, such information may be ignored by newly established NGOs or community representatives who know little about the Global Fund and its processes due to the complexity and/or volume of the

information. Thus, according to the majority of respondents, mailings cannot be used to inform all audiences. They are only of interest to those already familiar with the Global Fund's processes. Respondents suggested a differentiated approach to disseminating information through mailings. In this approach, regular users of the Platform receive more specific information, and those who are not yet users of the Platform and are not involved in the Global Fund processes receive the same information but in a simplified and more concise form and in non-professional language for better understanding.

"We need to move more boldly towards the format of simple and accessible communication channels for people, for example, Telegram channels, forums, regional platforms, where social workers and peer advisors come together and communicate."
(Delegation representative to the Global Fund Board).

Another potential source of information for communities may be the Platform's social media accounts. However, not all respondents subscribed to them, and subscribers mention the Platform's Facebook page as an account of which they are aware. Respondents regularly see the Platform's posts in their Facebook feed and find them useful. However, reported by the vast majority of respondents representing NGOs that have received TA under the Global Fund's CRG TA Programme and key partners from KP networks, there is not enough creative content on social media about the Global Fund processes. They also suggested options for creative content that included quizzes, short Q&A sessions, short video messages from community leaders actively using the Platform, Global Fund TA recipients, and other experts on relevant Platform topics. In addition, respondents recommended addressing not only issues related to Global Fund processes at the global level but also the work of Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs), funding, fundraising, and other issues. According to the interviewees, the creative presentation of information can attract more attention and be better understood, as

information on social media should be introductory and attention-grabbing but, at the same time, provide the opportunity to go deeper into the topic by clicking on the links if interested. In addition, Instagram and Telegram/Telegram bots were mentioned as alternative information channels as they are currently the most popular social media in the EECA region. NGO representatives who received TA consider Facebook to be a more professional platform that is not used by all members of the community. Most respondents do not use Twitter or use it less than Facebook.

"Small quizzes and contests can be held in countries to appeal to more people in a particular country. After all, if you announce a quiz or contest for the whole region, sometimes a more proactive country participates more actively than others."
(NGO that received TA under Global Fund CRG TA Programme/C19RM).

All respondents are familiar with the Platform website and have used it occasionally, clicking on links or searching for necessary documents. The information on the website is helpful and meets the needs of the users. However, some survey respondents noted that the user interface is outdated and lacks a more precise structure for presenting information, such as dividing it into separate tabs on narrow topics.

"The website now looks like an information-specific "something". It might be worth dividing the information about Global Fund processes into thematic sections. For example, add a section on Country Coordinating Mechanisms or a section where EECA country voices can be heard. The substantive work is happening in the countries, but there is no link to this level. It is important to promote the Platform as a way to make a difference. There are no hyperlinks. The site seems very isolated and unrelated to reality. There is a need to create hyperlinks to the web resources of all the regional community networks."
(Delegation representative to the Global Fund Board).

In addition, respondents wanted more training materials and tools on the Platform's website, as well as information about current projects supported by the Global Fund, their successes, and lessons learned in implementing the projects.

Generally, despite ongoing information efforts, respondents representing NGOs that received TA indicated that they learned about Global Fund processes and related opportunities for the first time during an on-site visit by the Platform Coordinator or from third parties who had such information. For respondents, the available information channels (newsletters/emails, websites, and social media accounts) were not the primary source of information about Global Fund processes and relevant TA opportunities. Nevertheless, they served as valuable sources of information for further participation in Global Fund processes.

When asked how best to provide regional civil society with information about the Global Fund and to generate their interest in such information, most respondents indicated that each key population in each country requires an approach that takes into account local, national, political, and epidemiological characteristics.

"There is a need to hold a series of webinars about TA and share the information with the community. A separate event should be held in each country and possibly for each key population separately."
(NGOs that received TA under the Global Fund CRG TA Programme/C19RM).

The study showed that communities affected by tuberculosis (TB) were significantly less involved in TA processes than communities of people living with, and affected by, HIV.

"It is necessary to organise events at the national level in the countries, possibly for individual communities, because that is where the whole process takes place. Therefore, such events should be used to inform and contact people directly, to explain and discuss possible applications for TA."
(NGOs that received TA under the Global Fund CRG TA Programme/C19RM).

According to online interviews, 96% of respondents interact with the Platform through mailings and directly; 83% through participation in webinars and other online events; 29% participate in coordination calls; 38% use the Platform's website; and 13% receive information through posts on social media (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Answers to the question, "How do you interact with the Platform most often (you can select more than one answer)?".
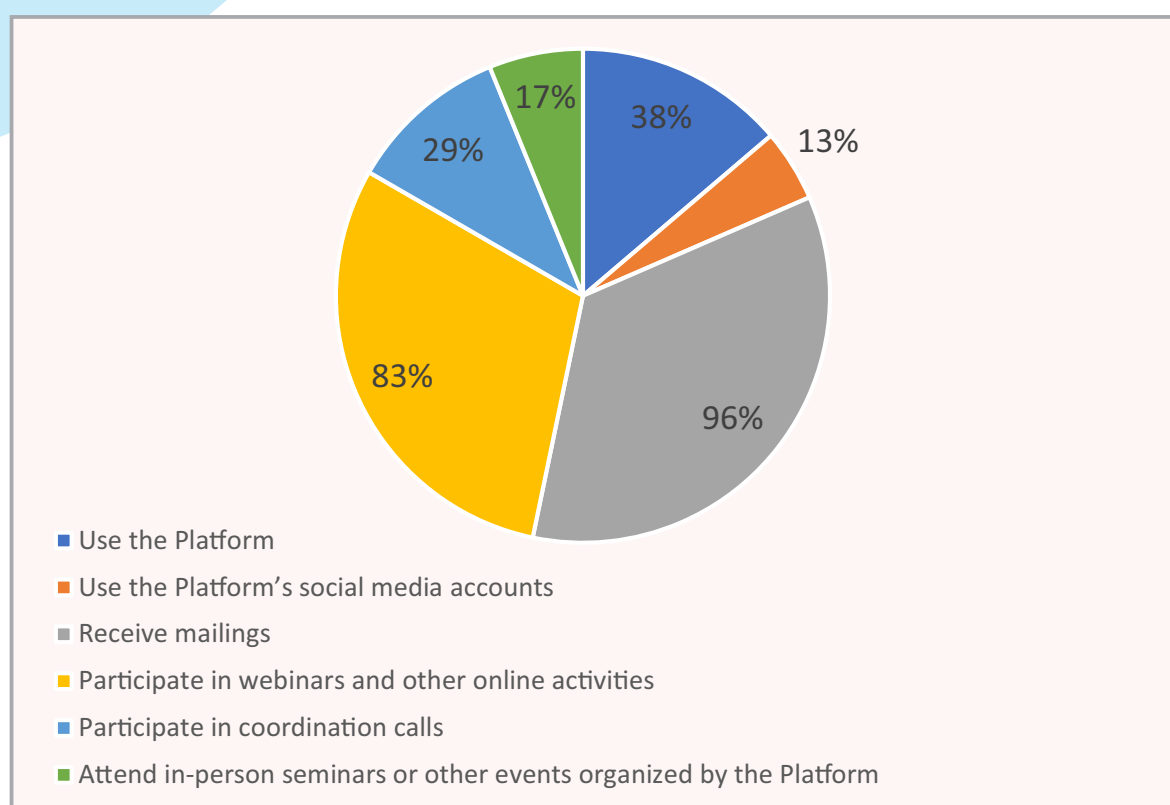
Respondents to the online survey who use the Platform indicated a need to publish information about ongoing projects supported by the Global Fund, as well as best practices, successes, and lessons learned from those projects, in order to improve the functionality of the Platform's website. Targeted advertising in social media is also necessary to increase awareness of the Platform.

As a recommendation for improving the current approach to informing civil society about Global Fund processes, respondents cited the need to provide information in a concise form, as large amounts of information can be difficult to understand.

"Sometimes large amounts of information scare you."

"So far, everything is fine, considering that the coordinator is available for clarification."

"Provide information in informational videos, not just publications or webinars."

(NGOs that received TA under the Global Fund/C19RM CRG TA Programme).

To improve the information-sharing process, online survey participants recommended Telegram as a popular information channel among community representatives. They also suggested "expanding the possibilities of providing information by mailing through the channels of the Secretariats of the Country Coordinating Mechanisms".

In answering the question, "What tasks should the Platform pay more attention to in terms of raising awareness of community and civil society representatives in the EECA and their participation in Global Fund processes?", respondents suggested:

- **Providing practical examples from countries about the participation of representatives of their communities in processes related to the CCM (positive and negative examples);**

- **Clearly describing in detail the mechanisms of interaction with the Global Fund, including when writing grant proposals; and,**

- **Addressing the language barrier, as representatives of KPs from Russia often do not participate in Platform and Global Fund events due to a lack of English language skills.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING INFORMATION WORK

- Organise targeted, community- and country-specific events (in-person, remotely) to inform communities about Global Fund processes and TA opportunities.
- Distinguish posts on social media by volume and complexity of language, depending on the audience. Post information more frequently in a short, easy-to-understand format when needed, and provide translations of English-language texts and events for users from the EECA region.
- Provide video messages and quizzes to encourage creativity in sharing information about Global Fund processes with communities.
- Include topics on Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs), financing and fundraising in informational post topics.
- Use Telegram (Telegram channels/Telegram bot) as a popular information channel in communities.
- Targeted advertising on social media is recommended to promote the Platform.
- Expand the possibilities for providing information by mailing through the channels of the Secretariats of the Country Coordinating Mechanisms.
- Revise the structure of the Platform's website; update the content and user interface; structure the information more precisely by dividing it into separate tabs and narrow thematic areas; and create hyperlinks to other important resources, including at the national level.
- The Platform's website should include information on ongoing projects supported by the Global Fund, best practices, successes and lessons learned from these projects, and other educational materials and tools.
- Increase the amount of targeted information for the community of people affected by TB and organisations that provide services to this target group, as well as their involvement in information services and activities of the Platform, with a particular focus on face-to-face events.

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY AND COORDINATION OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES TO ENSURE THEIR MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GLOBAL FUND GRANTS

To strengthen the capacity of NGOs and communities and ensure their meaningful participation in Global Fund processes, the Platform's activities in 2021 included the following:

- Nine webinars and online sessions were organised, involving 261 participants from at least ten EECA countries;

- Civil society representatives from Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia were supported to engage in Global Fund processes at the national level to ensure the sustainability of the HIV response as it transitions from Global Fund support to national funding;

- Four regional community networks (ECOM, TBEC, FREE ZONE, Regional Expert Group on Migrant Health) were supported to ensure more meaningful participation of their members in processes related to the implementation of Global Fund grants in their respective EECA countries; and,

- Monthly coordination calls were organised with regional and technical partners on issues related to the implementation of Global Fund grants in the EECA region.

As a priority action to strengthen the capacity of NGOs and communities, the majority of respondents identified the need for a clear preliminary definition of the target group, which should be divided into subgroups (such as experienced NGOs and communities or newly established ones) according to their level of awareness and capacity. Interviewees pointed out that the demand for training topics should primarily reflect the needs reported by communities, but should also take into account the requests of all actors and partners involved in the TA delivery processes, as specific situations arise at each level of work (service recipient, service provider, coordinator, partner, etc.). These situations can be the basis for the thematic focus of trainings, seminars, Q&A sessions and success stories.

"Joint participation in events as speakers on relevant topics and areas of activity can also help to strengthen not only the capacity of NGOs but also cooperation among participants in Global Fund processes."
(Partners involved in the implementation of Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund CRG SI).

Regularly reviewing the opinions and needs of partners and communities in the capacity building process, including the selection of topics, frequency of events, and selection of speakers, would make the process more effective and responsive to the needs of civil society organisations (CSOs). Respondents noted that such opinion and needs surveys could take the form of short online social media polls or be based on quizzes (for example, the area/question with the fewest responses could be classified as unknown or uninteresting). Finding out the reasons for the insufficient number of answers to the quiz question(s) through a short survey can help you decide whether this or that question is relevant and whether it requires a detailed explanation to community representatives. This will make the learning process more vivid and involve community representatives in formulating the list of topics and developing an education and training plan.

"The Platform does not need to position itself as an expert structure when interacting with communities. No one here is an expert, or everyone is an expert in their field, including the members of the communities. The focus should be on the target groups and their needs, not on the Global Fund plans."
 (Partners involved in the implementation of Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund CRG SI).

Respondents suggested that the Platform should position itself as an initiator of events and a communication space for partners to increase the capacity of NGOs and to engage them in the implementation of Global Fund grants.

"NGOs have a lot of questions to ask. And these questions often go beyond the realm of technical assistance. If the Platform positions itself as a communication and association centre, it can take the initiative to organise events on the Platform's thematic areas and invite representatives of organisations to participate. The thematic plan could include the following topics: CCM Transition Plan, Sustainability and Transition Issues, and Forms of Financing."
(Representative of one of the Delegations to the Global Fund Board).

Although webinars were cited as helpful, most respondents reported the need to organise offline events to increase NGO capacity. These events could include site visits and study tours where representatives from communities that successfully implement Global Fund grants or participate in Global Fund processes could serve as coordinators, experts, and trainers. In addition, the need for separate, targeted face-to-face work with different communities in each country was identified, taking into account the specifics of each country and the potential of local NGOs.

"There are too many webinars. And they do not meet the need to talk, ask questions, and discuss. Site visits could be very helpful."
(NGOs that received TA under Global Fund CRG TA Programme/C19RM).

Publishing and disseminating success stories (case studies), with the opportunity to learn about successful practices of communities in different countries and share knowledge through commentaries and live broadcasts, was mentioned as one of the ways to engage NGOs in Global Fund processes and increase their capacity.

"It is useful and necessary for community representatives to communicate with each other, share successes, and solve problems together. Such events not only increase the capacity of NGOs, but also motivate, generate ideas, and foster a competitive spirit."
(NGOs that received TA under the Global Fund CRG TA Programme/C19RM).

Respondents also emphasised the need to regularly explain and reiterate topics about Global Fund processes and adapt this information to the level of knowledge and experience of the target audience.

"It is necessary to clearly explain to the whole community what they can receive in the new round of applications, e.g. capacity development, hiring a consultant."
(Partners involved in the implementation of Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund CRG SI).

"Simplify the way information is presented at webinars and meetings."
(Key EHRA partners in the region from KP networks).

In addition, partners involved in the implementation of Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund CRG SI and the Principal Recipients of the Global Fund's multi-country grants on HIV and TB in the EECA region, as well as partners from KP communities, reported the need of:

1) Collaboration of the Platform with organisations and structures implementing regional and country grants of the Global Fund in the phases of community need assessment and capacity building of NGOs in the framework of organising joint information and other events and promoting information among regional and country grantees on how to obtain TA.

2) Strengthen the capacity of KPs and community organisations to meaningfully participate in the planning and preparation of country and multi-country proposals. Such activities can take the form of information sessions for communities, especially newly formed ones, on the right to participate in country proposal planning. In addition, tools can be provided to communities to help them properly identify an issue and justify the need to include it in a proposal for further funding.

3) Provide information and advice on how the community can reach beyond national borders with its activities and activism, what regional networks it can join, and what place it can have in the regional community.

3) Предоставления информации и инструкций о том, как сообщество в своей деятельности и активизме может выйти за пределы страны, в какие региональные сети может вступить, какое место может занять в региональном сообществе.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEVELOP THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITIES AND ENSURE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GLOBAL FUND GRANTS

- Define the target audience more precisely, depending on their level of awareness and capacity (experienced or newly established NGOs and communities).

- Create a thematic plan for the capacity-building events for CSOs based on the requests of all participants of the process, including communities.

- Regularly update the thematic plan of events in an interactive way, for example via social media pages.

- Invite as experts and speakers representatives of NGOs that have received TA under the Global Fund CRG TA Programme, partners involved in the implementation of Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund CRG SI, TA providers, recipients of Global Fund multi-country grants on HIV and TB in the EECA region, and other relevant parties.

- Initiate events by acting as a communication space for partners and inviting them to speak on specific topics beyond technical support.

- Differentiate the approach to the information and topics provided, depending on the potential of the target audience.

- Work with representatives of organisations and structures implementing regional and national Global Fund grants by organising joint information sessions and disseminating information about TA and Global Fund processes through their information channels.

- Organise documentation of examples of practical work (case studies), site visits, and in-person events for communities.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING IN THE CONTEXT OF PARTICIPATION IN GLOBAL FUND PROCESSES BY COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

To improve access by community representatives to technical assistance by providing necessary information, facilitating communication with relevant TA providers, supporting the development of TA and capacity building applications, and coordinating technical assistance providers, the Platform has undertaken activities including:

- Nine new TA applications from the EECA region were submitted and approved for implementation under the Global Fund CRG TA Programme with support from the Platform (one from Azerbaijan, two from Georgia, one from Kyrgyzstan, two from Russia, one from Tajikistan, and two from Ukraine).

- The Platform contributed to the submission of 10 applications from civil society in the EECA region for TA from sources other than the Global Fund CRG TA Programme; five of these applications were supported.

- The Platform documented and disseminated two case studies of successful TA provided through the Global Fund CRG TA Programme (Kazakhstan and Tajikistan).

- A review of TA available to civil society in the EECA region regarding HIV, TB, and COVID-19 has been prepared.

One of the first requirements cited to improve community access to technical assistance was the need to conduct a TA needs assessment and/or train communities to identify their own needs. Respondents indicated that there are NGOs that are sufficiently informed about, and actively involved in, Global Fund processes and are aware of TA opportunities. However, there are also NGOs that are not involved in Global Fund processes, have little or no knowledge of TA, are unaware of their needs, and cannot assess the areas in which they need technical assistance. For this reason, the approach to providing the necessary information about TA, assistance in communicating with relevant TA providers, assistance in developing applications, and coordination should be differentiated..

"We need to conduct a community needs assessment to help them formulate their TA requests."
(Partners involved in implementing Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund CRG SI).

"Conduct a series of webinars on TA and promote this topic in communities. Each country needs its own event, and perhaps such events should be divided according to key population groups."
(Partners involved in implementing Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund CRG SI).

Representatives of NGOs that received technical assistance noted that the Platform greatly assisted them in completing an application for TA. However, respondents pointed out that the activities for which they need TA are operational, problems arise in everyday work, and require quick, short-term intervention. However, obtaining this short-term, dynamic technical assistance in the context of overall complex activities is complicated by the lengthy application review process for obtaining TA. Respondents pointed out that some applications took a long time to be considered, so that the TA

became irrelevant or was implemented in the country with the support of other donors. Another important issue that respondents felt needed revision was that the basic idea of the application changed during the approval process. Respondents pointed out that they had applied for specific TA but, after going through all the approval stages, received different technical assistance than the one for which they had applied.

"The technical assistance we received is also necessary, we do not reject it. But we needed even more urgently the TA which we had originally applied for."
(NGOs that received TA under the Global Fund CRG TA Programme).

"The Platform should not be there for the Global Fund but for the NGOs, it should convey the interests of the NGOs to the Global Fund and not the other way around."
(Partners involved in the implementation of Components 1 and 2 of the Global Fund CRG SI).

While not entirely within the Platform's purview, these issues have implications for community access to TA. The Platform should communicate these facts more clearly to the representatives of the CRG Department of the Global Fund Secretariat who are responsible for implementing the technical assistance programme.

Some respondents criticised the insufficient interaction between the Platform and the organisations and structures that implement regional and national grants. Close collaboration with current grantees would improve the community needs assessment process and the accuracy of requested TA, as well as avoid duplication of Global Fund-supported and other donor-funded activities in one country or another.

"When our application for the TA was decided and approved, we learned that such an activity was already being carried out in the country. It would be right for the Platform to work with the country's Principal Recipient and review the application for overlap."
(Principal Recipient of the Global Fund's multi-country grants on HIV and TB in the EECA region).

To provide better access and increase community interest in TA, the Platform, as a co-host of events, could be a kind of negotiation space where, concerning the local problems discussed, information is provided on how to obtain TA to solve a specific problem. It would help to attract the attention of many NGOs that could subsequently apply for TA. At the same time, respondents stressed the importance of organising national events that include key stakeholders and partners.

"The Platform can act as a space for dialogue that helps solve community problems."
(Key EHRA partners in the EECA region from KP networks).

Respondents pointed out that it can be difficult for the Platform Coordinator to accomplish this and that a team is needed to work together to generate the required number of requests from the region.

"We need to create a demand for technical assistance. And without advertising and helping write applications for TA, we will not solve the problem of the influx of new NGOs. It is where the question of resources comes in. Maybe, in this case, you need a team of people."
(A representative of one of the Delegations to the Global Fund Board).

In answering the question, 'How can the Platform help motivate civil society representatives to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the TA Programme?', respondents indicated that study tours and in-person events could be a way to build capacity while motivating communities. Involving representatives of the communities as experts and events (forums) with the consideration of concrete successful examples (cases) under the heading 'Questions and Answers' can also be motivating for NGOs that want to become expert organisations for other NGOs in the EECA region.

"There have been many workshops, conferences and seminars, but NGOs have not gone anywhere. Study tours are both educational and motivational events."
 (NGOs that received TA under the Global Fund CRG TA Programme).

"Study tours (not online) should be organised to advanced countries/organisations where community leaders can see the practice and results of obtaining TA, be inspired and emulate the experience. This is more effective than theoretical knowledge."
(NGOs that received TA under the Global Fund CRG TA Programme).

According to respondents, the community needs to be regularly provided with accurate information about what TA is, what it entails, how it differs from financial assistance, and what types of TA they can receive.

"Some NGOs consider TA as a grant. They do not fully understand that TA is payment for an expert opinion or a request from an organisation to get a specific professional opinion or assessment of what is happening. This needs to be communicated to NGOs on a regular basis."
(A representative of one of the Delegations to the Global Fund Board).

"You should feel free to explain what technical assistance is in a variety of formats. Often people from grassroots organisations see TA as a grant. They do not understand that it is something else. Rather, it is a payment for professional expertise or a request for an expert opinion. It should be taken into account that even activists who do not fully understand the issues that are constantly changing. It would be nice to refresh people's memory. Perhaps resources and consultants are needed to help, in addition to the coordinator. You have to convey that there is such a cycle and support. It's routine. If you calm down, everything stops."
(A representative of one of the Delegations to the Global Fund Board).

According to the online survey, greater NGO participation in Global Fund processes and TA requires an assessment of NGO capacity through confidential interviews, based upon which technical assistance needs are described.

"One of the possible reasons for the sluggish applying [for TA] is the lack of understanding by organisations that this is relevant to them, even though there is enough information, and it is easy to understand."
(Key EHRA partners in the EECA region from KP networks, a member of the Country Coordinating Mechanism).

The online survey results also suggest that some community members may not understand the information about TA and their own needs. For example, one respondent may have concluded that the main topic of the Global Fund's TA Programme is gender.

"Only give information to organisations that deals with gender issues (not my issue)."
(A representative of an NGO involved in implementing Global Fund grants).

Short-term technical support was mentioned as a significant weakness. However, this is not a drawback of the Platform's work but perhaps one of the reasons for the insufficient motivation of communities to participate in the TA Programme. This also indicates a lack of understanding by communities of the nature of TA.

To improve the efficiency of the Platform's work, respondents also recommended that it be systematised in the form of a clear operational plan for different types of activities.

"The Platform works well and meets the needs for which it was established. However, a clear operational plan for all activities of the Platform is needed to make interventions, results, and dynamics clear."
(CRG Department of the Global Fund Secretariat).

When asked how the Platform could better help civil society representatives obtain technical assistance, suggestions included the following:

- Divide regions into Eastern Europe (EE) and Central Asia (CA) to provide more targeted support for needs assessment and proposal writing for TA;

- Expand TA to support more than just requests related to Global Fund processes;

- Describe in detail and systematically in any format as to what the technical assistance is about;

- Give specific examples of the assistance provided and the results achieved;

- Assist in filling out rather complex forms;

- Hire a TA specialist in the region/country to identify the needs of newly established NGOs, help prepare TA applications, etc.; and,

- Publish information on technical assistance provided in the region, budgets allocated, and results achieved.
- помогать заполнять формы, которые достаточно сложны;

Implementing some of these suggestions is beyond the scope of the Platform's activities and responsibilities. Nevertheless, they are important to understand the views of civil society from the region on improving the work of the Global Fund TA Programme. They should be shared with the staff of the CRG Department of the Global Fund Secretariat.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING COMMUNITY ACCESS TO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Conduct a community TA needs assessment and/or train communities to conduct TA needs self-assessment.

- Apply a differentiated approach taking into account the capacity of NGOs while providing the necessary information on TA, facilitating communication with relevant TA providers, and providing support in developing TA requests.

- Actively interact with organisations and structures that implement regional/country grants to avoid duplication of activities and TA requests.

- Consider expanding the role of the Platform as a space for dialogue to address various issues, including those unrelated to Global Fund processes.

- Activities to inform, build capacity, and improve access to TA should be systematically implemented to dynamically monitor positive changes in community capacity, participation in Global Fund processes, and in applying for and obtaining TA.

- Use study tours and in-person events not only to improve community capacity but also as a way to share experiences, serve as experts, and learn more about communities in other countries.

- Actively publish success and failure stories, and organise case/practice documentation (case studies).

- Publish information about the results of the TA provided in the region, their scope, and recipients

- Keep communities informed about the nature and specifics of TA and scope of support available under the Global Fund TA Programme.

RAISING THE PROFILE OF THE PLATFORM

When asked how visible the Platform and its activities are in the EECA region, 50% of respondents answered that the Platform is visible in the region and rated its visibility with 8, 9 and 10 points. The visibility of the Platform was evaluated by the largest number of respondents (26.6%) with 8 points, with 9 points (18%), and with 10 points (6%); 36% of respondents rated the visibility of the Platform with 5–7 points, while 18% with 5 points, 12% with 6 points, and 6% with 7 points. 15% of respondents rated the visibility of the Platform with two to four points out of 10 (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Assessment by respondents of the visibility of the Platform's activities on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being invisible, 10 being very visible, %)
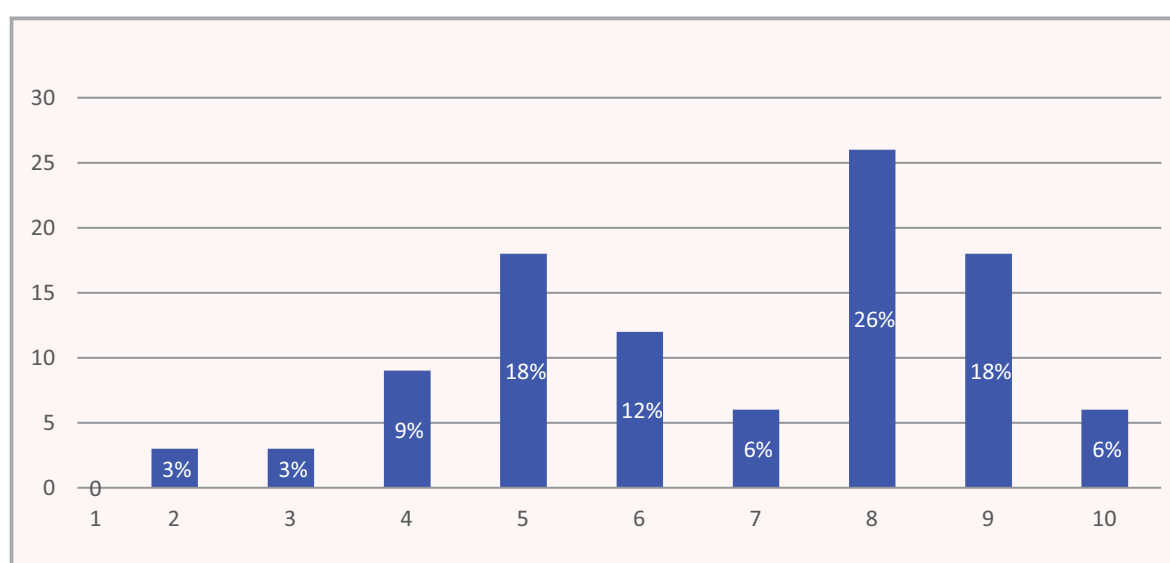
When asked about the benefits of the Platform for civil society in terms of facilitating their participation in Global Fund processes, 53% of respondents believe that the Platform's activities are useful for the community and rate this benefit with 8–10 points, while 12% rate this benefit with 10 points, 15% with 9 points and 26% with 8 points; 39% of respondents believe that the Platform is useful for the community and rate this with 5–7 points (with 7 points (9%), with 5 and 6 points (15%) each); and 10% of respondents rated the usefulness of the Platform with 3–4 points (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Answers by Respondents to the question, to what extent the Platform's activities benefit civil society by facilitating their participation in Global Fund processes, on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being useless and 10 being very useful, %).
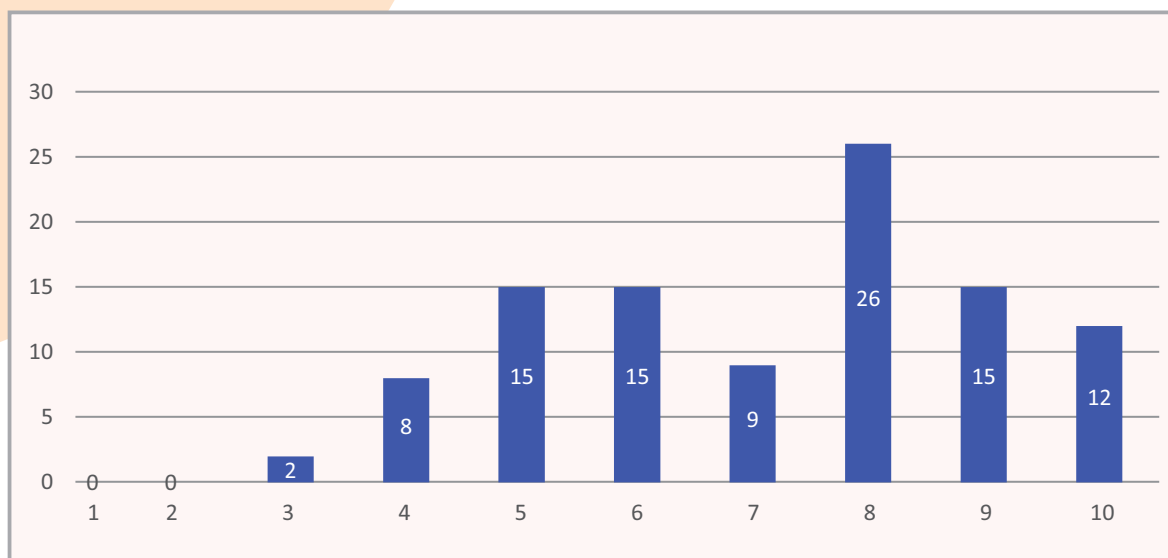
The survey revealed the following gaps in the Platform's work that needs to be addressed to raise its profile in the region:

- Information about the Platform's activities, as well as information disseminated by the Platform, reaches only a limited number of representatives of communities/NGOs involved in the implementation of Global Fund grants in the EECA region. As a result, only a small number of organisations submit applications for TA, and the list of NGOs receiving TA does not expand significantly. Information efforts should be made, starting with the coordinating committees, national programmes, and in-country agencies responsible for implementing Global Fund grants and ending with individual NGOs. It is important to use information channels at all levels. A country-by-country inventory of NGOs involved in Global Fund grant implementation at the sub-recipient and sub-sub-recipient levels should be conducted to implement this approach.

"Many NGOs do not feel involved in the activities of the Platform due to some factors. That is, information about the Platform is not disseminated in the country beyond a certain level."
(Key EHRA partners in the EECA region from KP networks).

- Insufficient interaction with Global Fund project implementers at the Principal Recipient level.

"In my opinion, there is little regular communication with implementers of Global Fund-supported projects."
(Principal Recipients of Global Fund multi-country grants on HIV and TB in the EECA region).

- Insufficient information on the positive experience of communities in the countries of the region in obtaining TA.

"It is not enough to show examples of technical assistance and its results. It is important to include such messages as well as successful and unsuccessful cases in ongoing information activities."
(NGOs that received TA).

- The needs of the community are not evaluated.

"There is no targeted work with individual NGOs to understand community interests and needs."
(NGOs that received TA).

Respondents representing the Platform partners made the following suggestions for improving cooperation with the Platform:

- **Mutual participation in events as speakers on relevant topics and areas of activities.**

- **Planning and holding thematic events for narrower target audiences and on narrower topics, according to the level of knowledge and experience and the needs of these audiences.**

- **Accurately designating and informing partners where the Platform's area of responsibility lies and its boundaries.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING THE RELEVANCE OF THE WORK OF THE PLATFORM

- Strengthen information efforts through targeted work with communities and interested organisations in each country. It means that the Platform must be relevant to communities and responsive to their specific needs. To do this, it is necessary to work not only with the known organisations and communities that have previously applied for TA, but with all those active in the country in a particular area. For example, there are 18 TB-related NGOs working under a Global Fund project. It is necessary to hold information sessions with each of them to identify their needs and to explain in which cases they can and cannot apply for TA, what the TA is, what problems of the community it will solve, and what opportunities are open for obtaining financial support. The importance of the Platform's work will increase as the Platform becomes more responsive to the needs of communities and as each NGO feels involved in Global Fund processes.

- Collaborate with regional and national organisations and structures that implement Global Fund grants. National-level recipients and sub-recipients of the Global Fund have access to non-governmental organisations and work directly with communities on a regular basis. They are most familiar with Global Fund processes in their country, needs, positives and negatives, and capacities of NGOs. Therefore, working with regional and national implementers of Global Fund grants will enhance in-country work with communities through joint information and training events.

- Assess the needs of communities as they are not always able to assess the problems and their own needs. It will allow the Platform to understand the needs of communities and develop content for information and training events, site visits, and joint events with national partners which, in turn, will increase the visibility and relevance of the Platform in the region.

- Organise joint events with partners where all participants in the process can participate as experts and speakers, which will streamline the process of delivering TA.

- For partners, clearly define the Platform's scope of responsibility. Regular meetings with partners will help designate the responsibility area of each participant, present the results of activities, and discuss plans.