

EHRA 2023



# THE GLOBAL FUND'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Case Study of Tajikistan (2022-2023):  
Meaningful participation of community  
organisations in developing a national  
funding request for HIV and TB programmes  
for Global Fund Grant Cycle 7 (GC7)



---

## SUMMARY

---

Tangible progress has been achieved in terms of the active engagement of key and vulnerable populations and civil society in the HIV and TB responses at global and national levels. However, strengthening formal and informal mechanisms for community engagement in programme development, implementation and evaluation remains a priority for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund). Over the past five years, the role of Tajikistan's civil society organisations and communities in Global Fund programme management has increased significantly, with their voice becoming clearer and stronger. Yet further efforts are needed to ensure active community involvement in critical decision-making processes. It is therefore a key objective of the technical assistance (TA) to ensure the meaningful engagement of a wide range of key and vulnerable populations in assessing their needs and identifying priority interventions for inclusion in the new funding request. Based on this process, TA has been provided in drafting and developing the national funding request Annex of Funding Priorities of Civil Society and Communities Most Affected by HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria (hereafter referred to as the 'Community Priorities Annex' or 'Annex') which became an important tool for ensuring active civil society engagement in developing the new funding request for 2024-2026.

The TA provided included inclusive consultations with civil society organizations (CSOs) and key and vulnerable populations; identification and analysis of relevant needs and priorities; coordination with international experts involved in funding request development; and inclusion of the priorities in the final funding request.

The TA provided resulted in the creation, development and coordination of a broad set of new programme priorities recommended by the affected communities. Based on these recommendations, the Community Priorities Annex was developed and successfully integrated into the funding request. The support also encouraged the active participation of communities and civil society in formulating the content of the funding request, ensuring a better correspondence between the programme priorities and the needs of the key populations (KPs).

Following consultation with the Technical Review Panel (TRP) of the Global Fund during the grant-making stage, civil society organisations and the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) sought to continue the work on community priorities through additional support from the BACKUP Initiative of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). An additional visit by a consultant was aimed at providing training on organisational sustainability and alternative financing for CSOs, thus expanding the actions taken by communities to strengthen their role and influence.

Strengthening the role of civil society in Global Fund processes at the global and country levels remains a priority that requires additional efforts in training and engaging civil society representatives at all stages of programme implementation. Further enhancement of formal

procedures within the processes of the Global Fund programme are needed to ensure that community priorities are genuinely considered and addressed at all stages of funding request and programme development.

## KEY STAGES OF TA

### SEPTEMBER 2022

Submission of a Technical Assistance request.

### OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2022

Review and approval of the request by Global Fund; selection of the TA provider; preparation and approval of the ToR; and selection of the consultants.

### DECEMBER 2022

A country visit to provide technical assistance for developing the Community Priorities Annex.

### DECEMBER 2022 – JANUARY 2023

Remote work with the team to develop the funding request.

### JANUARY 2023

Final report on the technical assistance results.

### JANUARY – MARCH 2023

Working with the key funding request writing team to agree on priority interventions and costing.

### JUNE 2023

An additional country visit by a consultant, funded as part of the GIZ BACKUP Initiative, to conduct an organisational sustainability training for CSOs.

### TOTAL BUDGET:

**\$40,304**

(excluding GIZ funding)

### TECHNICAL PROVIDER:

The Centre for Health Policies and Studies (PAS Centre),  
Moldova

## WHAT WAS THE RATIONALE FOR THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REQUEST?

In December 2022, Tajikistan received an official letter regarding available funding for HIV and TB interventions under the Global Fund's Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) for the period of 2023-2025. The first funding request submission window was set for March 2023. Since the current Global Fund grant for HIV and TB in Tajikistan was coming to an end, Tajikistan planned to apply for new funding during the first window.

The new mandatory Annex of Funding Priorities of Civil Society and Communities Most Affected by HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria has been introduced as part of the GC7 funding request. It captures the highest priority interventions related to the challenges faced by civil society and affected communities. The introduction of the mandatory Annex promoted the formal strengthening of civil society organisations and community engagement in developing the national funding request.

SPIN Plus, a local NGO advocating for the rights of people who use drugs, submitted a request to the Technical Assistance Programme of the Global Fund’s Community Engagement Strategic Initiative (formerly known as the Community, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiative) in September 2022. The request was developed together with key partners from CSOs with support from the **Regional Civil Society and Community Support, Communication and Coordination Platform in the EECA** hosted by the **Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA)**.

The TA was provided in line with the objectives of the Global Fund Strategy Framework 2023-2028. The Strategy emphasises that maximising the engagement and leadership of the most affected communities is one of the three key objectives in attaining the global goal of ending AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Technical support was provided by the Centre for Health Policies and Studies (PAS Centre), Moldova.

## HOW WAS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ORGANISED AND PROVIDED?

### STAGES OF TA



The main TA stages are presented graphically in chronological order and described below:

#### ***Global Fund Country Team briefing (early December 2022)***

To ensure TA coordination, external consultants held a briefing with the Global Fund Country Team in early December 2022, during which the Country Team was informed of the TA objectives and methods, with recommendations received on improving the TA process.

### ***Desk review and toolkit development (early December 2022)***

A brief desk review was conducted based on the available materials collected with the help of local organisations, experts and the Global Fund. The review included brief information on the history of civil society engagement in Global Fund-supported programmes in Tajikistan and an overview of key legal and gender barriers to HIV and TB services. In addition to the review, the Technical Assistance Team (TA Team) developed data collection toolkits for rapid community engagement assessment, focus group guides, and the prioritisation tool.

### ***First working meeting and rapid assessment of community engagement (December 12, 2022)***

The first consultation with organisations representing the interests of key populations was held on December 12, 2022. The working meeting was attended by 23 representatives (9 women and 14 men) of 9 organisations working with KPs in 5 regions of Tajikistan. These organisations particularly work with people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, sex workers, and a TB patients' organisation.

Those present focused on analysing the barriers to meaningful community engagement in Global Fund programmes, assessing the level of meaningful community engagement, and discussing priority areas for future work. The meeting included a short training session for NGO and community representatives on the Global Fund's new strategy and processes, GC7 specifics, and opportunities for community and civil society engagement at different stages of the grant cycle.

Meeting participants also rated the level of community engagement and consideration of CSO opinions when implementing the previous programme. Meaningful KP engagement in the previous Global Fund programme was rated 2 on a scale of 0 to 10.

### ***Fieldwork: Inclusive consultations with communities (December 13-18, 2022)***

Men who have sex with men	2 FGs/19 participants
Sex workers	3 FGs/21 participants
Males who inject drugs	4 FGs/35 participants
Females who inject drugs	1 FGs/12 participants + 3 participants in mixed FGs
Women living with HIV	1 FGs/16 participants
People affected by TB	1 FGs/15 participants

After the first working meeting, fieldwork began with inclusive consultations with KPs to identify their concerns, needs and priorities. The consultations were conducted through focus groups (FGs) discussions according to the guides developed during the preliminary phase of the work. A total of 13 focus groups were conducted with the participation of 151 people of which 71 (47%) were women. To ensure geographic diversity, focus groups were conducted in 5 cities: Dushanbe, Khorog, Rudaki, Vahdat, and Kulob.

### ***Second working meeting with community organisations, formulation of community priorities (December 19, 2022)***

Following the inclusive consultations, a full list of community priorities was documented and presented at the second working meeting on December 19, 2022. At this stage, the list included 25 priorities, the key ones being:

- Advocacy and legal interventions to protect the economic rights of vulnerable populations, especially women (such as access to housing, benefits, employment); training for women activists;
- Advocacy and strategic litigation aimed at decriminalising HIV and KPs;
- Expansion of mental health services;
- Protection of KP rights: legal aid; lawyer/doctor fees; and legal education activities for KPs; and;
- Other important priorities.

The second working meeting was attended by representatives of 9 organisations working with KPs in 5 regions of Tajikistan, including people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, sex workers, women living with HIV, and the TB patient’s organisation. Representatives of government bodies and international technical agencies were also invited to the meeting. The discussion and a ranking process using a simple tool resulted in a final list of 20 key priorities.

### ***Translation of community priorities into concrete activities (January 2023)***

Following approval by the meeting, the list of priorities was translated by the female consultant team into concrete activities in accordance with the Global Fund’s Modular Framework Handbook. The draft of activities based on the community priorities was submitted for approval and finalisation to the TA recipient, SPIN Plus. Following discussion of the list with the international consultants involved in the development of the country’s funding request for 2024-2026, some priorities and activities were combined for inclusion in the budget.

### ***Participation in online consultations on budget prioritisation (January - February 2023)***

Given the limited government funding of HIV and TB interventions, the Global Fund continues to bear the main burden of providing access to prevention and treatment services, including the necessary equipment and drugs. The needs of the country in this area, and the extensive list of interventions requiring funding, remain huge. In this context, it was critical to ensure the active participation of the TA Team in the online budgeting consultations with international and local consultants. It was important that they remained focused on community priorities, human rights, gender issues and the strengthening of community networks for inclusion in the final funding request.

### ***Work on community priorities to finalise the funding request:***

#### ***Organisational sustainability training and needs assessment (June 2023)***

In its comments on the funding request, received by the country in May 2023, the Technical Review Panel (TRP) of the Global Fund emphasised the need to ensure sustainability of the national response to HIV and TB in Tajikistan, including institutional sustainability of CSOs. Following informal consultations with local NGOs/CSOs and the TRP, SPIN Plus decided to implement additional activities to build the capacity of CSOs in this area. A training on alternative funding and enhancing sustainability of organisations working with KPs, developed by EHRA, was adapted and implemented with additional funding from the BACKUP Initiative. Another important activity held for this purpose was the rapid assessment of organisational sustainability needs. The consultant participated in the meeting of CSOs with the Global Fund Country Team and prepared recommendations on moving one of the important priorities – ‘Strengthening programme sustainability for key populations, particularly the transition to public funding. Refining state social procurement mechanisms’ - from Prioritised Above Allocation Request (PAAR) to the core budget in line with TRP comments and community priorities.

## **WHAT RESULTS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED THROUGH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?**

The technical assistance has helped to achieve the following results:

- Inclusive consultations were conducted with the key populations and organisations working with them. Thirteen focus group discussions were held with community representatives involving 151 people, about half of whom were women. This ensured the meaningful engagement of community representatives in the process and consideration of their opinions and needs in developing the funding request.
- Eighteen of the twenty priority interventions identified by the communities were fully or partially included into the core budget of the funding request. Five of these were only included in the PAAR. Some priorities were not included in the request because their implementation was expected to be supported by other funding sources.
- Additional work on community priorities was undertaken with additional funding from GIZ during the proposal finalisation stage following comments from the TRP. This work focused on building organisational sustainability of CSOs, thus both responding to TRP comments and further advancing the two sustainability-focused community priorities.

All of these results contribute to mainstreaming and advancing community needs in programme funding and development, as well as strengthening the meaningful engagement of key and vulnerable population networks in effective responses to HIV and TB in Tajikistan.

## WHAT LESSONS HAVE BEEN LEARNED AND WHAT NEEDS ATTENTION IN THE FUTURE?

- The technical assistance facilitated a dynamic, inclusive and active engagement of communities and community organisations in working on the priorities.
- The pre-designed tools made it possible to rapidly and effectively collect large amounts of information on the priority needs of the communities. Inclusive consultations were held with both CSOs and KPs. Thirteen focus group discussions were conducted with the participation of 151 people, about half of whom were women. This demonstrates the ability to effectively organise and conduct consultations with diverse stakeholders within a short time.
- Coordinated work with the funding request writing team allowed the majority of community priorities to be included in the final draft of the request. Funding for 18 of the 20 community priorities was included in the core budget. Some priorities were not included in the request as they are expected to be funded from different sources.
- The developed table of priorities with relevant activities facilitated the inclusion of the activities in the budget despite limited resources. This demonstrates the need for developing clear action plans and specifying funding requirements to implement the priorities.
- Additional work on community priorities was undertaken with additional funding from the BACKUP Initiative during the proposal finalisation stage following comments from the TRP. This work focused on building the organisational sustainability of CSOs, thus both responding to TRP comments and further advancing the two sustainability-focused community priorities. This underscores the importance of collaborating and seeking additional sources of funding to support community priorities.

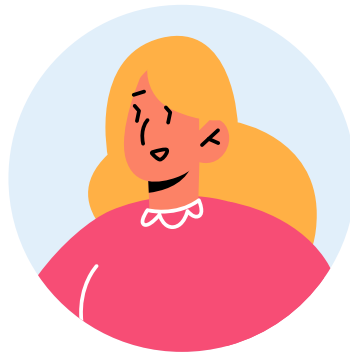
### **Limitations and proposals for improvement**

- Some KPs, including transwomen, women TB survivors and prisoners, did not participate in the consultations due to time constraints and limited access; hence, their concerns and priorities may be underrepresented in the programme. To avoid this, it is important to pay special attention to these groups and their needs during programme implementation.
- The remote participation of international consultants created constraints during the funding request and budget development. Intensive work and the impossibility to visit Tajikistan limited the interaction and coordination during the budgeting activities.
- During the intensive budgeting negotiations, some priorities and activities were either merged, significantly cut or excluded. Some of them were included only in the PAAR or were not included in any funding request as their funding was expected to come from other programmes and organisations. This may create uncertainty in securing funding



for these priorities in the future and reduce the focus on community priorities during programme implementation.

- The Community Priorities Annex is mandatory for completion, but it is not included in the main funding request package to be examined by the Technical Review Panel. Moreover, there are no formal requirements for including the priorities in the final funding request. This may reduce the formal value of the Annex and impede direct communication of community priorities to the experts comprising the Technical Review Panel.
- Tajikistan is still short of community experts familiar with the Global Fund processes to inform and lead the funding request development process. More attention should be paid to systematically engaging community experts in relevant expert structures, including the Global Fund's TRP. There is a need for better training and involvement of civil society representatives in these processes.
- After finalising and submitting the Annex, there was a decline in the involvement of KP organisations in the programme development. Little time was devoted to consulting community organisations during the finalisation of the funding request at the grant-making stage. There are still only vague chances for reallocating funds based on the TRP's comments and community sustainability priorities. This highlights the importance of improving formal mechanisms for community engagement at all stages of funding request development and strengthening of the meaningful engagement of CSOs in decision-making processes to enhance responses to the HIV/AIDS and TB epidemics.



*One of the tasks of the EECA Regional Platform for Communication and Coordination is to raise awareness of civil society and communities about technical assistance opportunities under the Global Fund CRG TA Programme, to create a request for such assistance and, if necessary, to help in preparing a quality application. Therefore, if you have questions about how to fill in the form, or need a consultancy on the possible content and/or quality of a request, please contact the Regional Platform for assistance.*

*Moreover, from 2021, it will be mandatory to agree the content of a TA request within the Programme with the Regional Platform before submitting it to the Global Fund!*

*EECA Regional Platform contacts:*

[eecaplatform@harmreductioneurasia.org](mailto:eecaplatform@harmreductioneurasia.org)

[eecaplatform.org](http://eecaplatform.org)