



ATHENA



Strengthening Women's Engagement with the Global Fund to Champion Gender Equality through the New Funding Model and Beyond

**Outcomes of a workshop held 10-12 July 2013
Global Fund Secretariat, Geneva, Switzerland**

Summary of outcomes requiring immediate attention

From 10-12 July 2013, more than 35 individuals with extensive experience on gender equality, from over 20 countries, met in Geneva to focus on the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund). Twenty-three of the participants were women's rights advocates working primarily at the community level, with grassroots organisations; over three-quarters of those advocates are openly living with HIV, including several from key populations. They were joined by representatives from the Global Fund and United Nations agencies. The meeting was supported by the Secretariat of the Global Fund, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with some additional support from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The overarching aim was to strengthen women's engagement with the Global Fund.

The meeting was organised and facilitated by ASAP (AIDS Strategy, Advocacy and Policy) and the ATHENA Network. The workshop was the launch of a joint initiative to coordinate and strengthen the engagement of women's rights advocates—in particular women living with HIV and TB and affected by malaria—with the Global Fund and its processes, and to provide meaningful and consistent input into decision-making structures. The timing of this first global meeting was designed to inform discussions at the Global Fund's Strategy, Investment and Impact Committee (SIIC) that met in Geneva 16-18 July 2013.

Problem statement: Despite the existence of the Global Fund's Gender Equality Strategy (GES), women's priorities and challenges are not adequately recognized or responded to throughout all Global Fund structures and processes

The Global Fund has great potential to be a vital engine for investment in women's health and rights, particularly for women living with and affected by the three diseases. To date, this full potential and impact have yet to be achieved. The Global Fund and many of its stakeholders have failed to prioritize and implement programmes to support women in all their diversity, and they have not taken sufficient steps to address the barriers that prevent women and girls from obtaining the comprehensive, quality services that meet their rights and needs. These programmes are essential to achieve the greatest impact on the three diseases. The failure to respond has particularly dire consequences in sub-Saharan Africa, where some 60 percent of all those newly acquiring HIV are women and girls, often within communities of women who experience stigma and discrimination above and beyond gender-specific vulnerabilities, including female and trans¹ sex workers, and women and girls who use drugs.

The lack of effective action persists despite the existence since 2008 of the Global Fund's Gender Equality Strategy (GES). That strategy—commendably progressive on paper, especially in the world of international development—laid out a commitment for all Global Fund stakeholders to take steps to transform the lives of women and girls in implementing countries. However, at least three evaluations of

¹ "Trans*" is an umbrella term that refers to all of the identities within the gender identity spectrum. It is a term preferred by many people working in and with communities.

the implementation of the GES to date have shown that it has significantly failed to meet its goals. Implementation of the GES has been limited, has not been adequately costed or budgeted, and no adequate communications strategy has been rolled out to explain or push for it. Therefore, it is not surprising that within Global Fund structures—including country coordinating mechanisms (CCMs) and principal recipients (PRs)—many people remain unaware of the existence of the GES and the importance assigned to addressing gender equality through the Global Fund.

Moreover, Global Fund proposals are rarely assessed for their gender impact. As a result, far too few grant agreements specify or fund gender-sensitive or gender-transformative activities, and where they do progress is not tracked. Few women, and people with gender expertise, are able to participate meaningfully in CCMs and other Global Fund structures. Community-based groups that comprise of, and work on behalf of, women and their rights rarely receive funding or other support to do this kind of work. The Global Fund Secretariat has just one person, among some 600 total, mandated to focus primarily on gender.

The GES on its own may not fully address these challenges, but implementing and monitoring the 2008 strategy—and strengthening and updating it as needed—is a crucial step that can and should be undertaken immediately. The launch of the new funding model (NFM) is an opportunity to rectify the poor performance of the past in regards to women and advancing gender equality. The Global Fund should seize this opportunity. Leadership at the highest level is needed, with the Global Fund Board and Secretariat working with partners from all sectors to put the GES into action in all countries.

Key message: Women, particularly those at grassroots level, want and demand change

Women's rights advocates around the world find the current situation unacceptable in their own lives and for their families and their communities. Their input and observations for next steps are critical because they work at all levels, from the global to the grassroots, where services are delivered and gender-related obstacles and needs are most acute.

In general, the participants attending the July 2013 workshop highly value the Global Fund. All have seen how it has transformed lives and raised hope among people living with and affected by HIV, TB and malaria. But they want and expect it to be more effective, in particular to overcome gender-related barriers to accessing services and realising rights. In their view, successful efforts in this area are a critical component of strategic investment. The Global Fund can only achieve optimal impact if its overall approach to supporting HIV, TB and malaria responses adequately and proactively addresses gender-related barriers. Those priorities are exactly the ones that the Global Fund itself has identified as part of its 2012-2016 Strategy and the NFM. All Global Fund stakeholders should, therefore, understand that the rights, priorities, needs and visions of women in all their diversity must be better recognized and addressed if the Global Fund is to achieve the goals and objectives it has identified and to have maximum impact on the three diseases.

Action 1: Priority steps for the Global Fund's SIIC to undertake immediately

Based on their discussion, participants at the July 2013 global workshop identified several steps that should be taken to address their concerns and, more broadly, the needs of women in all their diversity, including those living with HIV, TB and malaria in countries where the Global Fund is active. The first and most immediate steps focused on influencing discussions at the Global Fund's SIIC, which met in Geneva from 16 July 2013. One participant highlighted that the recommended steps are closely aligned to many of the objectives specified in the Joint Civil Society Action Plan currently being developed with leadership of the three civil society delegations to the Global Fund Board.

Workshop participants formally present the following priority recommendations to the SIIC.

1. In considering the paper discussing implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy (GES), the SIIC should:

- Require Global Fund reporting to include sex- and age-disaggregated data.
Evidence is a main principle of the NFM. A comprehensive data set would include sex- and age-disaggregated data. Therefore, the Global Fund should **require** (not merely recommend) that such data be collected and reported. Collecting and reporting such data provides a key opportunity to track implementation and needs, to ensure that gender-sensitive and gender-transformative activities are supported in Global Fund grants, and to raise awareness of gender-related concerns. The lack of ample or adequate gendered evidence, and the Global Fund not requiring it, are two main reasons why stakeholders at all levels, especially at country level, may overlook and fail to prioritise sufficient activities and funding focused on the needs and priorities of women and girls, and that will deliver gender equality.
- Budget sufficient resources for the Global Fund Secretariat to undertake and monitor implementation of the GES.
Implementation of the GES should be costed. That initial step should be followed by the provision of targeted, sufficient resources to implement the GES. This would include action to:
 - i) develop a strong advocacy and communications strategy and then initiate and sustain a campaign that reaches stakeholders at all levels;²
 - ii) implement gender equality training for CCMs, PRs and other key stakeholders;
 - iii) provide training on gender to all Secretariat staff; and
 - iv) monitor and evaluate all Global Fund programming to ensure gender-related issues are considered and addressed effectively.

2. In considering the CCM eligibility paper, the SIIC should:

- Require gender focal points on all CCMs.
There is a need to integrate gender equality in Global Fund programming, implementation and monitoring more thoroughly than is currently underway in most countries. Effective responses to gender-related challenges and concerns require women and men who understand the importance of gender to be involved at all stages of the NFM process, including on the CCM. Inclusion and enhanced awareness on such structures is especially important because CCMs remain a core component of Global Fund programming. Regardless of the extent of gender-sensitive discussion and engagement in country dialogue processes, CCMs remain the gatekeeper of Global Fund proposals. Vital gender-sensitive and -transformative programmes are unlikely to be included adequately in concept notes and thus moved forward through the NFM unless CCMs include trained and monitored gender focal points.

3. In addition, the SIIC should:

- Require gender analysis to be a conditionality of the concept note.
Currently the NFM processes suggest and recommend to countries that they include gender analysis when developing the concept note. This is a good step forward, but it is not strong enough. The Global Fund should make gender analysis at this stage a requirement and take steps—including through funding and technical support—to enable countries to undertake such analysis. FPMs (fund portfolio managers) and staff from technical partners should be made aware of this requirement and be included in relevant training and technical support, if necessary, so that they are able to provide the requisite support to countries through NFM processes and in the development and iteration of concept notes. Given the importance, under the NFM, of national strategic plans (NSPs) the Global Fund should also strongly encourage countries to undertake gender analysis when developing NSPs.

Action 2: Other steps agreed by participants

Participants at the Geneva workshop urged the SIIC to consider the priorities below that fall within its remit, as well as recognising that many other areas of priority fall to others working at local and global

² In line with the third area of intervention of the GES, “Develop a robust communications and advocacy strategy”

level. They agreed to collaborate moving forward, and involve other stakeholders as necessary, to ensure that the following actions are reflected and responded to in the **GES implementation paper**:

- Create and monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) in regards to GES implementation
- Create and monitor gender-specific KPIs, including in regards to the implementation of the GES, for FPMs
- Hire and support more Secretariat staff working on gender equality
- Conduct ongoing independent evaluation of GES implementation
- Initiate and sustain a global and national communications strategy regarding the GES specifically, and gender issues more generally

Participants specified the following in regards to the **CCM eligibility paper**:

- Gender training within CCMs should be required (not simply recommended). All members should be provided with such training upon joining a CCM and all should receive training on a regular basis. The Global Fund should allocate dedicated financial support for such training.
- The Global Fund (through the SIIC) should review the inclusion of “women and girls” in the definition of key populations. Participants raised concerns that such inclusion diluted and limited efforts to respond to key gender-related issues, which are broadly relevant across all aspects of Global Fund programming.

Workshop participants agreed that ***they and their community-based colleagues would take the following action steps at the global level:***

- Debrief the Global Fund Executive Director on the outcomes of the meeting
- Review the modules being developed by the Global Fund Secretariat to identify, measure and quantify HIV, TB, malaria, and health systems strengthening (HSS) activities
- Include gender in other key papers from the Secretariat, including those related to community systems strengthening (CSS) and the proposal guidelines provided to countries
- Consider joining relevant Global Fund Board delegations, including the Communities and Developing Country NGO delegations
- Apply to join the Global Fund Technical Review Panel (TRP), which is currently seeking new members
- Enhance the documentation of key gender-related data and evidence, and identify research and data gaps
- Ensure gender equality is further prioritized in the mid-term review of the current Global Fund Strategy (2012-2016) and included in the one that follows

Workshop participants agreed that ***they and their community-based colleagues would take the following action steps at the regional and national level:***

- Strengthen the capacity of women through national and regional training on the GES and the Global Fund more broadly
- Sensitize Global Fund PRs on the GES and the Global Fund more broadly
- Bring women, in all their diversity, into country dialogues
- Join CCMs and participate fully, including through consulting widely with others and sharing experiences and information
- Establish (or contribute to) a "watchdog" role in regards to the inclusion of gender concerns in all Global Fund structures and processes, at national, regional and global level
- Involve men as agents to advance gender equality in all Global Fund structures and processes

Workshop participants agreed to work with the Global Fund (and demand action, if necessary) to achieve the following ***national and regional actions on the part of the Global Fund:***

- Invest in women's leadership, including by providing core funding for women's networks
- Roll out the UNAIDS Gender Assessment Tool and ensure that it is understood and used in all relevant Global Fund processes—e.g., development and review of NSPs, country dialogues, concept note development, and CCM decision-making
- Gather gender-related strategic information and evidence at the national level and document it
- Identify data and research gaps, especially at national level
- Influence political leaders in regards to gender-related issues and the need to prioritize them

The conveners of the global workshop, ASAP and the ATHENA Network, pledged to:

- Set up and maintain opportunities for dialogue among workshop participants, through the existing website space and virtual meetings
- Convene two regional workshops to bring together women's rights advocates from Asia and the Pacific—at the time of the International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) in November 2013, in Bangkok, Thailand—and from Africa, at the time of the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) in December 2013, in Cape Town, South Africa
- Support actions to strengthen local efforts on gender equality in five of the priority NFM countries
- Strengthen CCMs' work on gender equality through the Global Fund's pilot programme to strengthen engagement in the NFM of people living with and affected by HIV, TB and malaria, and key populations.

26 July 2013
ASAP and the ATHENA Network
On behalf of the 10-12 July workshop participants