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Aidspan White Paper

Providing Improved Technical Support to Enhance the Effectiveness of Global Fund Grants

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Funding provided entirely by Dr. Albert and Mrs. Monique Heijn

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Preface

This white paper is one of over a dozen free Aidspan publications written for those applying for, implementing, or supporting grants from the *Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria* (the Global Fund). The following is a partial list of Aidspan's publications.

- **Global Fund Observer:** A free email newsletter providing news, analysis and commentary to over 7,000 subscribers in 170 countries. (86 issues over the past five years; currently in English only.)
- **The Aidspan Guide to Round 8 Applications to the Global Fund – Volume 1: Getting a Head Start** (January 2008; available in English, French and Spanish)
- **The Aidspan Guide to Round 8 Applications to the Global Fund – Volume 2: The Applications Process and the Proposal Form** (March 2008; available in English, French and Spanish)
- **Aidspan Documents for In-Country Submissions** (December 2007; available in English, Spanish, French and Russian)
- **The Aidspan Guide to Building and Running an Effective Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM)** (Second edition September 2007; available in English, Spanish and French)
- **The Aidspan Guide to Understanding Global Fund Processes for Grant Implementation – Volume 1: From Grant Approval to Signing the Grant Agreement** (First edition December 2005; originally titled "The Aidspan Guide to Effective Implementation of Global Fund Grants". Available in English only.)
- **The Aidspan Guide to Understanding Global Fund Processes for Grant Implementation – Volume 2: From First Disbursement to Phase 2 Renewal** (November 2007; available in English, French and Spanish)
- **The Aidspan Guide to Developing Global Fund Proposals to Benefit Children Affected by HIV/AIDS** (May 2006; available in English only)
- **The Aidspan Guide to Obtaining Global Fund-Related Technical Assistance** (First edition January 2004; available in English only)

Downloads

To download a copy of any of these publications, go to www.aidspan.org. If you do not have access to the web but you do have access to email, send a request to guides@aidspan.org specifying which publications you would like to receive as attachments to an email. Aidspan does not produce or distribute printed copies of these publications.

Aidspan

Aidspan is a non-governmental organization based in Kenya; its mission is to reinforce the effectiveness of the *Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria*. Aidspan performs this mission by serving as an independent watchdog of the Fund, and by providing services that can benefit all countries wishing to obtain and make effective use of Global Fund financing.

Aidspan also publishes the *Global Fund Observer* (GFO) newsletter, an independent email-based source of news, analysis and commentary about the Global Fund. To receive GFO at no charge, send an email to receive-gfo-newsletter@aidspan.org. The subject line and text area can be left blank.

Aidspan finances its work primarily through grants from foundations. Aidspan does not accept Global Fund money, perform paid consulting work, or charge for any of its products.

Aidspan and the Global Fund maintain a positive working relationship, but have no formal connection. *The board and staff of the Global Fund have no influence on, and bear no responsibility for, the content of this white paper or of any other Aidspan publication.*

Acknowledgements, Permissions, Feedback

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Readers are invited to email Bernard Rivers (rivers@aidspan.org), Executive Director of Aidspan, with questions, comments, or suggestions for improvements of this white paper. If you find this white paper useful, or if you have appreciated *Global Fund Observer* or any other Aidspan publication, please let us know. Feedback of all kinds is always helpful.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

The following is a list of the main abbreviations and acronyms used in this guide:

CCM	Country Coordinating Mechanism
EARS	Early Alert and Response System
GF	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GFO	Global Fund Observer
GIST	Global Problem-solving and Implementation Support Team
LFA	Local Fund Agent
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PR	Principal Recipient
SR	Sub-Recipient
TA	Technical Assistance (See Technical Support, below)
TB	Tuberculosis
TRP	Technical Review Panel
TS	Technical Support (also known as Technical Assistance, TA)
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV and AIDS
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Before the *Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria* was established five years ago, the critical challenge in the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria was coping with the shortage of money. But now that the Global Fund is in a position to give grants worth over a billion dollars per year, the critical challenge has shifted. It now consists of two things: developing adequate capacity; and overcoming a range of technical and management barriers to smooth project implementation. One key – but not the only one – to tackling these barriers is the provision of effective technical support (TS) (also known as technical assistance).

This Aidspan white paper tackles two linked questions: What problems arise in the provision of adequate, timely, appropriate and effective TS to projects financed by the Global Fund? And what can be done about these problems?

These issues were discussed at the first "Global Fund Round Table", organized in 2007 by Aidspan. The meeting consisted of a private "conversation" between twenty leaders representing government, civil society and multilateral agencies. These leaders, including Peter Piot, head of UNAIDS, and Mark Dybul, head of PEPFAR, did not attempt to agree on recommendations. They agreed instead that Aidspan would produce this white paper, based in large part on problems that were discussed at the Round Table, and including recommendations generated before and after the Round Table by Aidspan and others. *Aidspan alone is responsible for the contents of this white paper, and no specific participant at the Round Table can be assumed to agree with any specific opinion or recommendation that the white paper contains.*

The first main problem area is that *TS needs are usually identified and met too late in the Global Fund grant cycle*. Underlying factors here include:

- CCMs and PRs are often in denial regarding grant difficulties
- Even where there is no denial, there is often a reluctance to ask for TS
- M&E systems are inadequate
- The Fund's system for detecting grants in difficulty is insufficiently effective
- Getting TS is time-consuming

Recommendations to deal with this include:

- Divide the Fund's grant proposal process into two stages – pre-proposal, and full proposal. And require both stages to include a TS Plan.
- Provide incentives for PRs and CCMs to identify problems early
- Replace the Fund's existing system for detecting grants in difficulty with a three-level online "Grant Progress Reporting System (GPRS)"

The second main problem area is that *the TS that is provided often does not meet grantee needs. In particular, it usually does not build local capacity*. Underlying factors here include:

- "TS seekers" and appropriate "TS providers" have difficulties finding each other
- TS is too often supplier-driven and too often North-based
- TS too often has a short-term focus
- There is no global knowledge-base on TS
- Language and cultural barriers often prevent effective TS provision

- The main form of TS that is needed is often for someone to provide "proactive coordination" among the in-country stakeholders; but often no suitable person is available to play this role
- TS is rarely evaluated

Recommendations to deal with this include:

- Encourage, within each large country or region, the establishment of a two-level TS provision system
- Create a web-based "TS marketplace"
- Strengthen local TS capacity
- Monitor effectiveness of TS

The third main problem area is that *TS is under-funded, and GF partners do not collaborate sufficiently regarding TS provision.* Underlying factors here include:

- Nobody has a clear mandate to provide GF-related TS
- GF partner agencies do not communicate/coordinate adequately
- Loss of institutional memory is a major problem
- TS providers are often unaware of each other's lessons learned

Recommendations to deal with this include:

- For each country/disease combination, choose a "lead agency" to coordinate TS issues
- For each country, develop an in-country forum of partners (or strengthen it, if it exists) to discuss TS needs and related issues
- Develop a forum through which TS funders and TS providers can mutually discuss lessons learned and best practice

There is at times some overlap between the recommendations in this white paper. Aidspan is not suggesting that every one of them should be implemented. Instead, the recommendations are offered to stimulate thought and possible action by and among a wide range of Global Fund stakeholders.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background regarding the first Global Fund Round Table (RT1)

From time to time, Aidspan organizes a "Global Fund Round Table" to discuss a single big-picture issue regarding which innovative and collaborative action is needed not just by the Global Fund, but also by other players. Each meeting consists, in effect, of a private conversation between about twenty leaders representing government, civil society and multilateral agencies. Participants discuss the problems and possibilities of the chosen topic, sharing opinions on creative ways forward. Participants attend in their personal rather than official capacities, and agree not to reveal "who said what". For each Round Table it is possible – though obviously not certain – that the discussions will have a subsequent impact on the policies and procedures of the Global Fund and others.

The first Round Table, RT1, in January 2007, discussed how to ensure that implementers of programs funded by the GF have access to adequate and appropriate technical support. The meeting was attended by the following:

Global Fund:

- Nosa Orobation, GF Director of Operations
- Bernhard Schwartlander, GF Performance Evaluation and Policy Director

UN entities:

- Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director
- Kevin De Cock, WHO Dept of HIV/AIDS Director
- Debrework Zewdie, World Bank Global HIV/AIDS Program Director

Bilaterals:

- Mark Dybul, US Global AIDS Coordinator (head of PEPFAR)
- Carole Presern, Counsellor, United Kingdom Mission in Geneva
- Sigrun Mogedal, Norway AIDS Ambassador

Foundations:

- Todd Summers, Gates Foundation
- Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch, Open Society Institute

Providers of technical support:

- Fareed Abdullah, International HIV/AIDS Alliance Director of Technical Support
- Carrie Hessler Radelet, John Snow International Director of DC operations

South governments:

- Caroline Kayonga, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health and CCM Chair, Rwanda
- Dr Suwit, Thailand MOH Senior Advisor and former Vice Chair of GF board
- Paulo Teixeira, former head of Brazil's national AIDS programme

Civil society:

- Alex Coutinho, The AIDS Support Organization of Uganda (TASO) Executive Director
- Lillian Mworeko, International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, East Africa Regional Coordinator
- Asia Russell, Incoming GF board member
- Richard Burzynski, ICASO Executive Director

Secretariat:

- Bernard Rivers, Aidspan Executive Director
- Chris Collins, Aidspan RT Coordinator

In organizing RT1, Aidspan was guided by a Steering Committee that is entirely independent of the Global Fund and of the other major agencies. The members were:

- Chair: Dr. Jim Kim, USA (Director of the F-X Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard School of Public Health. Former Director, Dep't of HIV/AIDS, WHO.)
- Dr. Alex Coutinho, Uganda (CEO, The AIDS Support Organization, Uganda, Africa's largest NGO dealing with AIDS. Former Vice Chair, GF Technical Review Panel.)

- Mabel van Oranje, Netherlands (Global Fund board delegation member representing the Foundations sector. Director EU Affairs, Open Society Institute.)
- Dr. Steve Radelet, USA (Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development. Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury for Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.)
- Peter van Rooijen, Netherlands (Global Fund board member representing Developed Country NGOs. Former Chair of the two largest AIDS NGOs in the Netherlands.)
- Dr. Suwit Wibulpolprasert, Thailand (Senior Advisor on Health Economics, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand. Former Vice Chair, Global Fund board.)
- Dr. Ngaire Woods, New Zealand (Director, Global Economic Governance Programme, Oxford University.)

Funding

The entire cost of preparing and hosting RT1 and the forthcoming RT2 was generously underwritten by Dr. Albert and Mrs. Monique Heijn. Dr. Heijn is the former president and CEO of the Albert Heijn supermarket chain and of Royal Ahold NV. Dr. and Mrs. Heijn have long been interested in problems of HIV/AIDS in developing countries and have shown leadership in involving the business sector in the fight against HIV/AIDS. They hosted RT1 at their country estate, Pudleston Court, near Hereford, England.

RT1 working methods

Prior to RT1, Aidspan visited China, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda, and corresponded with a few other countries, in order to discuss technical support issues with various people who are involved in and/or supporting GF grant implementation. People were asked to speak candidly and privately, so that Aidspan could create a document containing various “perspectives from implementing countries” for input to participants at this Round Table.

At RT1, participants discussed that input document and others, together with their own experiences and insights. Participants made no attempt to collectively formulate recommendations. Instead, they agreed that they would return to their agencies and organizations armed with insights gained at the meeting and would draw upon these insights, as appropriate, in the course of their ongoing work.

Role of this white paper

Participants at RT1 also encouraged Aidspan to produce a white paper based on the input documentation and the discussions that took place at the meeting. The participants encouraged Aidspan to include its own recommendations within the white paper, on the understanding that *Aidspan alone is responsible for the contents of the white paper, and no specific participant at the Round Table can be assumed to agree with any specific opinion or recommendation that the white paper contains.*

This document is that white paper. It is written for readers who are involved in applying for, implementing, or supporting the implementation of grants from the Global Fund. Accordingly, it assumes a strong familiarity with the Global Fund and its processes.

The problems related to technical support that are identified in this paper emanate from the discussions at RT1 and the prior research. The list of problems is not meant to be exhaustive; there are certainly others not identified here.

The recommendations contained in this paper represent a collection of possibilities that Aidspan identified before, during and after the discussions. There is at times some overlap between these recommendations, and Aidspan is not suggesting that every one of the

recommendations should be implemented. Instead, *the recommendations are offered here to stimulate thought and possible action by and among a wide range of Global Fund stakeholders.*

Insofar as Aidspan receives extensive feedback to this white paper that adds to or improves upon the background, analysis, opinions and recommendations that it contains, Aidspan will produce a second edition of this white paper later in 2008.

Chapter 2: What Is Technical Support? In What Situations Is it Needed?

People use the term "Technical Support (TS)" to cover a number of different activities. These include:

- Providing policy or technical advice in a difficult or new area
- Providing management advice or support
- Providing coordination advice or support
- Providing capacity building, which in turn can be used to mean both training new staff, and providing additional training to existing staff.

Some people use the term "Technical Assistance (TA)" rather than "TS". However, throughout this white paper, we use the term "TS".

Effective progress with implementing Global Fund (GF) grants, and with implementing grants from funding entities other than the GF, requires all four legs of the following table to be strong within each implementing country:

- Leg 1: Technical and management skills and capacity
- Leg 2: Effective coordination among the many players
- Leg 3: Political leadership and support
- Leg 4: Absence of endemic corruption.

If any one of those four legs is weak, the table runs the risk of collapsing. However, TS cannot resolve – or even help to resolve – weaknesses in all these legs. It can often be used to address weaknesses in Leg 1; it can occasionally be used to address weaknesses in Leg 2; but it cannot deal with weaknesses in Legs 3 or 4.

On the other hand, whenever a country submits a GF proposal that commences (or significantly increases) activity within a certain programmatic area, TS is often invaluable and sometimes crucial. In such situations, it is really important to build significant amounts of TS and training into the proposal.

Furthermore, TS is often needed to enable a potential "No Go" grant to avoid receiving such a designation; and it is sometimes needed to help a fairly effective grant become a very effective one. But the type of TS needed in these two situations, and – in particular – the politics involved in getting the TS designed and requested in those two situations, can be very different.

From the beginning, the GF board has been anxious to be totally non-political in its decision-making regarding which new grants to approve. Indeed, the board never discusses individual new proposals (although it has the right to), and most board members do not read the proposals (although a strong case could be made that they ought to). Instead, the board has always chosen to approve whichever proposals are recommended by the Technical Review Panel (TRP). (To help ensure its independence, no TRP members are GF board members or GF staff members.) The TRP does no field trips to evaluate the feasibility of individual proposals. It depends for information on what the proposals say, and on the knowledge of country conditions that individual TRP members happen to have (or believe they have). As a result, the TRP sometimes has limited, or inaccurate, knowledge of the extent to which, within the applicant country, the required skills are available, the required

capacity is available, and there is a willingness among the many players to work together. This means that the GF's grant-approval decision is at times somewhat arbitrary, with some grants being approved that should not be, and vice versa. And this in turn means that many grants that are approved need considerable amounts of TS to make them viable.

In addition, some countries need TS to help them fully understand the evolving policies and reporting requirements of the GF itself. Some even need TS on how to commission TS.

Non-English-speaking countries often feel they should recruit PR staff who speak good English. But as a result, those staff often are young and have less experience and technical skills than is needed. Hence, they need TS. In addition, because of this lack of experience, they need a sounding board – someone with whom they can discuss their concerns when things aren't working. This is often provided by in-country staff of various UN and bilateral agencies. This is an aspect of TS that is usually not thought of when people talk about the need for TS.

For each GF grant, there may be a need for TS in any or all of the following six areas:

- Area 1: Develop the proposal.
- Area 2: Go from the approved proposal to a viable effective workplan.
- Area 3: Get the players in the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), the Principal Recipient (PR) and the Sub-Recipients (SRs) to agree on how to work together.
- Area 4: Build/strengthen capacity, as needed.
- Area 5: Do the work spelled out in the grant agreement, overcoming political / management / technical problems as they arise.
- Area 6: Meet the GF's accountability requirements (re M&E etc.)

These areas require very different types of TS. Governments have been perfectly willing to seek TS in Area 1. But once the grant has been approved, governments have often felt that the money is "theirs", and have been reluctant to seek TS in some or all of the other five areas, partly because, as discussed elsewhere in this white paper, requesting TS can be seen as involving loss of face.

This is a short-sighted approach. Each country and every project needs to develop a systematic approach to TS that acknowledges and addresses the potential need for TS in all six areas.

There are three main challenges that arise regarding the provision of TS in the context of GF grants. These are:

- **Challenge A:** TS needs are usually identified and met too late in the GF grant cycle.
- **Challenge B:** The TS that is provided often does not meet grantee needs. In particular, it usually does not build local capacity.
- **Challenge C:** TS is under-funded, and GF partners do not collaborate sufficiently regarding TS provision.

These three challenges are discussed in detail in the following three chapters.

Chapter 3: Problems Relating to TS Needs Being Identified and Met Too Late in the GF Grant Cycle

In this and the next two chapters, we identify some of the key problems that have arisen regarding TS-related issues, and we then provide some recommendations for tackling or avoiding these problems.

Problem 1: CCMs and PRs are often in denial regarding grant difficulties

- (a) Many CCMs develop ambitious grant proposals but have difficulty, when doing so, in acknowledging that the PRs/SRs might need TS, let alone knowing what those TS needs might be.
- (b) Once the proposal has been approved and implementation of the grant has started, there is reluctance by many PRs/SRs to seriously consider the possibility of grant under-performance or failure. As a result, these PRs often under-prioritise or delay their requests for technical support.
- (c) Specific grant implementation problems are often not identified until a crisis is approaching or has arrived, making it difficult to provide effective TS in a timely manner.
- (d) If development partners in-country are to identify TS needs in a timely manner, they must ask tough questions about grant-implementation problems. They are usually hesitant, and sometimes ill-equipped, to do this.

Problem 2: Even where there is no denial, there is often a reluctance to ask for TS

PRs are often reluctant to ask for TS for fear that they will be perceived as "weak", and that the grant will be labelled "at risk" and that future proposals might not be approved.¹

Problem 3: M&E systems are inadequate

- (a) Indicators for measuring grant performance are often not designed to detect problems early.
- (b) Local Fund Agents (LFAs) are often ill-equipped to provide a robust analysis of grant performance and TS needs; their expertise is primarily financial.
- (c) LFAs have a mandate to privately report their findings to the GF. Thus, some of their key findings regarding grant-implementation problems (and therefore, regarding TS needs) do not become known by others who need to know them. And if they did become known, LFAs would be increasingly hesitant to be candid in their reports to the GF.

Problem 4: The GF's system for detecting grants in difficulty is insufficiently effective

The GF's "Early Alert and Response System" (EARS) is often in fact a "Late" Alert and Response System. This is partly because bad news does not naturally and rapidly flow up the chain from implementing unit to GF.

¹ An enlightened approach would say that it is not a "sin" to anticipate or even to encounter problems, though it could be said that it is a "sin" to fail to acknowledge that problems have been encountered.

Problem 5: TS is generally regarded as a cost; instead, it should be regarded as an investment

Self-explanatory.

Problem 6: Getting TS is time-consuming

- (a) When international TS is needed, it can take several months to move from acknowledging the need, to agreeing the TS terms of reference, to identifying a funding source, to identifying an appropriate and available TS provider, to getting government approval for that provider.
- (b) Sometimes a two-stage process is needed: TS to evaluate the underlying issues and needs, and then further TS to meet those needs. All this takes time.

Problem 7: There is inadequate accountability

- (a) GF grants often don't work because nobody has sufficient ownership of the need for the grant to succeed (i.e. because nobody is held fully accountable if the grant doesn't succeed). When this is the case, nobody is inclined to ask for TS.
- (b) There is no system to reward PRs based on their ability to keep the grant on track. (If there were, they would be more inclined to ask for TS when – or before – the grant got into trouble.)

Problem 8: CCMs do not play an effective role regarding TS

- (a) The logical place to identify and discuss emerging grant-implementation problems, and the consequent need for TS, is within CCMs. But many CCMs are a "marriage of convenience" where open discussion is limited. These CCMs often have no clear written governance rules that spell out the rights of members to speak and vote freely. As a result, CCM members (particularly from civil society) who are best placed to look into and speak out about grant implementation problems are frequently hesitant to do so.
- (b) Furthermore, the GF has never clearly spelled out what it means when it says that CCMs have "oversight" responsibility regarding existing grants. Thus, CCMs generally spend little or no time carrying out their oversight role.
- (c) GF grants are technically complex, and most CCM members have insufficient technical expertise to play a meaningful oversight role. As a result, CCMs are not good at recognizing grant implementation problems early. Furthermore, although most CCMs have technical working groups, many of which have both CCM and non-CCM members, these groups often lack a clear mandate. Without a clear mandate, it's politically very hard for the working groups to speak up clearly about shortcomings within the PR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Divide the GF's grant proposal process into two stages – pre-proposal, and full proposal. And require both stages to include a TS Plan.

(Note: The following recommendation is made not just to help address the TS-related problems discussed above, but also because of a number of other issues that have become apparent over the years – e.g. that with rare exceptions, each proposal to the GF is approved or rejected in its entirety, which makes it very hard for the CCM to decide how ambitious a proposal to submit.)

The recommendation for a two-stage proposal process is as follows:

- Step 1: The CCM submits to the GF Secretariat, at any time of the year, a "pre-proposal", without cost estimates, but with proposed activities and levels of effort, with a needs assessment (that is, a gap analysis regarding skills and capacity), and with a preliminary TS plan to address those gaps.
- Step 2: The GF Secretariat (supplemented by a panel of paid outside mentors) then responds to the pre-proposal with detailed comments and questions, and with encouragement to the applicant (a) to proceed to the next step, or (b) to repeat Steps 1 and 2, or (c) to abandon the process.^{2 3}
- Step 3: The CCM then decides whether, at the next Call for Proposals, to submit a full proposal, possibly after modifying the ideas that were in the pre-proposal as a result of the Secretariat/mentor comments. The CCM has the right to ignore what was said by the Secretariat/mentors. And even if the CCM follows what was advised by Secretariat/mentors, the TRP still has every right not to recommend the full proposal for approval.
- Step 4: As part of the full proposal, the CCM must include a fuller needs assessment and TS plan than was done in Step 1. The needs assessment and TS plan:
 - (a) Should specify what TS is needed (and, if none, why).
 - (b) Should specify, for each part of the TS, who it is hoped will provide it, whether it will be paid for out of the grant, and, if not, who it is hoped will pay for it.⁴
- Step 5: The TRP then evaluates the full proposal in the normal manner.
- Step 6: Subsequent to grant approval, the CCM is required to update the needs assessment and TS plan annually.

Recommendation 2: Provide incentives for PRs and CCMs to identify problems early

- (a) Work to create a culture whereby identifying problems and asking for TS is seen as "the intelligent thing to do."
- (b) In addition, provide incentives for PRs and CCMs to identify problems earlier and to regularly review TS needs, and thus to improve the chances of keeping the grant on track. (In the private sector, such incentives often consist of financial bonuses for on-track performance and/or penalties for delayed performance. This is a useful model, but designing an equivalent approach for GF grants will require considerable thought.)⁵

² This will increase the number of needed GF staff. But it will also lead to more feasible and effective proposals, which might save on GF staff time at a later stage.

³ The GF Secretariat and the outside mentors won't necessarily know enough about the country in question to guarantee that their advice will lead to a better project. But they probably will know enough about other countries and other projects and the GF itself to be able to guarantee that their advice will lead to a proposal that the TRP is more likely to accept, even if there is a high wall built between the Secretariat and the mentors on one side, and the TRP on the other side.

⁴ The GF's application guidelines might recommend that a certain percentage, from x% to y%, of each grant be dedicated to TS.

⁵ In many countries, GF grants would work more effectively if much of the PR's work was outsourced to a Project Management Unit (PMU), probably in the private sector, that was given a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which specified deliverables and targets – e.g. which specified that progress updates and disbursement requests must be submitted to the GF, and approved, by a specified date. The PMU would be allowed to charge a management fee that was a small percentage of the grant, with a modest increase or decrease according to whether it met its service level targets. In this context, the PMU would be much more likely to

Recommendation 3: Replace EARS with a three-level online "Grant Progress Reporting System (GPRS)"

Replace EARS (the GF's *Early Alert and Response System*) with a three-level online "*Grant Progress Reporting System (GPRS)*" that provides quantitative and narrative grant progress information regarding all grants, not just regarding the ones deemed by the GF to be in possible trouble.

For each grant, information should be provided at three levels, as shown in the table below. The first level should contain all of the PR's M&E data; this level should be viewable by the public. The second level, not publicly accessible, should contain additional data and comments that is input by, and viewable by, CCM members and in-country partners. (The objective of this level is to encourage in-country information-sharing and debate, and to encourage PRs to provide accurate and complete data in Level 1.) The third level should be just for use by GF and LFA staff.

<u>Level</u>	<u>Information</u>	<u>Information is placed in GPRS by</u>	<u>Information can be viewed by</u>
Level 1	All grant M&E data that has been submitted to the GF by the PR	• PR or GF	• The public
Level 2	Additional data and comments	• CCM members • In-country partners	• CCM members • In-country partners • GF staff • GF board • LFA
Level 3	Yet further data and comments	• GF staff • LFA	• GF staff • LFA

The objective of GPRS is to maximize information-sharing regarding all grants by all players, and maximize the chances that problems are detected early. In cases where PRs are providing the GF and/or the CCM with inadequate or poor quality M&E information, GPRS will enable other players to provide information that might present a more accurate and more timely picture of how the grant is doing.

Recommendation 4: Take additional measures to help detect grant problems early

- (a) Strengthen the ability of LFAs to evaluate non-financial aspects of grant performance.
- (b) Design M&E procedures that more fully capture "the bad news" (partly by recording qualitative progress, not just quantitative) and that also capture "the encouraging possibilities" (by recording lessons learned).
- (c) Be more directive to CCMs about the need for them to have clear written governance rules that spell out the rights of members to speak and vote freely. This will make it easier for CCM members (particularly from civil society) to look into and speak out about grant implementation problems.
- (d) Provide much clearer guidance to CCMs about what is meant by their having ongoing grant-oversight responsibilities.

request TS when it was needed, because the PMU would see that receiving appropriate TS could enhance its chance of earning its full management fee. Sophisticated corporations have no qualms asking for help from consultants. Why can't PRs be the same?

- (e) Provide training, support and other resources to help CCM members evaluate and respond to challenges with grant implementation.

Recommendation 5: Develop a program to educate TS providers and receivers

- (a) Use training and materials to help grant implementers understand that to recognize the need for TS is a sign of strength, not weakness. Make it clear that the GF and TRP will be less impressed with a CCM / PR that fails to acknowledge problems than with one that acknowledges problems and tries to deal with them.
- (b) Identify and disseminate best practices and lessons learned in TS provision, and share this among TS providers, funders, and recipients. In particular, provide examples where TS has helped grants (i) that were in trouble, and (ii) that were performing adequately and got even better.
- (c) Provide documentation containing a menu of types of TS that may be needed in different circumstances (e.g. re proposal development, CCM governance, staffing to strengthen the PR, monitoring the effectiveness of the PR, self-monitoring by the CCM, scaling up the provision of ARVs, etc.). For each type of TS, provide a template for a TOR document regarding the commissioning of relevant TS.
- (d) Encourage the provision of TS that addresses longer-term capacity weaknesses, not just short-term emergency needs.
- (e) Refrain from providing TS in cases where the TS recipient does not have a sense of "ownership" over the process and does not show enthusiasm about implementing TS recommendations.

Chapter 4: Problems Relating to TS Not Meeting Grantee Needs

Problem 9: Grant implementers often don't know what skills they need but don't have

Part of the new mantra is that TS should be “demand-led” rather than “supply-led”. But the problem with demand-led TS is that weak grant implementers often don’t know (or don’t acknowledge) what are the skills that they need but don’t have. As a result, they don’t ask for appropriately focussed TS. And the TS provider/funder can’t really know what is needed; and even if they think they do, the chances of it being accepted are not great.

Problem 10: "TS seekers" and appropriate "TS providers" have difficulties finding each other

In some cases it is difficult for "TS seekers" to select from a plethora of "TS providers". Other times, it is difficult for TS seekers to find any TS providers who can meet a specialized need and are currently available. Mechanisms for matching TS seekers and providers are still relatively basic, and no standardised web-based “dating service” is available.

Problem 11: TS is too often supplier-driven

- (a) TS is often supplier-driven (meaning it consists of what the TS funders or providers can provide or want to provide) rather than being demand-driven (meaning, it consists of what is requested or needed).
- (b) As a result, TS recipients often don’t know what the TS provider is doing or why the TS provider is there.
- (c) When a bilateral or multilateral donor gives a grant to a country, and then that donor also provides or finances TS (whether or not the TS is related to the grant), the recipient is very hesitant to reject or criticize the TS, for fear that this will also threaten future grants from that donor. And that creates a mentality of mute acceptance regarding donor-provided/funded TS.

Problem 12: TS is too often North-based

TS providers are often flown in from Western countries. TS capacity from the same country or region or from other developing countries (“South-South TS”) is not effectively utilized or developed.

Problem 13: TS too often has a short-term focus

All too often, TS is designed to meet short-term emergency needs (akin to asking a doctor to treat one’s symptoms) rather than being proactively planned to meet longer-term capacity weaknesses (akin to asking a personal trainer to help one get fitter). Yet it can be difficult and/or expensive to recruit TS providers for longer interventions.

Problem 14: TS providers are sometimes ill-prepared for the work

- (a) TS providers sometimes commence their project with inadequate briefing.
- (b) TS providers sometimes lack the needed combination of competence and flexibility, finding it difficult to address serious problems without “taking over” the grant, rather than assisting TS recipients to do so.

- (c) As one cynical observer put it: "All too often, TS providers provide the TS that they can provide, rather than the TS that is actually needed. Yet almost everyone ends up happy. The funder of the TS looks good. The TS provider earns money. The TS recipient can assure the GF that there is forward movement. And the TS recipient can ignore the TS provider's recommendations if they wish to. As a result, there is lots of appearance of movement, but not necessarily much real movement. This, of course, is of no consolation to the people who are supposed to receive services through a GF grant that may be in trouble."
- (d) A small number of TS providers focus too much on providing academic-style lectures or designing abstract training curricula.

Problem 15: There is no global knowledge-base on TS

There is no global knowledge-base on TS – no “TS Wikipedia”.⁶ For TS issues that are truly technical rather than that involve dealing with managerial or coordination issues, such a resource may be useful.

Problem 16: Language and cultural barriers often prevent effective TS provision

TS projects that are well-designed often require TS providers who have technical knowledge and local language/cultural knowledge. Few consultants have all of this. So, as the next best thing, TS teams are often created that contain both international consultants and domestic experts, with the latter then working with local-level implementers. But even then, international consultants sometimes lack skills in partnering with domestic counterparts – and their CVs don't reveal this weakness.

Problem 17: TS providers are hesitant to be candid

When TS is provided in the context of seriously troubled grants, the TS provider sometimes doesn't have the courage to candidly discuss the problems. This is particularly so in the many cases where the TS funder, the TS provider, or the TS recipient is a governmental or multilateral entity.⁷

Problem 18: The main form of TS that is needed is often for someone to provide "proactive coordination" among the in-country stakeholders; but often no suitable person is available to play this role

Often, what is needed is not “technical support” in the classic sense, but “coordination support”, in which someone provides “proactive coordination” among the many in-country players involved in GF grant implementation and oversight. But finding the right person to play this “proactive coordination” role is very hard.

This situation applies in both a TS context, and in other contexts. In a TS context, this person has to:

- Get domestic parties to articulate what TS is actually needed.
- Ensure that this TS is actually provided.
- Persuade domestic parties to implement what is recommended by the TS provider.

⁶ Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com) is an enormously popular, comprehensive and up-to-date web-based encyclopedia in which all entries are written and updated by volunteers.

⁷ One particularly angry Westerner with years of in-country experience said "Much TS provided by UN agencies is useless. It is self-serving work that produces reports that few people read. It is mostly written by policy wonks rather than people with deep implementation experience. And it is generally designed to be unthreatening to ineffective ministers and ineffective ministries."

In a non-TS context (e.g. getting agreement on the focus of CCM proposals, or on CCM governance procedures, etc.), this person has to do things like:

- Encourage CCM members to make a clear decision.
- Identify what is blocking effective implementation of that decision.
- Persuade whoever is blocking progress to take appropriate action.

The momentum often dissipates if there isn't someone playing this role.

Unfortunately, it takes a very unusual kind of person to play this "proactive coordination" role. This person has to be willing (and to have the standing) to talk to senior officials in ways that those officials don't necessarily like (e.g. "At a CCM meeting last year, your ministry/organization promised it would do X by two months ago, but it hasn't done so. As a result, other parties can't move, and the project is stuck.")

Sometimes, this role is played by someone who is the lead UNAIDS or WHO official in-country. This work can take over half of their time. The problem is that at the end of his/her term of office, that person might be replaced by someone without those particular skills or interests (or there might be a long gap before the successor arrives), and things grind to a halt.

It's very hard for a national of the country to play this role, because (a) the need is almost full-time, and (b) a domestic player who is not very senior does not have the standing to make such interventions. The CCM Chair rarely has the time to play this role, because he/she will have some other full-time job as well.

Note: A recommendation for dealing with this need is provided in Recommendation 12 in the next chapter.

Problem 19: TS is rarely evaluated

- (a) TS is rarely evaluated, and few models for M&E of TS are available.
- (b) TS recipients usually don't provide candid feedback about the services they have received, particularly when that feedback would be negative.
- (c) Many reports by consultants aren't even read – let alone acted on – by some TS recipients, which makes those reports a complete waste.
- (d) Although expenditure by PRs on TS should be used by the GF as a key indicator, the GF usually can't do that, because the data that it is sent by PRs to the GF is too aggregated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 6: Encourage, within each large country or region, the establishment of a two-level TS provision system⁸

This would work as follows:

- Level 1: Set up a *pool of international consultants*, mostly based outside the country/region, with long-term part-time contracts (e.g. 60 days per year), to come in and out of the country/region as needed.

⁸ This recommendation is based in part on a scheme implemented in China by a large bilateral donor.

- Instruct the pool of international consultants to spend part of their time providing strategic advice to national-level leaders (primarily within the PR), and part of their time providing guidance/training/support to the panels of domestic experts (see next bullet).
- Level 2: Set up one or more *panels of domestic experts* at the local level to provide TS to local implementers.
- Thus, the TS is demand-led: implementers draw down time and expertise from the domestic panels, and the domestic panels draw down time and expertise from the international pool.

Recommendation 7: Create a web-based “TS marketplace”

Create a web-based “TS marketplace” (equivalent to a web-based “dating service”) in which “TS seekers” specify their needs and “TS providers” specify their skills and experience, and members of each group review the other group and then select which members of that group to contact.⁹ Use this, in part, to facilitate South-South TS.

Recommendation 8: Strengthen the TS that is provided

- (a) Provide more non-English-language TS materials.
- (b) Recruit TS providers with appropriate language and cultural competency.
- (c) Encourage short diagnostic visits before full TS teams are fielded.
- (d) Develop training courses for TS providers.

Recommendation 9: Strengthen local TS capacity

- (a) Encourage, and/or provide incentives for, use of local TS providers, and for use of a local counterpart with every international TS team.
- (b) Provide grants and advice for building local institutions that are capable of providing TS.
- (c) Provide support to civil society organizations to become actively engaged as TS providers.
- (d) Draw upon private sector entities that are based in recipient countries and that have skills in management, procurement, and related areas.
- (e) When appropriate, replicate a particular initiative in East Africa in which there is an ad hoc consulting team consisting of a Westerner who has lived for years in the region, working with two senior independent private sector consultants from the region. They have been given consulting assignments regarding PR issues in two or three East African countries, paid for by a Western donor, and things seem to have gone well.

Recommendation 10: Monitor effectiveness of TS

- (a) Establish a system for evaluating the effectiveness of the TS that has been provided, and encourage its widespread use. Make it easier than at present for TS recipients to indicate their unhappiness with TS that is planned or has been delivered (if that is

⁹ This is a substantial project. One key issue is who, if anyone, should evaluate which TS providers have solid track records. Another issue is whether and how to provide this service to TS seekers who are not comfortable communicating their needs through a web interface.

indeed what they feel), in particular by encouraging TS recipients to rate each piece of TS received.¹⁰

- (b) Require grant recipients to inform the GF Secretariat about grant expenditure on TS.

¹⁰ For instance, the rating scheme could range from 'A' ("in terms of usefulness, this TS was within the best 25% of TS we've ever received") through 'D' ("...was within the weakest 25% of TS we've ever received").

Chapter 5: Problems Relating to Funding and to Partner Collaboration

Problem 20: Insufficient funding is available for TS

The GF does not at present finance technical support (other than when grant applicants build TS into their original proposals), and UN agencies that seek to provide or finance TS do not currently have the resources to do so adequately.

Problem 21: Nobody has a clear mandate to provide GF-related TS

Some in the UN agencies have complained, particularly in the earlier GF years, that their agencies have an "unfunded mandate" to "support the Global Fund". Others within those agencies have resisted this view, saying that their agencies have a mandate to help the countries at a technical level, and the GF has a mandate to help those same countries at a financial level, and that for the sake of the countries, there is every reason why the UN agencies and the GF should work together. The fact remains, though, that in any one country, there is always the risk that nobody will step forward to provide GF-related TS.

Problem 22: GF partner agencies do not communicate/coordinate adequately

- (a) GF partner agencies (GF, UN agencies, bilateral agencies, major foundations, national governments):
 - (i) often do not communicate sufficiently about problems that specific grant implementers are facing
 - (ii) often do not communicate sufficiently about their own plans for providing TS
 - (iii) often do not coordinate among themselves about who is best suited to provide TS.
- (b) Sometimes it appears that the cause of insufficient communication and coordination between the agencies is not confusion or overwork, but the fact that different agencies have different underlying ideologies. It's hard to harmonize activities when these different underlying ideologies exist.

Problem 23: The role of GF Fund Portfolio Managers regarding TS is unclear

It is not clear to what extent GF Fund Portfolio Managers are expected – or permitted – to promote and coordinate TS for grants that come under them, or whether they have the training and the time to do so.

Problem 24: Loss of institutional memory is a major problem

There are huge problems with loss of institutional memory. Just as someone (civil servant, UN official, whatever) gets to the point of understanding what's really going on, he/she gets assigned to a different department or country, and the memory is easily lost.

Problem 25: TS providers are often unaware of each other's lessons learned

Large bilateral funders and providers of TS, and smaller private sector and NGO-based providers of TS, have gained vast experience over the years, have learned many lessons from mistakes made, and have developed much good practice. But what they have learned is often not shared with other TS funders and TS providers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 11: Significantly increase funding for TS

- (a) On a global basis, establish a pool of "TS money" (provided by the GF and/or other sources) that grant implementers can apply for:
 - (i) to cover the modest cost of doing a gap analysis regarding skills and capacity, and then creating a TS plan to address those gaps (as per Step 1 in Recommendation 1 above).
 - (ii) to cover the more substantial cost of providing the TS itself.

In each case, if either form of "TS money" is to be provided by the GF, the GF Secretariat (possibly backed by a TRP-like committee) should evaluate requests and make approval decisions based on GF board guidelines. If the money is to be provided by a source other than the GF, the ground rules for its use should be determined by the funder, the GF, and others as appropriate. The amount of TS money needed per country may not bear much relation to the size of the actual GF grants to that country.

- (b) In addition, or as an alternative, on a country-by-country basis, establish a pool of "TS money" (provided by the GF and/or other sources) that PRs and SRs can apply for, with decisions regarding the allocation of that pool being made by the government or CCM or PR of our country. That way, it becomes clear to the TS provider, and to all other parties, that the client is the government/CCM/PR, not the provider of the pool of money. (Of course, if the government/CCM/PR chooses not to spend from the pool, or if it cannot demonstrate that the pool has been made effective use of, the pool should not then be topped up.)

Recommendation 12: For each country/disease combination, choose a "lead agency" to coordinate TS issues

- (a) Obtain agreement, on a global basis, that within each country and regarding each disease, TS issues will be coordinated by one agency (the "lead agency"). This doesn't mean that the lead agency has to provide all the TS, or to control who provides it. But the lead agency should look for and seek to avoid gaps and overlaps in TS provision. And it should be accountable, so if TS is not provided, or is duplicative, or is ineffective, people will know whom to point the finger at.
- (b) The "lead agency" should observe whether the PR is spending its TS budget appropriately, adequately and effectively, and should report its findings to both the CCM and the GF.
- (c) If the PR doesn't want the TS that has been budgeted for, that's OK if the things that the TS is designed to achieve are being achieved without the TS. But if the PR doesn't want the TS, and the things the TS is designed to achieve are not being achieved, this should be reported by the lead agency to the CCM and the GF.
- (d) The decision as to who should serve as the lead agency in a particular country regarding a particular disease should be based not just on institutional strengths/interests globally and locally, but also on the personal strengths/interests of the local head of that agency, particularly if the lead agency also has to play the "proactive coordination" role described in Problem 18 above. Thus, it might be that in Country X regarding Disease Y, a particular UN agency should be the current lead agency, and the in-country head of that agency should play the "proactive coordination" role. But when that person leaves the country and is replaced by his/her successor, it might be that the successor is much less suited to that role, and

the head of some other agency should play that role. But the decision should certainly not be made based on whose “turn” it is.

- (e) For each country and disease, the decision as to who will serve as lead agency should be made by the CCM (or jointly by the CCM and a global committee such as GIST). This selection should be repeated at least annually (including whenever the person who has been taking the lead coordination role within the current lead agency ceases to be available, or when the CCM believes there is a need for a change), and, as just discussed, should be made based in part on the interests and skills of the person who will play this role, not just based on the agency this person works for.
- (f) Although the lead agency will often be a UN agency, it could in fact be any pre-existing international or domestic public or private entity, so long as its representative is based in-country.
- (g) The lead agency should have the following responsibilities:^{11 12}
 - 1. Serve as the “proactive coordinator” (as described in Problem 18 above) regarding all the forms of coordination between stakeholders that are needed if GF grants are to succeed. This includes being tactfully pushy or opinionated when blockages are identified.
 - 2. Regarding TS issues:
 - i. Look for and encourage the avoidance of gaps and overlaps in TS provision. (However, the lead agency should not be expected to provide all of the TS; indeed, sometimes it will provide none of it.)
 - ii. Support the CCM/PR in the development of a TS plan for each GF grant.
 - iii. Encourage PR/SRs to recognize and articulate their TS needs.
 - iv. Push for TS to be provided in a way that meets those needs.
 - v. Push for a candid evaluation of the TS that has been provided.
 - vi. Where the evaluation of the TS that has been provided is positive, urge PR/SRs to implement what was recommended by the TS provider.
 - vii. Inform the CCM whether the PR is spending its TS budget as per the TS plan, and whether the TS has led to the anticipated results/benefits.
 - viii. Be accountable, so if TS is not provided or is ineffective, people know who to complain to.
 - 3. Regarding non-TS issues:
 - i. Do whatever is needed to help and encourage the CCM to function effectively when – as happens all too often – its own momentum dissipates.
 - 4. Attend all CCM meetings.
 - 5. Work closely with the CCM Chair and the CCM Secretariat.
 - 6. Pass on institutional memory to the next lead agency representative.

¹¹ In theory, all these tasks are performed by the CCM and its various members. But in reality, this is often – maybe usually – not happening.

¹² A stronger version of this recommendation would be to establish a staffed *Global Fund Facilitation Unit* in each country or region, performing these roles and maybe more.

Note that these many responsibilities collectively require the availability of a senior person with high standing who is able to work between quarter-time and full-time in this role, often backed up by one or more less senior professionals.

Note also that the lead agency plays a coordinating role, but not a controlling role. It is for the lead agency to persuade stakeholders to take effective action; but it cannot require them to.

- (h) Whether the lead agency will need external funding will depend upon circumstances.

Recommendation 13: For each country, develop an in-country forum of partners (or strengthen it, if it exists) to discuss TS needs and related issues

- (a) Partners in-country need to work collaboratively to address grant-implementation bottlenecks, identify resources available, and drive demand for TS.
- (b) This can only happen where there is support by the government in question for such a coordination group. There are already several models of in-country coordination groups.
- (c) In some cases forums could be built on UN Theme Groups and in-country UN reform efforts. But civil society, which is not normally part of such forums, must be included.
- (d) This should be piloted in a few countries.
- (e) The initiative should not be too formal or bureaucratic. It should be tailored to country circumstances and players.

Recommendation 14: Clarify the roles of, and fund and encourage increased use of, existing multilateral TS-related facilities and committees

- (a) Build on the role of GIST (the *Global Problem-solving and Implementation Support Team* – see item A.1 in the Appendix) so that it can provide more intensive consultation to more countries. Perhaps encourage all grantees to have at least annual interactions with GIST staff.
- (b) Fund and encourage increased use of *UNAIDS Technical Support Facilities* (see item A.2 in the Appendix).
- (c) Fund and encourage increased use of *WHO Knowledge Hubs* (see item A.3 in the Appendix).

Recommendation 15: Develop a forum through which TS funders and TS providers can mutually discuss lessons learned and best practice

Such a forum could deal with global lessons, and country-specific lessons. And it could consist of in-person meetings, published or privately-circulated papers, and/or public or password-protected web sites.

Appendix: Background on Existing TS-Related Structures and Processes

Introduction

This appendix describes the following TS-related structures, processes, and documentation. Most of the data shown here was gathered a year ago; some updates may have occurred since then.

A: Technical Support Structures and Processes

1. Global Problem-solving and Implementation Support Team (GIST)
2. UNAIDS Technical Support Facilities (TSFs)
3. WHO Knowledge Hubs
4. World Bank AIDS Strategy & Action Plan (ASAP)
5. GTZ BACKUP Initiative
6. US Government Support to Global Fund Grants
7. Civil Society Action Team (CSAT)

B. High level strategic meeting on technical assistance

C: Background Documentation

1. Keith Bezanson: "*Replenishing the Global Fund: An Independent Assessment: 2005*"
2. GAO 2005 report on the GF
3. *Updated Discussion Paper on the Core Business Model of a mature Global Fund*, GF/B9/5, Nov. 2004
4. "*Ad Hoc Working Group on Technical Support for Grant Implementation and Performance*" – GF Board paper GF/B9/13 – November 2004
5. *Global Fund Board decisions on Technical Support, 9th GF board meeting, Nov. 2004*
6. "*Challenges and Opportunities for the New Executive Director of the Global Fund: Seven Essential Tasks*", Report of the Global Fund Working Group, Center for Global Development, October 2006
7. "*Making the Money Work through greater UN support for AIDS responses – the 2006-2007 Consolidated UN Technical Support Plan for AIDS*"
8. "*Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination Among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors: Final Report, 14 June 2005*"
9. "*Discussion Paper: Global Task Team Working Group 2 – Harmonization of Technical Support*"

A: Technical Support Structures and Processes

1. Global Problem-solving and Implementation Support Team (GIST)

The GIST is a forum for UN technical agencies and major funding entities such as the Global Fund and the World Bank to mobilize and harmonize the effective use of AIDS-related

resources in countries. It was established in July 2005 by the UNAIDS Secretariat, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, the World Bank and the Global Fund Secretariat in response to recommendations from the Global Task Team. The GIST was expanded in November 2006 to include donor, civil society and other organizations.

GIST's mission is to improve: (1) the alignment of financial donors and providers of technical support; and (2) coordination of technical support to address implementation bottlenecks and help "make the money work" at the country level. Its member organizations meet on a regular basis to review immediate and medium-term technical support needs, take decisions on joint and coordinated technical support to be provided, evaluate progress and assess performance of such support, and look at ways to improve interaction between GIST member organizations and countries.

Examples of GIST activities include:

- generating in-country dialogue to address TS needs
- facilitating procurement and supply management
- helping resolve governance and management problems related to CCM and PR functioning and coordination between Global Fund and World Bank programmes

2. UNAIDS Technical Support Facilities (TSFs)

TSFs deliver TS in a number of priority areas including: monitoring and evaluation, resource tracking, strategic and operational planning, costing and budgeting, organizational development, management (including financial management), partnership development, prevention, gender and mainstreaming.

TSF services are available at a reasonable cost to national AIDS coordinating authorities, government ministries and departments, civil society, and business sector and development partners. The Facilities help programmes locate good, regionally based, short-term consultants by using databases and partner networks to track the quality of individual consultants' work. The TSFs actively promote the use of regional expertise.

The TSFs are increasingly coordinating their efforts with the GIST, the AIDS Strategy and Action Plan Service (ASAP), WHO Knowledge Hubs and other mechanisms to better harmonize TS to country partners. Discussions are under way with the Global Fund Secretariat on how the TSFs can better support Fund-financed programmes.

Specific examples of country-level progress achieved with TSF assistance include:

- national strategic planning
- mainstreaming of HIV and gender in national AIDS plans
- development of TS frameworks for UN Theme Groups
- development of the national monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- development of a multi-donor funding mechanism
- assistance with Round 6 Global Fund grant proposals

3. WHO Knowledge Hubs

Knowledge Hubs are intended to improve access to and use of Global Fund and other large grant programs by supporting the development of local technical capacity. A chief aim of the Knowledge Hub project is to develop a number of existing regional institutions and networks

into centres that can take the lead in providing technical backup to Global Fund applicants or grantees. Knowledge hubs are expected to:

- provide direct TS (with mechanisms to purchase TS, services and goods, and by training a pool of experts from the region that can assume such functions)
- systematically build capacity for technical support (by providing training opportunities for key in-country staff)
- support technical resource networks (by catalyzing links between individuals and institutions)
- adapt normative guidance to local conditions (by making working documents appropriate and accessible).

As an example, since December 2003 one Regional Knowledge Hub has been providing TS to countries throughout Eurasia. The Knowledge Hub is collaborating with international experts and educational institutions throughout the region to develop and provide a series of training workshops and online resources designed to give practitioners the skills necessary to improve care for people living with HIV.

4. World Bank AIDS Strategy & Action Plan (ASAP)

ASAP responds to country requests for support in developing well-prioritized, evidence-based, results-focused, and costed AIDS strategies and action plans. The program was created in response to a Global Task Team recommendation that multilateral agencies provide expanded assistance to countries to develop strategic AIDS plans. ASAP is hosted by the World Bank on behalf of UNAIDS.

Through ASAP, AIDS specialists from UN organizations, non-UN institutions and local and international consultants provide technical support directly to countries on development of their national HIV/AIDS strategies. ASAP can also provide “peer reviews” of existing national strategies. The program has developed a scorecard-style tool (with guidelines) that countries can use themselves to assess their AIDS strategies.

Potential activities for ASAP include:

- Support for enhancing national strategies and annual action plans through review of plans, as well as TS in response to country requests
- Facilitating planning processes to develop AIDS strategies
- Knowledge management and capacity building
- Support for coordination, harmonization and alignment of efforts of different stakeholders in development of strategic plans

5. GTZ BACKUP Initiative

The purpose of the GTZ BACKUP Initiative is to support the development of partner countries' capacity to utilize global financing through the Global Fund, World Bank MAP and other global AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria initiatives. Launched in 2002, the Initiative provides and strengthens technical competence in countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe.

Specific objectives of the BACKUP Initiative are:

- to strengthen national coordination, in particular CCMs and their member

organisations

- to strengthen national and international partnerships in a joint effort to make global finance work
- to assist in developing relevant skills and knowledge of stakeholder implementing organisations
- to assist in the development and application of monitoring and evaluation systems in line with international standards.

Collaboration with the Global Fund is focused on CCM development. Joint activities include the organisation of sub-regional CCM meetings to provide a forum of exchange, guidance and information on Global Fund processes; a series of CCM case studies to identify challenges, opportunities and good practice; support to the coordination of BACKUP financed multilateral and bilateral technical support activities; and collaboration on the development of a sustainable technical support model for improved utilization of financial resources.

6. US Government Support to Global Fund Grants

The US government supports Global Fund grant performance through bilateral country programs, regional offices, and a Congressionally-authorized program that allows withholding of up to 5% of funds made available to the Global Fund, with that 5% then being used to fund TS related to Global Fund activities.

Guiding principles for the “5% TS program” include:

- targeting assistance to grants with bottlenecks in governance, program and financial management, procurement and logistics, or monitoring and evaluation
- being demand driven (only CCMs or PRs can request support)
- being short term in duration (about six weeks)
- not being used for new proposal development

As of November 2006, 25 countries had submitted 40 requests for assistance, primarily in the areas of organizational development, M&E, and procurement and supply management. Lessons learned in the first round of TS provision included the importance of limiting the number of different requests per country, clarifying parameters for UNDP technical support requests (in its role as a PR), encouraging more short diagnostic visits before full technical support teams are fielded, and reconsidering at which phases of the grant cycle technical support can be effectively provided.

Staff working on the program have identified the need for earlier “intelligence” from the Global Fund secretariat about challenges with grant implementation, better communication with in-country partners, and systematic advertisement to grantees of the utility and advantages of TS early in the grant cycle.

7. Civil Society Action Team (CSAT)

Civil society delegations of the Global Fund Board have formed the Civil Society Action Team (CSAT) for Universal Access. The strategic objectives of CSAT are to:

- work with relevant partners to improve Global Fund grant performance and accelerate grant implementation; support local, independent monitoring of Global

Fund grant implementation; and help anticipate and overcome grant implementation bottlenecks

- establish a routine communications channel between country-level civil society stakeholders and the Global Fund Secretariat
- support independent monitoring of Global Fund Grant implementation
- advocate for improvements in GIST performance and serve as the civil society focal point for communications with the GIST
- ensure that civil society sources of TS or management assistance from the global South and global North are organized and effectively utilized
- increase capacity of civil society stakeholders in order to expand the number of NGO Principal Recipients or Lead Sub-Recipients of Global Fund or other funding sources.

B. High level strategic meeting on TS

In October 2006 The Global Fund and key technical partners met to discuss more effective coordination and provision of TS during proposal development and grant negotiation and implementation. The project is ongoing and its goal is to identify out what forms of TS have been most effective during these three phases, and then to encourage more such TS to be provided.

At that meeting, four workstreams were identified for follow up:

1. Joint analysis of outcomes in GF proposal development with focus on effective TS. The plan is to identify what factors have led to successful proposals in funding Rounds 1 – 6. Partners will ask where technical support has been helpful and where it could have helped. This workstream should lead to recommendations regarding where TS is provided and what types of TS are most effective given different country circumstances.
2. Strengthening support of partners in proposal development, building on best practices and lessons learned. The goal is to use lessons learned from workstream 1 to put in place appropriate TS by partner organizations to help with proposal development.
3. Engagement of partners in grant negotiation. The focus is to provide appropriate TS by partners to help with development of good workplans and budgets at the time of grant negotiation. Grant negotiations involve determining indicators to be measured and setting disease-specific targets, as well as addressing any systemic and management weaknesses that may have been identified during LFA assessments. These issues are often inadequately resourced and addressed in budgets, workplans and among partner agencies.
4. Improved partner engagement in grant oversight. This workstream will address the need for partners to provide appropriate TS to help with grant oversight, particularly through CCMs. This includes TS as well as systematic, meaningful and sustained engagement by partners in processes within (and often beyond) the CCM. The goal is to promote identification of bottlenecks as early as possible and for partners to effectively coordinate responses.

C: Background Documentation

1. Keith Bezanson: "Replenishing the Global Fund: An Independent Assessment: 2005"
[\(www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/about/replenishment/assessment_report_en.pdf\)](http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/about/replenishment/assessment_report_en.pdf)

Excerpt:

Can the need for technical assistance be addressed and solved without the Global Fund becoming either a technical assistance agency or a financial agency for technical assistance? There is general agreement that LFAs do not (at least generally) have the capacity to do principal recipient analysis and also that many countries and CCMs are simply not equipped to prepare or coordinate proposals. One proposal is to provide Global Fund financing to permit CCMs to obtain their own technical assistance. Would this not risk becoming very labour intensive? Is the problem best approached thorough improved coordination by ensuring that donors, including the United Nations technical agencies, respond quickly with adequate technical assistance to CCM requests? Could call down agreements be pre-negotiated and guaranteed financing set aside for these?

2. GAO 2005 report on the GF
[\(www.gao.gov/new.items/d05639.pdf\)](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05639.pdf)

Excerpt:

UNAIDS and WHO officials in Geneva and in the field expressed strong support for the Global Fund but consistently raised concerns about their organizations' ability to respond to increasing numbers of requests from grant recipients for help in addressing issues underlying performance problems. For example, although UNAIDS recently added about 30 monitoring and evaluation officers in its country and regional offices, officials said that the agency's resources are being stretched thin and that it cannot provide assistance to all Global Fund grant recipients. Likewise, WHO officials said that its regional and country staff are dedicated to providing technical assistance, but because WHO is not funded to support Global Fund grants it is often unable to respond to all recipients' requests for help. According to officials from WHO's HIV/AIDS, Stop TB, and Roll Back Malaria departments, the Global Fund works under the assumption that UN agencies have a mandate to provide technical assistance. However, unless it gets more money from its member countries for this purpose, WHO does not have the resources to keep up with the massive increase in need for technical assistance owing to Global Fund grants.

3. Updated Discussion Paper on the Core Business Model of a mature Global Fund, GF/B9/5, Nov. 2004
[\(www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/boardmeeting9/qfb905.pdf\)](http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/boardmeeting9/qfb905.pdf)

Excerpts:

- The Global Fund does not and should not provide technical assistance. However, many recipients turn to the Secretariat for information on where they can secure technical assistance. Strong collaboration with technical partners, especially WHO and UNAIDS, means that the Secretariat is usually well-positioned to direct recipients to these organizations. However, there is less information systematically available either about less traditional sources of technical assistance (e.g., the private sector) or about technical assistance to address some of the managerial bottlenecks that recipients are encountering as they scale-up (e.g., financial management systems at peripheral level,

procurement and supply management capacity). To respond to the requests of recipients, the Secretariat could continue with the current ad hoc approach, or could develop (or outsource the development of) a more systematized response. For example, this could take the form of a robust information platform that would enable recipients to learn about purveyors of technical assistance, so they could identify an entity well-suited to address their particular challenges. Such a platform could be interactive, with recipients able to connect directly with providers of technical assistance in a virtual brokering service that would optimize the use of Global Fund resources available for technical assistance...

- [One option] would be to reserve (each time a proposal is approved) an additional amount to create a fund from which a CCM could pay for technical assistance. The amount would be a function of a combination of the size of the proposal and the quality of the CCM... [W]ell-performing CCMs would have more funds placed at their disposal to finance technical assistance, whereas those that have demonstrated no commitment to broad representation and good governance would not be allocated any funds.

4. "Ad Hoc Working Group on Technical Support for Grant Implementation and Performance" – GF Board paper GF/B9/13 – November 2004

(www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/boardmeeting9/gfb913.pdf)

Excerpts:

- For the purpose of Working Group meeting discussions, the term “technical support” is used to encompass capacity building, technical assistance, and technical cooperation.
- Over the past two years, there has been an increasing recognition by stakeholders on the Board and at country level, as well as by the Secretariat, of the critical need for technical support to assure the success of Global Fund programs from design through to implementation. However, there has been a lack of clarity on what technical support means, what it should cover, who should be responsible for coordinating and delivering it to countries, how best to harmonize technical support dedicated to Global Fund grant purposes vs. other country needs, and who is responsible for funding it.
- Technical support should be country-led, demand driven.
- There is a general lack of awareness by countries of their technical support needs... When CCMs have identified technical support needs, often they are not aware of the modalities for funding such support or its availability at international, regional and national levels.
- Technical support to Global Fund grants has not been provided in a systematic manner but has rather been Ad Hoc to respond to immediate problems rather than looking at long term planning for overall sustainable capacity building. The Ad Hoc approach [is] not working in some cases, due to a failure to communicate Global Fund policies and lack of coordination among potential suppliers of support at country level.
- Though many partners in countries recognize the technical support needs of Principal Recipients, often these partners have their own development priorities, strategies, and objectives to reach, and are willing to stretch themselves to some extent, but in some cases cannot respond to the wide range of needs identified to ensure success of Global Fund programs.

- It is assumed that many partners will be able to provide technical support to meet Global Fund grant needs, but there are still unanswered questions around who is going to pay for the technical support provided by partners on the ground, who is going to coordinate technical support on the ground, and who is finally accountable for it.
- One important (and often underutilized) source of technical support to CCMs is, existing national experts from the public sector, civil society, academia, the private sector and affected communities. This is a resource that should be used.
- The Secretariat could identify an appropriate partner or partners to develop a handout or users' guide on technical support. In order to help recipients determine appropriate service providers for technical support when needed, this guide should highlight cost of services and relevant providers locally, regionally and internationally.
- The Global Fund Secretariat should proactively seek and publish on the website as well as through other channels best practices on technical support and promote these to recipients.

5. Global Fund Board decisions on Technical Support, 9th GF board meeting, Nov. 2004

(From www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/boardmeeting9/gfb92020.pdf)

Decision Point 1:

- The Board recognizes the critical importance of technical support for the proposal development stage and throughout the lifecycle of the grant, particularly from partners in the country. The Board encourages CCMs to engage with providers of technical support during proposal development and throughout the lifecycle of a grant. The Board encourages providers of technical support to engage with CCMs, PRs and SRs to respond to their needs, in coordination with other national and international efforts. The Board also encourages providers of technical support to assist countries in developing their own capacity.
- The Board also asks the Secretariat to clearly communicate to CCMs and PRs that technical support can be funded through the Global Fund grants. In addition, donors who provide resources to the Global Fund are encouraged to provide additional resources for technical support where gaps in available resources for technical support occur, in order to maximize the impact of the grants.

Decision Point 2:

- The Board requests the Secretariat to develop communication strategies and processes to engage with appropriate partners (multi- and bilateral partners, international and national NGOs, south-south horizontal initiatives, private sector, academia) to facilitate the provision of technical support throughout the lifecycle of the grant (proposal development, grant negotiation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) in a timely and coordinated manner.

Decision Point 3:

- The Board recognizes the efforts of the Secretariat to develop an early warning system to identify technical support needs.

6. “*Challenges and Opportunities for the New Executive Director of the Global Fund: Seven Essential Tasks*”, Report of the Global Fund Working Group, Center for Global Development, October 2006
(www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/boardmeeting9/qfb905.pdf)

Excerpt:

When the Global Fund was founded, international discussion primarily focused on the need for scaled-up financial resources. There was much less discussion about the need to scale-up other complementary resources, including TA for countries where the capacity to design and implement effective programs was limited. When the Global Fund’s founders designed it to focus primarily on financing, they implicitly assumed that in most cases country capacity and TA availability would not be significant limitations, and that where they were, TA could be easily ramped up by other agencies. This has turned out not to be the case, and it has become clear that the international community dramatically underestimated TA requirements.

Many countries face significant constraints in human resources, basic management and health systems infrastructure. Specific TA needs differ across countries, as does the quality and amount of local supply. In some cases, TA is needed at the proposal development stage, with care to ensure that TA helps countries design and communicate better strategies while respecting country-led approaches. In other cases, TA is needed to assist programs to scale up rapidly, to meet performance goals, to assist with under-performing grants, and to build long-term capacity. Within this context, defining TA needs should be a country-driven process. Civil society and NGO groups that are implementing programs sometimes need TA, while other civil society organizations (local and international) can be important suppliers of TA. As with other aspects of programs, there is often a tension between the desire to move as quickly as possible in attacking diseases and the need to build long-term capacity within recipient countries.

There are three distinct TA challenges:

- *Inadequate supply.* Many countries are facing difficulties in finding sufficient levels of high quality TA to meet their needs, and where high quality TA is available, often systems are not in place to ensure that countries can access it in a timely manner.
- *Information gaps.* PRs and SRs often do not know how to find TA, or how to determine whether the available TA has the knowledge and skills and experience to perform effectively. As a result, some programs struggle to find and use available TA productively, while others use TA of questionable quality.
- *Funding.* The Global Fund does not directly provide TA, as its founders explicitly determined that other agencies were better suited to supply TA. Unfortunately, what was not decided was how to pay for it. There are two basic approaches: either finance TA directly out of grants (either as originally programmed or re-programmed), allowing PRs and SRs to buy TA, or for other agencies to supply it. With the first option, the information gaps described above are more salient. The second approach has led to much acrimony and debate, with other organizations drawing attention to the “unfunded mandate” to provide TA to “Global Fund” programs. What is clear, however, is that the international community has not adequately responded to the challenge to provide these agencies with the funds necessary to meet overall global needs, including those of national programs supported by Global Fund grants. Attempts to address these issues through the Global

Joint Problem-Solving and Implementation Support Team (GIST) and the Global Task Team (GTT) are making some notable progress, but have not yet been completely successful, and have not yet included all key groups such as NGOs and civil society organizations, among others.

Recommendations: Technical Assistance

1. Help Establish a Global Initiative to Identify and Increase High Quality TA

The new ED and the Global Fund clearly cannot address the TA issue on their own. Systematic efforts to work through these issues cooperatively between agencies are still in their early stages... The new ED should convene the [proposed] Heads of Agencies Group to jointly determine what steps are needed and what support is required at a global level for each of the three diseases, and then collectively approach the international community with proposed solutions. The group should both stimulate new ideas and actively support currently defined partnerships where they exist. One possibility would be to establish a global pool for financing TA, similar to global pools of financing for drug and commodity purchases.

2. Encourage the Development of an Information Market for TA

PRs and SRs need better access to information about available high-quality TA. The new ED, working closely with other agencies, should encourage further information exchange and greater coordination of TA, including supporting the initiation of greater web-based information exchange, where "TA seekers" and "TA providers" can more easily find each other. This should be based on existing coordination systems within partnerships such as UNAIDS, the Stop TB partnership, and Roll Back Malaria, and should include civil society and NGO groups. Facilitating greater information exchange on TA is not straightforward, and requires careful consideration of quality control, among other issues. The Global Fund should not be the lead agency in this endeavor, but the new ED should help stimulate a deepening of information exchange and much better matching of needs with availability, working in conjunction with other agencies.

In addition to these two recommendations, the new ED also should explore options to ensure that programs build in adequate TA from the start, rather than scrambling to find qualified and available TA later. One option to explore is whether or not a TA review should be requisite for grant approval. In addition, the Global Fund should encourage PRs to use high-quality local TA where available. This would be a first step in the broader, long-term challenge of building local capacity. Countries have built significant capacity to fight the diseases over the last decade, and the challenge is to accelerate the process of building that capacity while meeting the immediate needs of ongoing programs.

7. "Making the Money Work through greater UN support for AIDS responses – the 2006-2007 Consolidated UN Technical Support Plan for AIDS"

(http://data.unaids.org/UNA-docs/TechSupportPlan_Aug05_en.pdf)

Excerpt:

The current system for channeling and utilizing nationally and internationally available resources for technical support is presently performing inadequately. In particular, the system suffers from insufficient needs assessment; poor national leadership affecting prioritization of technical support needs; poor allocation of funds; poor coordination between technical agencies and between providers and funders; and poor utilization of local and regional technical support capacity....

...The Consolidated UN Technical Support Plan marks a significant departure from past approaches in nine important respects.

- The plan provides, for the first time, a unified and consolidated UN-sourced technical support plan to address implementation bottlenecks (in contrast to the presentation of piecemeal, parallel and sometimes competitive plans and appeals in the past).
- The plan is based on an explicit and rational division of labour underpinned by an analysis of the comparative advantages of each of the Cosponsors with respect to addressing specific implementation bottlenecks.
- The Lead Organization approach provides national stakeholders with clarity regarding which UN organization should be contacted for each specific technical support requirement, as well as a means to hold one organization accountable for the UN's provision of high-quality technical support.
- A unified budgetary mechanism, building on the UNAIDS Programme Acceleration Funds (PAF), will be used to finance the additional technical support⁶.
- The technical support within the Plan will be provided directly by UNAIDS Cosponsors and—where needed—purchased from local, regional and international organizations, both public and private. Implementation of the Plan will thereby contribute to the development of regional technical support capacity and South-South cooperation. In other words, the Plan will be implemented by both UN and non-UN technical support providers including, critically, civil society organizations (CSO).
- The mechanism developed to identify, supply, manage and evaluate technical support introduces new quality assurance procedures. In particular, the purchasing of all technical support will be subject to a number of safeguards, which will include an external review of products and services to improve the quality of technical support provided, as well as manage real and apparent conflicts of interest.
- The Plan establishes an explicit balance between technical support addressing prevention and treatment and care interventions.
- The UNAIDS Cosponsors and Secretariat agreed to focus their attention on a limited number of priority countries to enhance optimal utilization of technical support funds.
- A Global Problem-Solving and Implementation Support Team (GIST) has been established to support inclusive country-level technical needs assessments, and strengthen links with regional and global level stakeholders to address those needs.

8. *Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination Among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors: Final Report, 14 June 2005*

(www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/links_resources/library/studies/PP_GEN2_full.pdf)

Excerpt:

There is currently a mismatch between the need for technical support and the financing available for it, as well as inefficiencies in the delivery of the support. Financing for programme activities has increased enormously, but this has not been accompanied by a concomitant rise in funding for technical support. The Global Fund's attempt to use a purely country-driven approach to the financing of technical

support has generally not resulted in a sufficient volume of resources within grant agreements being devoted to technical support, and structurally it cannot address the financing of the upstream work of proposal development. Thus while countries are scaling up their AIDS responses and are asking the UN system for more technical support, UN agencies may have not receive additional resources to respond to these requests. The result is that the UN system struggles to fulfill an unfunded mandate.

Additionally, there is insufficient coordination of technical support, competition among multilateral institutions providing the support, and under-utilized local and regional sources of technical support. Recent innovations in horizontal and south-south cooperation require additional international support, as do key local providers of technical support, such as national academic institutions and civil society groups.

Recommendation (excerpt):

3.4. The Global Task Team recommends that: Financing for technical support be considerably increased, including by expanding and refocusing UNAIDS Programme Acceleration Funds so they enable the UN system and others to scale up the provision and facilitation of technical support, based on requests by countries.

- UNAIDS will broaden the scope and means of access to Programme Acceleration Funds to ensure that they can be used to finance the provision of technical support by the UN system, local entities (such as civil society organizations, private sector firms, and governments), regional organizations and technical support facilities, south-south cooperation efforts, multilateral institutions, and others, with further financing provided based on performance.
- UNAIDS and partners will determine the most effective way of financing the expansion of the Programme Acceleration Funds, such as in the form of additional commitments in the Global Fund Replenishment mechanism.
- Through the existing World Bank/WHO capacity-building programme and other initiatives, multilateral institutions and international partners will intensify their efforts to build national capacity on procurement and supply chain management.

9. *Discussion Paper: Global Task Team Working Group 2 – Harmonization of Technical Support*

Excerpt:

...the effort to assist high burden, resource limited countries to manage the technical aspects of HIV/AIDS interventions is suffering for the lack of a number of key inputs and structures. Implementers and government administrators often do not have a good sense of what assistance could be helpful to address their needs, let alone which organizations may be able to provide it. Providers, for their part, often do not have any systematic, timely sense of how much technical assistance is needed, of what kind, and where. Finally, donors are typically financing support reactively, in response to observed problems well downstream.

In response to these challenges, the paper will offer several potential solutions for discussion by the working group:

- A collaborative needs assessment process feeding into National Technical Support Plans (NTSPs). The NTSPs would be compiled by countries with high level support by multilateral agencies, and updated regularly via “rolling assessments.” They would then form the basis for provision of technical support by all multilateral agencies.

- A Clearing House for International Technical Support (CHITS). There are two possible models for this mechanism. The collaborative model would offer providers and funders a real-time database of country needs, from which agencies would allocate resources as appropriate. The competitive model would allow countries to select providers of technical assistance on the basis of past performance.
- A new funding mechanism for technical support. This might be replenished by a fixed proportion of all grant approvals from the Global Fund, MAP, and bilateral agencies, and would go to a central fund for technical support. The fund would be managed under an independent body with participatory and inclusive governance structure.
- The expansion of the Global Fund's existing early warning system. This would strengthen the linkages between those in need of technical support, those who provide it, and those who finance it.