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Sub Recipient Survey: A brief report on opinions and perceptions from the East African Region

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Sub recipients (SRs) are country level organizations directly responsible for implementing Global Fund programs. Their role is central in providing services to the populations of need. Little research has been done to understand their experiences and document their opinions on how Global Fund operations can be improved. Aidspan surveyed SRs across 4 countries in the High Impact Africa I region (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda). The survey reported a mixed picture of opinions and experiences with PRs and Global Fund processes. This brief describes the survey methodology, results, and provides recommendations from SRs for the improvement of Global Fund processes.

Introduction The Global Fund was established to support countries in fighting malaria, HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis. The Fund's guiding principles include having a system of long-distance management, no direct implementation responsibility and therefore no-country presence. Whilst principal recipients (PR) are responsible for oversight of program implementation (as well as some implementation), most field implementation is done by SRs. Larger SRs may also sub-grant to smaller organizations (sub-sub recipients [SSRs]). SRs are usually local or national entities, and can be from the governmental, civil society or private sectors.

Following an Aidspan [survey](#) which assessed the opinions and experiences of PRs on a number of Global Fund processes, an analysis of the opinions of grant implementers was suggested. To date, there have no published surveys of the organizations that interact both with the Global Fund infrastructure and the

beneficiaries on the ground. Aidspan's survey gathered information on the following topics:

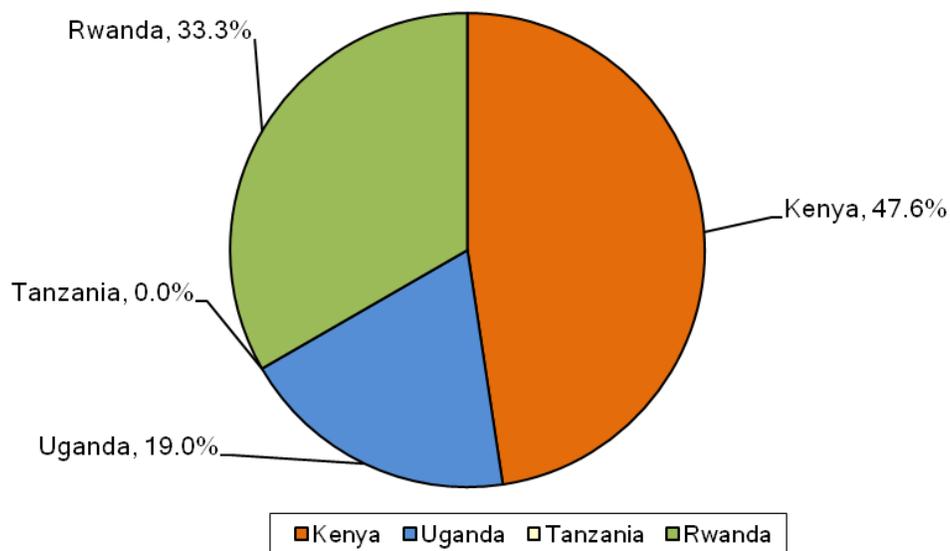
- **Opinions about their organizational capacity to implement Global Fund programs**
- **Experiences of SRs in management of SSRs**
- **Relationships and communication with PRs**
- **PR support in program implementation**
- **Opinions of and experiences with local fund agents (LFAs)**
- **Interactions with Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs)**
- **Experiences with funding disbursements**

Methodology An online survey of SRs across 4 countries in the High Impact Africa I region (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda) was carried out. The pre-tested questionnaire was sent to representatives of 318 SR organizations. Each survey respondent was provided with a gift voucher of USD15.00 for

participation and entered into a five-winner draw of USD100.

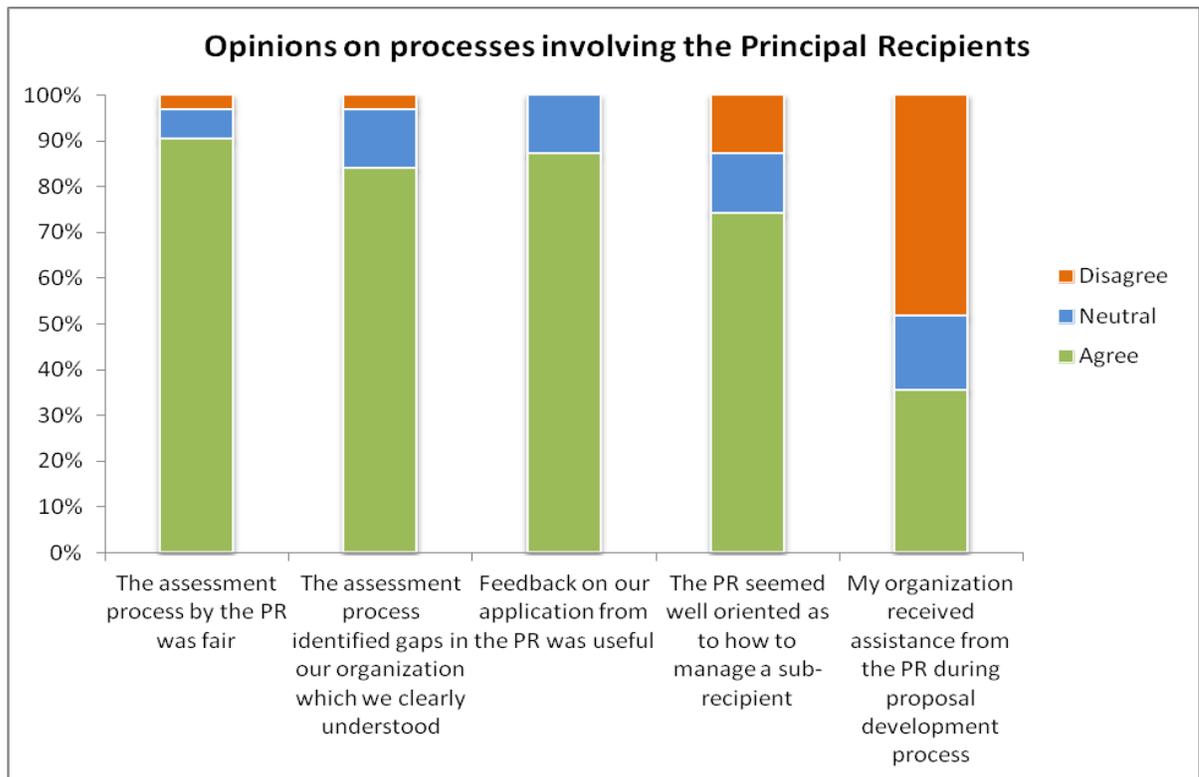
Respondent rate and characteristics Of the 318 surveys sent to SRs and SSRs in East Africa, only 42 responded to the survey (13.2%). Most responses were from Kenya (47.6%). No responses were received from Tanzania. Over two thirds (67.6%) of the respondents were from SR organizations that had been Global Fund grant recipients for 1 to 4 years. The number of employees supported by Global Fund grants ranged from 1 to 8 with an average of 3 employees.

Total organizational annual expenditure in the year 2012 ranged from less than USD 100,000 to more than USD 10 million. Most (34.4%) organizations indicated an annual expenditure between USD 100,000 and USD 499,999. Six organizations (18.7%) indicated an annual expenditure between USD1 million and USD 10 million. Most grants (56.3%) for these organizations were below USD 100, 000 with 40.6% of the grants being between USD 100,00 and USD 499,999.



Role of PR in Selection, Grant Governance, Operation and Reporting Although most respondents (68.8%) felt that the PR selection process was straight forward, comments made by respondents indicated a need for clearer communication, wider stakeholder involvement, and more transparency. Most SRs (87.1%) perceived the contract signing process to be straight-forward. Those who

disagreed cited the long contracting process as being problematic with redundancies noted such as where the same documents were requested a number of times. Two-thirds of SRs (65%) said that funds are released within agreed upon timelines. (65%) agreed that funds are released within agreed upon timelines.



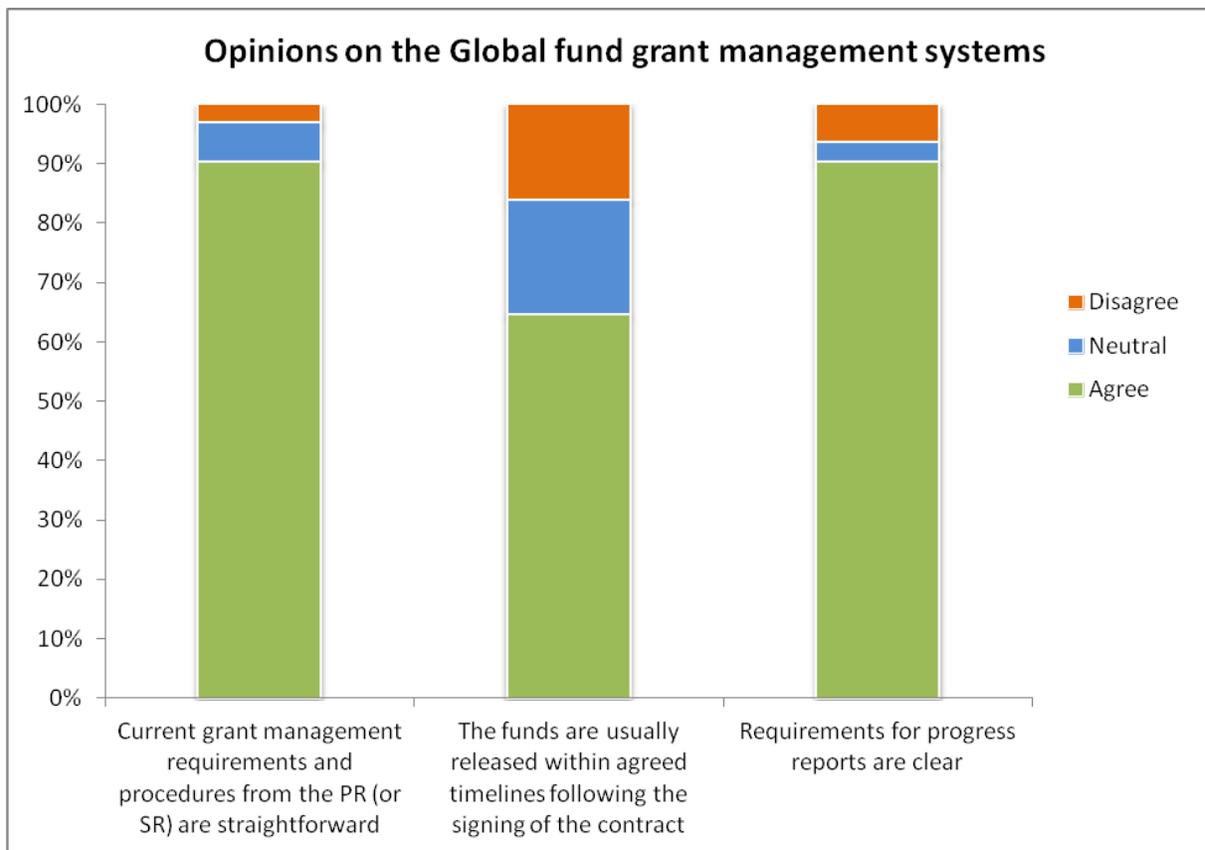
Relationships with other Global Fund actors

Most SRs (83.8%) agreed that their organization had a good relationship and communicated well with their PR. Visits by the PR organization were common with only 4 organizations reporting that they had been visited just once in the past 12 months. The majority (74.2%) of respondents did not mention any interactions with their respective country coordinating mechanisms (CCM). Although only 35.5% organizations said that they had communicated with the LFA in the last 12 months, most comments on their experiences with the LFAs were positive. Interactions with other SR organizations on Global Fund grant issues was not common with 57% of respondents indicating that they had not met with other SRs within their disease area in the past 12 months.

Technical support from the PR Most respondents felt that their organization needed technical assistance in financial management (74.2%) and program implementation (67.7%). More than half of respondents (51.6%) indicated that there had been program delays due to external factors. Delays in disbursements, health worker strikes, holidays, and elections were some of the reasons mentioned. The most common complaint was a delay in disbursements by PRs.

Suggestions for improvement of Global Fund processes

Timely disbursements of funds from PRs was the main suggestion for improvement. As many SRs may be working under tighter funding constraints than the PRs, quarterly disbursements of funds from PRs were suggested. Some SRs felt that their PRs lacked the capacity to provide technical assistance and suggested that the



Global Fund should build the capacity of PRs. Consultative budget processes at the proposal development stage between the PRs and SRs is another area that could be improved.

Conclusions This SR/SSR survey was designed to improve understanding about the experiences of SRs/SSRs in implementing Global Fund funded programs. A profile of SRs/SSRs in East Africa was produced. Information on communication and relationships with other Global Fund actors (PRs, LFAs, CCMs) was also gathered along with experiences of funding disbursements and technical assistance.

A mixed picture emerges of opinions and experiences with PRs and Global Fund processes. Most SRs/SSRs were happy with the content and timeliness of communication

with their PRs although 16.1% reported having had no communication from their PR in the past 12 months. Half of the respondents disagreed with the statement that their organization received assistance from their PR during proposal development and most respondents felt that their organization needed technical assistance in financial management 74.2% and program implementation 67.7%. Some concerns were raised with regards to specific processes such as the timeliness of disbursements and the technical capacity of PRs.

Many respondents reported their interactions with LFAs as positive. Despite the somewhat rare interactions, many respondents said these interactions were a learning experience and that they were useful for building capacity.

When asked which aspects of the process needed improvement, recommendations included reducing the time between disbursements, simplifying grant reporting processes from SRs to PRs and a more consultative budget process during proposal development.

The major limitation of this survey was the poor response rate. This makes it difficult to generalize the results across all SRs in the region. While every effort was made to introduce Aidspan and its work to the SRs and SSRs before asking recipient organizations to complete the survey, it was clear from some of the feedback received that Aidspan's work as an independent observer of the Global Fund was not well understood by this group. This feedback is currently being used to revamp Aidspan's communication strategy as we implement our 2014-2016 Strategic Plan.

Another factor that could have lowered the response rate was timing. The survey

coincided with the launch of the NFM, and many agencies were learning about changes in roles, responsibilities, and in the grant application process during this period. It may also be true that some SRs were not comfortable responding to a survey which they might interpret as potentially influencing their funding. They may have believed that information collected in the survey could be fed back to PRs and CCMs and thus reduce their likelihood of being selected as SRs/SSRs in the future. If this last factor is the case then this means that the responders that we did get are likely to be the most confident group amongst the SRs in East Africa. This means the potential bias in the results leans towards providing the best picture of the relationships and experiences of these implementers. However, because we are not certain why the response rate was so low, we can only propose that some more careful qualitative research is needed in this vital area.

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Aidspan (www.aidspan.org) is an international NGO based in Nairobi, Kenya, whose mission is to reinforce the effectiveness of the Global Fund. 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 news, analysis and commentary articles about the Global Fund in its Global Fund Observer (GFO) newsletter and on GFO Live. To receive GFO Newsletter, send an email to receive-gfo-newsletter@aidspan.org. The subject line and text area can be left blank. To see articles on GFO Live, go to www.aidspan.org/page/gfo-live.

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