



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

ICASO AND THE INTERNATIONAL HIV/AIDS ALLIANCE HAVE CONDUCTED SIX CASE STUDIES OF REGIONAL CONCEPT NOTE DEVELOPMENT

In a recent report noted at the end of this article, ICASO and the International AIDS Alliance looked at the second round of Regional Concept Note-RCN development from six regions and outlines experiences drawn from that second window. In total, the report includes RCN development in Asia, West Africa, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA).

In 2015, ICASO and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance produced a paper which looked at three case studies of first experience of RCN development in Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

The latest report found that in general, the regional application process improved in the second window of submissions compared to that of the first. Greater predictability and more technical assistance was provided in the second round. The report cited more funding mobilized to support RCN development. Applicants also learned from experiences in the first window, and were better the second time around at developing their applications.

Key findings

The report is thorough in detailing the experiences brought out from the RCN submissions and the findings and recommendations brought about from the subsequent methodology employed by ICASO and the Alliance. Each of the case studies offers unique insights into the regional concept note development process. The report identifies overarching findings that emerged in its study, which, it states, have

implications for future planning and design, as the Global Fund and various implementers look ahead to the next round of regional program proposals.

The five findings as a result of the study are:

- While the Global Fund Secretariat demonstrated responsiveness to applicant inquiries and requests, the handling of communications with applicants was often uncoordinated.
- The concept note template is still not tailored to regional programs, but with some adjustments, flexibility, and experience, applicants made it work.
- Applicants experienced the Technical Review Panel as a unilateral process.
- Country Coordinating Mechanism/National AIDS Program endorsements are burdensome to obtain, but can be managed with planning.
- Invitations following expressions of interest offered predictability.

Key recommendations

ICASO and the Alliance state in the report that specific recommendations for applicants are not included because the regional application process is currently under review and they expect that the recommendations that they have made will be considered in the course of the Global Fund's review. However, given below are the key recommendations brought out by the study and which are directed at the Fund:

1. Establish a hub for regional programs at the Global Fund Secretariat.
2. Establish a taskforce to review the regional proposal development process, concept note template, and associated protocol.
3. Improve the regional concept note template.
4. Develop a process for applicants to directly respond to TRP recommendations, with the potential for amended recommendations.
5. Review the CCM/NAP endorsement requirements for regional concept notes.
6. Explore more efficient pathways to CCM/NAP notice or buy-in.
7. Preserve the screening and invitation approach of the second window's expression of interest.

It should be noted that for 2017-2019, there will be no windows and no open call for applications. Instead, the Secretariat will invite certain organizations to apply. For further information on this, readers are directed to a previous GFO article with further details available [here](#). For a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the report's points, readers are encouraged to access the report [here](#).

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