



The Pandemic Fund

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Civil society proposes an engagement mechanism with the Pandemic Fund

In recent times, global health security has been a key agenda item as the world charts a way of reducing its vulnerability to future pandemics. Governments and global health institutions have been grappling with how to establish systemic and sustainable systems for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPPR). This is following the COVID-19 pandemic that exposed gaps in global health surveillance systems, disease prevention, and treatment, due to weak investments in these areas. On 9 September 2022, the governing board of the World Bank's new Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF) established the [new fund for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response](#) to provide additional resources to countries to incentivize more investments in PPPR.

Pandemic preparedness was on the agenda of the recently concluded Global Fund Board meeting held in Hanoi, Vietnam, on 10-11 May 2023. The Board discussed how the Global Fund should engage with the Pandemic Fund. We highlighted some of the Board deliberations, including explaining the Pandemic Fund, in our earlier article in GFO issue 431 ([Board controversy over the Global Fund's continued engagement with the World Bank's Pandemic Fund resulted in it being referred back to the Strategy Committee](#)).

In this article, we provide more information on stakeholders' views and the involvement of civil society in pandemic preparedness.

Pandemic preparedness discussions at the Global Fund Board meeting

Building on discussions that had started at the Strategy Committee meeting in March earlier this year, the Global Fund Secretariat briefed the Board that the organization initially intended to apply for funding from the Pandemic Fund to scale up its COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM). If the funding application were successful, the Global Fund would have used the resources to supplement its C19RM support, particularly for those activities that the organization was unable to fund within the available C19RM resources. However, the Secretariat informed the Board that the Global Fund was unable to apply for

Pandemic Fund funding due to the unwillingness of the Pandemic Fund to grant flexibilities that would allow the two organizations to align grant applications, implementations, and reporting requirements. Specifically, the Pandemic Fund informed the Global Fund that it was unable to extend such flexibilities as it must keep the requirements stated in its first Call for Proposals consistent among applicants. This is despite the two organizations investing in the same areas, including strengthening the health workforce, laboratory, and disease surveillance systems. Hence there is a real risk of duplication of efforts.

Since the two organizations are investing in the same areas, the Global Fund is still keen to find ways of working with the Pandemic Fund. Through this kind of collaboration the Global Fund hopes to reduce countries' burden in applying for and implementing grants in overlapping areas. Also, it would enable a better coordinated implementation of health systems investments, including pandemic preparedness. To achieve these, the Global Fund would accelerate C19RM deadlines, adjust application materials, and propose ways of working with the Pandemic Fund. Specifically, the Global Fund would:

- Ensure that C19RM reviews and awards is completed before the Pandemic Fund's technical review is concluded to ensure the coordination and alignment of the areas funded by the two organizations;
- Reduce the burden on countries by allowing them to utilize either the C19RM or Pandemic Fund application forms, which the Global Fund has ensured would cover similar information, in applying for PPR financing;
- Push for countries to utilize the organization's existing monitoring, evaluation, grant implementation, financial reporting and other processes for any potential funds awarded by the Pandemic Fund.

Some stakeholders urged the Secretariat to continue trying to engage the Pandemic Fund as there is clearly still a need to avoid duplicating efforts. They stressed that the Global Fund should focus on combating HIV, TB, and malaria, and its pursuit of a partnership with the Pandemic Fund is driven by the desire to make this focus becomes a reality.

Efforts to establish civil society engagement at the Pandemic Fund

Civil society has a key role to play in the global health arena through enhancing the collaboration between governments and communities to ensure better health outcomes. They are known to drive policy change and are strong advocates for the inclusion of communities in program design, implementation, and monitoring. They are best placed to work with marginalized populations, particularly those at risk of exclusion from health services. Thus, they ought to be meaningfully represented in governance processes at the global, national, and sub-national levels. This is also supported by civil society stakeholders, some of whom have called for efforts to persuade the Pandemic Fund to meaningfully engage civil society and communities and who have said that the Global Fund should work to advance the organization's interests through its civil society partners.

On 18 May 2023, the Pandemic Fund's Civil Society Constituency & Communities organized a virtual Town Hall meeting to share updates on the proposed civil society engagement mechanism. Participants were briefed on discussions about the draft proposal for a civil society engagement mechanism at the Pandemic Fund. Stakeholders appreciated the contribution of the Interim Civil Society Board Members in supporting the Pandemic Board member to engage the broader network of civil society and communities. However, the Pandemic Fund's Civil Society Constituency & Communities informed Town Hall participants that there was a need to set up a permanent, independent, and well-resourced civil society engagement mechanism at the Pandemic Fund.

The proposed mechanism draws experiences from the World Bank-hosted mechanisms, such as mechanisms at the [Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents](#) (GFF) and [Global Partnership for Education](#)

(GPE). GFF is a country-led global partnership committed to ensuring all women, children, and adolescents can survive and thrive. At its governing body level, the organization has civil society representation through two principal and two alternate members, along with a newly designated youth representative seat and an alternate. GPE transforms education in lower-income countries by delivering quality education so that every girl and boy can have hope, opportunity, and agency. GPE brings together all partners invested in education, including international and local civil society organizations, to transform education.

One of the key roles of the proposed mechanism will be to provide a platform for coordinating and providing technical support for the nomination, selection, and participation of civil society Board members. It will also provide virtual forums, such as Town Halls and other mechanisms, to provide information to broader networks and seek feedback. Moreover, it will support the development of additional civil society tools and resources to help their engagement and participation in the work of the Pandemic Fund. Civil society and communities are expected to share their input and feedback by 30 May 2023.

Permanent Global North and Global South civil society representatives to the Pandemic Fund Governance Board

Since September 2022, civil society and communities have been represented on the Pandemic Fund Governance Board by interim members. Jackline Njeri Kiarie from Amref Health Africa is the interim Global South CSO Board Member and Nitish Debnath from One Health Bangladesh is the interim Global South CSO Alternate Board Member. Elisha Dunn-Georgiou from the Global Health Council is the interim Global North CSO Board Member and Olya Golichenko from Frontline AIDS is the interim Global North CSO Alternate Board Member.

On 31 March 2023, the nomination process of full-term civil society and community representatives to the Pandemic Board kicked off. Following a rigorous process, only Elisha Dunn-Georgiou will continue to serve as full-term representative. Loretta Wong, the Deputy Chief of Global Advocacy and Policy, at AIDS Healthcare Foundation, is the Alternate Board Member for Global North civil society. Aida Kurtovic, the Executive Director of the South-Eastern Europe Regional HIV and TB Community Network, is the Board Member of Global South civil society. Diah S. Saminarsih, the Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Indonesia's Strategic Development Initiatives, is the Alternate Board Member for that region.

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