Secretariat provides update on the Global Fund's Governance Action Plan

The Global Fund Secretariat has provided an update on the implementation of its Governance Action Plan (GAP). The update took the form of a paper prepared for the Board meeting held on 9–10 May 2018.

The GAP was created by the Ethics and Governance Committee (EGC) in 2017 in response to an advisory review on governance issued by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). The purpose of the GAP was to provide some structure to governance reforms that were either underway or were being considered.

The OIG's advisory review was not made public. However, the update on the GAP provided some information on the review. According to the update, the advisory review assessed the effectiveness of changes to governance processes and systems and identified recurring governance issues and associated root causes.

The advisory review found that despite significant progress in governance structures and processes, certain longstanding challenges remained. The review concluded that there is a need for the Board to move beyond a focus on processes to focus on broader structural issues, "inherent conflicts in the governance structures," and "cultural aspects, such as trust and accountability."

The advisory review presented recommendations on matters such as the suitability of the Board's size, structure and composition; managing conflicts of interest; the need for the Board and committees to prioritize and focus on strategic matters; and challenges associated with maintaining institutional memory, on both the Board and committees, and within constituencies.

In addition to building on the OIG's recommendations, the GAP incorporated observations from an assessment conducted in 2016 of Board and Board leadership performance and committee performance. The Board and committee performance assessments identified many of the same issues as the advisory review (see last section of this article).

The GAP includes five principal thematic areas requiring attention, plus a sixth overarching theme related to cultural change (see Figure).

Figure: Governance Action Plan, thematic areas

Source: Board Document GF-B39-16 Governance Action Plan

The table below provides examples of the planned actions.

Table: Examples of planned actions in the GAP

Thematic area	Planned actions
Board size, structure and composition	- Develop proposal on Board size, structure and composition
Ethical decision-making and Board-related COI	- Deliver regular communications and training regarding ethi matters.
Succession planning, selection processes and skills	- Develop a leadership succession plan. - Adopt enhanced processes for Board and committee leade membership selection. - Implement an onboarding framework for governance officia
Leverage role of committees	- Clarify committee mandates. - Strengthen committee effectiveness.
Elevate Board discussions	- Implement criteria for strategic agenda-setting. - Strengthen information-sharing and constituency consultat
Cultural change to enhance Board effectiveness	- Conduct an assessment of Board culture.

Each of the 'planned actions' are at different stages of development and implementation. Here are three examples of where some work has already been done:

- The Office of Board Affairs has developed an Onboarding Framework for governance officials.
- A new process for the selection of the Board chair and vice-chair was proposed and approved by the Board (see GFO article.)
- Prioritized criteria for strategic agenda-setting were introduced ahead of the November 2017 Board meeting and are scheduled to be rolled out to committees in 2018.

Committee performance assessments

An assessment conducted by the management consulting firm Egon Zehnder found that the current committee structure is providing increased support to the Board and has improved the overall functioning of committees. According to a paper prepared for the most recent Board meeting, the assessment identified several challenges, including the following:

- a lack of clarity and overlap with respect to the different committee mandates;
- committee members finding the right balance between constituency interest and the best interests of the Global Fund;
- a perceived lack of trust at times, between the committees and the Board, and between the committees and the Secretariat; and
- a high volume of agenda items leading to limited time spent on critical strategic items.

Board Documents GF-B39-16 (Governance Action Plan) and GF-BM39-17 (Global Fund Committee Performance Assessment Outcomes 2018) are available at www.theglobalfund.org/en/board/meetings/39.

Read More