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NGO and Communities Delegations Review Recent NFM Developments

The two NGO delegations and the Communities delegation on the Global Fund Board met in Paris on 19–20 May to review recent developments in the implementation of the new funding model (NFM) and to develop a plan to improve communications and advocacy on this issue. Representatives from early and interim applicant countries were also present.

The Global Fund Secretariat provided an update on the transition phase and on lessons learned from “accelerated” early applicants – i.e. those early applicants that have already submitted concept notes (Myanmar, El Salvador and Zimbabwe).

The Secretariat observed that the final amount for an applicant’s indicative funding is determined by the country teams, which make adjustments to the initial allocation based on qualitative factors such as grant performance, willingness to pay and the rate of new infections. (The initial allocations for early applicants were determined when the NFM was launched in February.) If the final figure is higher than the initial allocation, the proposed allocation is reviewed by the Grant Approvals Committee (GAC). So far, the Secretariat said, this process has resulted some final allocations indeed being higher than the initial allocations. The Secretariat said that this will require downwards adjustments to the funding ceilings provided to other early and interim applicants.

The Secretariat said that the underlying approach of the allocation model needs to be explained better.

The Secretariat said that where epidemiological data is missing or is of poor quality – which is the case for many key populations – this presents a significant challenge under the NFM. The three Board delegations echoed this concern. They pointed out that in Zimbabwe, the lack of data on men who have sex with men

resulted in this group being left out of the concept note. Given the important role of epidemiological available data on key affected populations in the determination of the allocation of funding, this is considered a huge concern.

The Secretariat said that the greater involvement of the Technical Review Panel (TRP) and country teams in the concept note development process was well received among early applicants.

According to the Secretariat, two aspects of the concept note development process have been challenging: (1) the use of the budgeting and performance tool; and (2) the description of, and the request for, incentive funding.

The Secretariat said that the people involved in the accelerated early applications viewed the engagement with key populations as a critical and rewarding part of the process. However, many of them said that country coordinating mechanisms (CCMs) will require additional support to facilitate this process.

According to the Secretariat, the TRP said that for the three early applicants, the amount of unfunded quality demand was far greater than the amount of resources available.

The Developing Country NGO Delegation said that in an effort to ensure that its constituency has reliable and timely information on the NFM, eight regional focal points are being identified and trained. In addition to supporting regional communication strategies about the new funding model, regional focal points will support documentation of lessons learned.

Meeting participants noted that although the country dialogue presents an important opportunity for greater engagement of communities and civil society, actual engagement is highly dependent on clear and timely communication. One participant noted that in the case of Zimbabwe, participation of the Global Fund Secretariat in the country dialogue greatly facilitated the involvement of key populations because “the government was not given a choice.”

Some of the meeting participants said that when technical partners are relied on to facilitate the country dialogue, as was the case in Myanmar, there is a risk that these partners will involve mainly those groups it is used to working with, such as international NGOs, at the expense of more community-based organisations.

The following concerns were raised by meeting participants:

- Communications on the NFM are still not adequate, particularly in terms of the language of the communications and the forums used.
- Roles and responsibilities of the participants in the country dialogues have not been established.
- There is a lack of clarity and transparency concerning the country dialogue process, including, for example, at which points civil society will be involved, and when concept note narratives and budgets would be shared.
- There needs to be a mechanism in place to address situations where support for the country dialogues or the engagement of key populations is inadequate.
- There is a danger that reliance on national strategies will result in the exclusion of the needs of key populations if those strategies were developed without effective multi-stakeholder involvement.
- There are still many questions about how queued quality demand will be managed.
- Technical partners and country team members often lack knowledge of civil society and community issues.

During the discussion on regional early applicants, some participants stressed the need for dedicated resources for regional proposals and for guidance that is specific to regional proposals.

Meeting participants agreed on the following communications and advocacy objectives:

- to improve the level of knowledge and engagement of communities and civil society players at country level with the NFM through improved communication and information sharing;
- to increase the inclusion of key affected populations in the development of Global Fund proposals and to ensure budgeted interventions to meet their needs;
- to ensure that all technical partners and the Global Fund Secretariat provide accurate, timely, clear information about NFM for civil society and key populations, and that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined among technical assistance providers; and
- to identify capacity gaps so as to be able to cost the capacity building and support needed at country level for civil society, communities and key populations to engage in the iterative country dialogue and concept note development processes.

Participants also developed an action plan to achieve these objectives. The three Board delegations will review the objectives and the action plan in the near future.

Information for this article was taken from a report on the Joint Global Fund Board NGO and Communities Delegations Meeting. The report is expected to be posted on the [website](#) of International Civil Society Support.

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