



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

COMMUNITY, RIGHTS AND GENDER ISSUES HAVE A HIGHER PROFILE, BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN IN DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

The Global Fund has been successful at raising awareness about the importance of community, rights, and gender (CRG) and promoting the inclusion of CRG issues in country dialogues and concept notes. However, challenges remain in translating these achievements into impact in programs on the ground.

This is a central theme of the Community, Rights and Gender Report (2016) presented to the Board at its recent meeting in Abidjan. This is the second annual CRG report to the Board (click [here](#) to view the first report).

Community responses, human rights, and gender equality have been heavily prioritized by the Global Fund Secretariat throughout the rollout of its new funding model (NFM). The growing capacity of the Fund's Community, Rights, and Gender department has enabled its CRG advisors to provide direct support to 83 of the 113 countries receiving funding and to 20 of the 32 regional applications.

The CRG special initiative demonstrates further commitment to these issues. The initiative is a \$15 million set-aside for technical assistance, capacity building of key populations and the establishment of six regional platforms – all aiming to ensure that community, rights, and gender are central to how The Global Fund does business.

The Global Fund's new Strategy for the period 2017-2022 enshrines this focus going forward. After a widely consultative process – perhaps the Fund's most extensive ever – the new Strategy significantly strengthens The Global Fund's dedication to supporting community responses, human rights, gender equality, and programming for women and girls as well as key and vulnerable populations. The CRG

report praises the new Strategy, pointing to several sub-objectives that prioritize these issues.

However, a recently commissioned review of the Fund's Gender Equality Strategy and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities Strategy (not yet released) has found that while the Secretariat has led or mobilized significant progress in terms of policies, processes, portfolio analyses, and coordination on CRG issues, there remain concerns about the extent to which these efforts have translated into more and better investments in gender equality and key populations at country level. Indeed, the 2016 CRG report flags several persistent challenges around measuring impact and tracking investments on the ground.

The issue of impact

According to the CRG report, while there is evidence of greater inclusiveness in country dialogue, and some evidence of improved concept note content as a result, work is needed to show how this translates to more effective programs at country level. It is especially necessary to demonstrate how having communities engaged on these issues results in greater impact against the three diseases. [A report](#) released last year by EANNASO (the Eastern African National Network of AIDS Service Organizations), host of the regional platform for Anglophone Africa, which is part of the CRG special initiative, aimed to do this (see [GFO article](#)). EANNASO's research linking country dialogue participation to effectiveness of Global Fund investments will be presented as an [oral abstract session](#) at the International AIDS Conference in South Africa in July.

The CRG report notes that new key performance indicators have been proposed to accompany the 2017-2022 Strategy which promise to improve documentation of impact for community responses. Specifically, the proposed new KPI framework aims to strengthen the previous indicator on human rights by changing the focus from reported human rights violations to measuring progress in reducing human rights barriers to services. The new KPIs would also document increasing programming for key populations and measure the extent to which programming for key populations and human rights are increasingly absorbed by domestic funders, particularly as countries approach transition from Global Fund support.

The issue of investment

Possibly linked to historic challenges in showing CRG-related impact, there is evidence of insufficient funding for community responses in several areas. The CRG report highlights that less than 20% of country concept notes submitted in Windows 1 to 7 of the NFM requested funding to support community monitoring. Similar gaps in funding requests for community responses have been previously identified. For example, out of 119 concept notes submitted to the Global Fund in Windows 1 to 5, 72% identified human rights barriers to access but only 10% actually requested funding for the corresponding removing legal barriers module (see [GFO article](#)). In the same vein, the Technical Review Panel has expressed concern that funding requests for the community systems strengthening module are not well-aligned with identified needs. In its [report](#) on concept notes submitted in Windows 3 and 4, the TRP said that many submissions which provided analysis of CSS did not accompany this with appropriate budgets for these interventions. Many of these concept notes placed CSS activities in the above allocation requests, meaning they are an "extra ask" and are less likely to be awarded funding.

In any event, there are problems with using funding requests as proxy measures for actual investments in signed grants. The CRG report suggests there is a need for better resource tracking to get a more accurate picture of how The Global Fund is supporting community responses. The report points out that not all Global Fund investments in community responses are consistently categorized or captured within the CSS module in Global Fund grants. This is related to the fact that there are different types of community systems and responses. In an effort to improve resource tracking, The Global Fund is currently performing an in-depth analysis of 50 grants to provide a more accurate picture of the uptake of different CSS interventions across the Global Fund portfolio. They are specifically aiming to track CRG-related

interventions from concept note through to grant signing to see which activities make it through to the funding stage.

However, according to David Traynor, from The Global Fund's CRG department, "One of the challenges is that just because an activity or intervention falls off the Global Fund portfolio at grant signing stage doesn't mean it has disappeared altogether." Traynor says these interventions are sometimes removed at grant signing as a result of being taken up by PEPFAR or absorbed by domestic partners. "Then, these things become very difficult to track," says Traynor. On the flip side, Traynor also notes that "increased funding for community responses from The Global Fund does not necessarily mean greater coverage for key and vulnerable populations." This is especially the case in middle-income countries where the withdrawal of other donors may leave The Global Fund as the only remaining funding partner for key populations programming.

Editor's note: See the commentary by Ralf Jürgens elsewhere in this issue for a description of how The Global Fund plans to strengthen countries' response to human rights issues.

The Community, Rights and Gender Report 2016, Board Document GF/B35/15, should be available shortly at www.theglobalfund.org/en/board/meetings/35/. According to the CRG report, a full report of the review of the Global Fund's Gender Equality Strategy and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities Strategy will be available in May 2016.

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