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THE GLOBAL FUND ASSESSES ITS INVESTMENTS IN COMMUNITY HEALTH SYSTEMS AND APPLICANTS' EXPERIENCE OF THE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS -

On 19 January 2021, the Global Fund published the [Thematic Review of Global Fund Community Health Investments](#) based on in-depth reviews of five countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, and Mozambique. The review describes effective community practices in these five countries that can be scaled-up and highlights gaps and challenges in the existing community responses.

The review emphasizes that effective community health responses are strongly reliant on effective collaboration with the formal health care sector. The community health programs in the five countries have contributed to improved results in the HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria responses by developing close collaboration and mutual respect between community cadres and health care providers – for instance, through joint planning and review of activities – and providing different parallel options for testing and treatment considering the needs of the different community groups and individuals. These options include providing alternative venues for testing, such as drop-in centers, or having different cadres provide the service. The programs have also integrated interventions aimed at addressing broader barriers and needs of the population by, for instance, introducing peer paralegals that help address human rights-related issues. They have also allowed for innovations, where the community actors can adapt the services to deal with emerging challenges. However, the review also notes that this success often depends on whether the formal health sector is well resourced and functioning well.

The review calls on the Global Fund to foster local ownership of the community programs, invest in strategic local data use, support innovations in the community approaches, and continue addressing overall health system challenges, to name a few.

[Applicants are satisfied with the Global Fund's application process but urge further improvement](#)

According to the recently published findings from the [2020-2022 Funding Cycle Applicant Survey: All 2020 TRP Review Windows](#), applicants who submitted funding requests for the 2020–2022 cycle in 2020 were highly satisfied with the Global Fund grant application process. This survey targeted applicants who submitted requests in Windows 1, 2, and 3 and assessed their experiences of the 2020–2022 funding cycle country dialogue and funding request development processes.

The satisfaction level was especially high among application processes for Program Continuation, Tailored for Focused Portfolios, Tailored for National Strategic Plans (NSPs), and returning applicants. The applicants noted that the funding requests were simpler to complete than those used for the 2017–2019 funding cycle. However, the applicants criticized the extra time it took to complete templates in the annexes and the level of detail required, irrespective of the portfolio. They also expressed frustration at the varying levels of support available from Global Fund Country Teams and the challenges experienced with coordinating and completing an inclusive funding request process in the context of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Slightly less than two-thirds of the applicants experienced barriers during the application process such as poor or no internet connectivity, no telecommunication, and a lack of resources. Moving forward, the applicants requested that the Global Fund provides clearer instructions and application materials, arranges more frequent webinars and interactive sessions, and makes it easier to find needed resources on the Global Fund website.

Further reading:

- [Global Fund Thematic Review on Community Health: Synthesis Report](#), 19 January 2021
- [Findings from the 2020-2022 Funding Cycle Applicant Survey: All 2020 TRP Review Windows \(1, 2, 3\)](#), 15 January 2021
- [Global Fund Landscaping analyses and key performance indicator lessons](#)

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