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GLOBAL FUND BOARD EXTENDS THE PERIOD FOR INCLUSION OF COVID-19 PRODUCTS IN THE WAMBO.ORG PILOT

At the request of the Secretariat, the Global Fund Board has extended the period for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) products to be included in the wambo.org pilot to 31 May 2021. [In July 2020](#), The Board had initially approved the inclusion of the products in the wambo.org pilot until 31 December 2020. This decision, taken at the Board meeting held on 11 and 12 November 2020, allows Global Fund-eligible and transitioned countries to continue having an option to procure products for COVID-19 using non-grant funds on wambo.org, at minimal additional cost to the Global Fund.

[Wambo.org](#) is an online platform developed by the Global Fund Secretariat that enables countries to search for, compare, and purchase quality assured health products. The Secretariat has included a number of transactions by current state Principal Recipients (PRs) using domestic or other sources of funding in what is commonly referred to as the [wambo.org pilot](#).

In [July 2020](#), the Global Fund Board approved a request by the Secretariat to [extend the use of wambo.org](#) for non-Global Fund financed procurement of COVID-19 products. By then, Global Fund PRs were already using the wambo.org platform to procure these products using grant funds. These included grant flexibilities and funds made available through the COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM). The Board's decision allowed countries using non-Global Fund grants to access the same COVID-19 products available to Global Fund PRs through wambo.org.

The Board's latest decision extends the timeline to 31 May 2021. All other provisions set out in the Board's decision taken in July, including the scope and reporting requirements, will remain the same. Transactions for non-Global Fund financed procurement, within the COVID-19 module, will remain exempt from the \$50 million limit previously agreed on for the wambo.org pilot. The Secretariat will present

biannual reports on the progress of the wambo.org pilot, in general, as well as the COVID-19 transactions as agreed by the Board in July.

Countries are yet to take advantage of this provision

The Board paper noted that by 9 September 2020, there had been no transactions for COVID-19-related products on wambo.org using domestic resources. The decision to use wambo.org for procurement of COVID-19 products, with domestic or other sources of funding, remains at the discretion of the countries. The Secretariat attributed the lack of transactions thus far to a number of factors. The COVID-19 products became available on the wambo.org platform at varying times. For instance, Abbott and Cepheid test kits became available on 1 May 2020, the United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) personal protective equipment (PPE) catalog and oxygen equipment became available on 24 July and 26 August 2020, respectively. UNICEF diagnostics (Roche and Thermo Fisher) were available from 28 August 2020. Additionally, there was a limited supply of certain key products, most notably the Abbott and Cepheid test kits.

The paper also noted that the Global Fund resources were sufficient to finance the procurement of the available supply. The Global Fund had made [\\$1 billion available for the COVID-19 response](#): \$500 million in [grant flexibilities](#) and \$500 million through the [C19RM](#). Other factors include the existence of other procurement channels, such as the [Africa Medical Supplies Platform \(AMSP\)](#), and the failure of certain partnerships with key donors to materialize.

In general, the regulatory and legal challenges faced by the pilot countries in the procurement of products for HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria on wambo.org may also discourage countries from using the platform for purchasing COVID-19 products. Furthermore, a recent [Aidspan analysis](#) of the use of wambo.org for procurement of COVID-19 products with domestic resources found that some countries preferred to source PPE from local manufacturers since they were able to purchase products at lower prices and with shorter lead times than those on wambo.org. Some in-country sources warned that purchasing PPEs through wambo.org threatened the local manufacturing capacity. Countries did not procure products on wambo.org because product quantities were limited. Additionally, they already had their preferred system of procurement and existing relationships with manufacturers and suppliers.

There is value in extending the period for the inclusion of COVID-19 products

The Secretariat believes that there is value in extending the time period for the inclusion of COVID-19 products in the wambo.org pilot. Countries will have access to additional products, particularly those where the Global Fund has privileged access to supply and pricing arrangements, as they become available on wambo.org. For instance, the Global Fund has recently made [antigen rapid diagnostic tests \(RDTs\)](#) and [dexamethasone](#) available on wambo.org. The Global Fund also plans to expand its future COVID-19 sourcing strategy for all grant-funded procurements, which may, in turn, benefit those countries using domestic and other sources to purchase.

The Board paper also noted that the COVID-19 products currently offered through wambo.org were also available through other procurement channels. However, their availability on those channels could not be guaranteed in the future. Some buyers may opt to use the platform due to their familiarity with the platform for procurement of HIV, TB, and malaria products, and their preference for its transparency and tracking features. Countries had previously [praised wambo.org](#) for its transparency, competitive pricing, and visibility of transactions. Through wambo.org, the countries have access to quality assured products.

The extension will only incur minimal incremental costs or effort from the Global Fund. In making this recommendation, the Secretariat considered the additional cost and level of effort versus the potential value for countries and partners in having another trusted international procurement option for COVID-19

products.

Board constituencies offer inputs

Constituencies have welcomed the Board's decision to extend the inclusion of COVID-19 products on the wambo.org pilot. They asked that the Secretariat continue making this platform easily accessible especially to the smaller economies to allow for simpler and transparent procurements.

Board document GF/SC14/13 (extending the timeline for including COVID-19 products in the wambo.org pilot) should be available shortly at <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/board/meetings/44/>.

Further reading:

- Board paper GF/B43/ER07: [Extending the wambo.org pilot to include COVID-19 products](#), 30 June 2020

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