



Independent observer  
of the Global Fund

## UNAIDS WORKSHOP ON MAXIMIZING GLOBAL FUND PROCESSES IN ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION

### Introduction

The Technical Support Mechanism (TSM) of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), in partnership with the Global Fund and UNAIDS co-sponsors, held a workshop in Bangkok from 3 to 5 April to share the latest technical guidance and best practices in HIV programming, gender and human rights, and community engagement.

The primary aim was to support country delegations and independent consultants to prepare for the forthcoming round of Global Fund grant applications for the 2023-2025 period under Windows 2 and 3.

Attendees at the workshop included members of Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs), Global Fund grant recipients and implementers, civil society organizations (CSOs), and consultants contracted by the UN system to support national teams in preparing their funding requests. The 13 targeted countries were Bangladesh, Butan, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Iran, Lao PDR, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. Over 100 participants represented Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs), governments, consultants, civil society and key populations, as well as the Global Fund and other partners.

This was a hybrid workshop, with approximately 30 to 50 online participants joining each day.

### Workshop objectives

The specific objectives of the workshop were:

1. Ensure each country delegation and consultants are clear on the status of their HIV programs

- and agree on major gaps across the service cascade and what areas require priority investments.
2. Ensure each country delegation and consultants are clear on what is new in this Global Fund application cycle and how it affects each country.
  3. Develop a common understanding of key technical areas that cut across countries and practical strategies for addressing them based on lessons learned from countries.
  4. Develop greater awareness of the technical resources available to countries through all the stages of the cycle (in the form of tools, guidance, and technical expertise) at the regional and country level and how to access them.
  5. Provide countries with time and space to start reflecting on their Global Fund application requests, using the information and resources available during the three days of the workshop.

This workshop was a challenge in that the two earlier workshops in the series, held in Kenya and Senegal last year, had taken place over a five-day period. The GFO reported on these workshops in its articles [A packed agenda for a workshop to prepare Anglophone African countries for the next global fund funding cycle](#) and [Time to prioritize – let's get it right this time round](#). For the Asia-Pacific (AP) region, topics of particular interest to the region were prioritized and designed to be addressed within three days only. It was a tall order to ensure that the same topics were covered to a greater or lesser extent and, of necessity, less time was spent on certain thematic areas. Nonetheless, feedback from participants was positive, with most feeling they had learnt a lot.

#### Workshop content

The workshop covered these areas:

- Setting the Context: Regional epidemiology, the Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026 and the Global Fund Strategy 2023-2028; and the Global Fund Programme Essentials, a new category under the 2023-2025 funding cycle.
- A high-level overview of the new funding cycle was presented by the Global Fund, which looked at the application materials and highlighted new areas of importance.
- A summary of M&E indicator changes and the new additional indicators bringing the total number of indicators to 84.
- Evidence-based prioritization: how countries needed to prioritize interventions throughout the funding cycle, not just at the stage of funding request development; where the entry points are from national dialogue to national strategic plan development to funding request design, and thereafter into grant implementation..
- Lessons learnt from the peer reviews of draft funding requests submitted under Window 1 (please also see Article 3 for more details on this).
- HIV prevention with a focus on key populations, including adolescents/young people, especially adolescent girls and young women; and harm reduction.
- Differentiated service delivery (DSD).
- Community-led responses, with presentations from networks such as APN+ for people living with HIV (PLHIV), the Asia-Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) and the Bandhu Social Welfare Society in Bangladesh
- Resilient and sustainable systems for health (RSSH) and integrated systems and services for better HIV and health outcomes.

Three clinics were held: on financial sustainability of community-led responses, including social contracting; human rights and gender; and the practicalities of Global Fund processes.

Group work took place on (i) prioritization; (ii) Section 1.1 of the Funding Request (based on the modules in the Modular Handbook); (iii) HIV prevention; (iv) DSD; (v) community-led responses; and (vi) human rights and gender.

Time was also set aside for countries to work on their funding applications for the next Window.

Speakers and facilitators came from the Global Fund, UNAIDS and its co-sponsors such as the the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Health Organization and others. Learning was through a mixed method of presentations, Q&A sessions, panel discussion, Menti surveys, and group work and interactive clinics.

In addition, countries were encouraged to make use of the UNAIDS-TSM Virtual Support Desk mechanism, set up to support countries in their GC7 funding requests. As well as backstopping consultants and country teams, the VSD was able to conduct peer reviews of draft funding requests and support them to improve the content and quality.

## Conclusion

This is the third and last workshop in the series. It will be interesting to see how the lessons learnt from the Window 1 country applicants will be reflected in the funding requests from the AP Region under Windows 2 and 3. However, what came out clearly is that in spite of the [detailed guidance and supporting documents](#) produced by the Global Fund and available on its website, including the country case example of a HIV/TB Full Review request, [Jasmania](#), prepared by the Global Fund's Technical Review Panel, most countries are still woefully ill-prepared for the process.

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