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GLOBAL FUND ADOPTS NEW GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

At its meeting last month, the Global Fund Board adopted a new Gender Equality Strategy, the full title of which is “The Global Fund’s Strategy for Ensuring Gender Equality in the Response to HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.” The strategy is available under “Addendum to Report of PSC: The Gender Equality Strategy” at www.theglobalfund.org/en/board/meetings/eighteenth/documents.

The strategy is divided into five parts:

1. Introduction
2. Rationale
3. The Global Fund Principles and Role
4. Aims and Objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy
5. Areas for Intervention

There are also three attachments, including one on terminology, one on examples of interventions that the Fund will champion and support, and one on opportunities for partner engagement.

This GFO article describes (a) the objectives of the strategy; and (b) the main actions included in the strategy.

Objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy

The strategy says that the Global Fund will champion and fund proposals that:

- scale up services and interventions that reduce gender-related risks and vulnerabilities to infection;
- decrease the burden of disease for those most at-risk;

- mitigate the impact of the three diseases, and
- address structural inequalities and discrimination.

The strategy says that the Fund will do this by focusing on four areas of intervention:

- Ensure that the Global Fund's policies, procedures and structures effectively support programmes that address gender inequalities.
- Establish and strengthen partnerships that effectively support the development and implementation of programmes that address gender inequalities and reduce women's and girls' vulnerabilities, provide quality technical assistance, and build capacity of groups who are not currently participating in Global Fund processes, but should be.
- Develop a robust communications and advocacy strategy that promotes the Gender Equality Strategy.
- Provide leadership, internally and externally, by supporting, advancing and giving voice to the Gender Equality Strategy.

Actions included in the Gender Equality Strategy

The strategy contains some actions that the Global Fund will take directly, and some that it will promote itself and through its partner organisations. Some of these actions have already been implemented, starting in Round 8.

Actions that the Global Fund will take directly

- The CCM guidelines will provide clearer guidance on how gender issues should be taken into account in CCM operations; and will make it clear that a gender analysis should be the basis of programme development.
- In proposals to the Global Fund, CCMs "will be required to declare their capacity in gender." CCMs whose capacity needs to be strengthened will be entitled to funding for this purpose.
- The Global Fund will provide tools to help CCMs achieve sex parity among their membership and leadership (e.g., terms of reference for gender experts and other CCM members).
- The Guidelines for Proposals (issued for each round of funding) will require that applicants include a gender analysis in their proposals, based on age and sex disaggregated data.
- One of the three key criteria that the TRP uses to evaluate proposals is "soundness of approach." The TRP will treat this criterion as requiring evidence of a thorough gender analysis.
- In addition to providing a gender analysis, applicants will be required to explain how vulnerable groups will be reached and how interventions will have a sustained impact on women and girls.
- The Global Fund will require that in their M&E systems countries make available data disaggregated by sex and age. Countries that do not already collect this data will be asked to include in their proposals requests for funding to be able to do so.
- Evaluations of the Global Fund itself will use gender equality as a central measure of success and impact.
- Gender equality will be integrated into all aspects of staff management and culture in the Global Fund Secretariat.
- The Global Fund's communications strategy will position a commitment to gender equality as a central component of what the Fund is and stands for.
- The Global Fund Secretariat will recruit several senior level staff to work specifically on gender issues, including a Gender Champion.
- Gender awareness training will be provided to all Secretariat staff, and specialised training will be provided to key personnel, including fund portfolio managers.
- The Secretariat will establish a gender section in its Skills Bank, the staff of which will be able to provide other Secretariat staff with specialist advice on topics such as sexual and reproductive

health, violence against women, and issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people.

- The Board and its committees will ensure that they have access to appropriate gender expertise, and will strive for gender balance in leadership appointments.

Actions that the Global Fund will promote itself and through partner organisations

- In-country partners will be encouraged to provide training, capacity building and support to enable CCMs to access high-quality gender expertise.
- The Global Fund and in-country partners will promote a gender analysis in the context of national strategy development and proposal preparation.
- The Global Fund will promote, as part of the National Strategy Applications (NSA) process still under development, that a gender analysis and appropriate interventions be included in the criteria for validating national strategies.
- As part of the development of the Global Fund's partnership strategy, the Fund will promote the development of a network specifically focussed on activities that address gender equality.
- The Global Fund will promote the inclusion of government ministries responsible for gender and departments of the ministries of health responsible for sexual and reproductive health in planning processes for national AIDS strategies.
- The Global Fund will promote the involvement of global partners – multilateral and bilateral organisations, foundations, the private sector, and international, regional and national civil society organisations – in all aspects of Global Fund grants (from proposal development to implementation) to help ensure that attention is given to gender equality.

Implementation and next steps

A draft implementation plan for the Gender Equality Strategy will be developed in the first quarter of 2009. In addition, the Global Fund Secretariat will develop an M&E framework for the implementation of the strategy.

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