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Launch of HSS Pilot Expected Shortly

Will involve only a small number of countries

The Global Fund has approved the design of a pilot project to allow 4-5 countries to submit funding requests for health systems strengthening (HSS) based on jointly-assessed national health strategies. The pilot is part of the Health Systems Funding Platform (the Platform). The Platform is a joint initiative of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), the Global Fund and the World Bank, with facilitation from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Under the approved design for the pilot, applicants will be able to submit joint or separate funding requests to the Global Fund and GAVI. Requests to the Global Fund must emanate from a CCM. It is expected that the pilot will be launched early this year, with funding decisions coming at the Board meeting at the end of 2011.

The design of the pilot lists the following steps: a joint assessment of the country's national health strategy; submission of a funding request; review of the funding request; Board approval; signing of a grant agreement; and grant management. Joint requests to GAVI and the Global Fund will be reviewed jointly by members from the Global Fund's Technical Review Panel (TRP) and the GAVI Independent Review Committee (IRC). Individual requests to either the Global Fund or GAVI will be reviewed by their respective review panels. Joint requests that are approved for funding will result in separate grant agreements with GAVI and the Global Fund. Global Fund grants derived from the pilot will be managed in the same way as the Fund's other grants.

The design includes criteria to be used to select CCMs that will be invited to apply. Countries will have the opportunity to express an interest in participating in the pilot. The primary participation criteria will be as follows:

- Countries need to have arranged for a joint assessment of their national health strategy by the time of release of application materials by the Global Fund.
- Countries need to have a finalised strategy by the time the funding request is submitted.
- The duration of the strategy needs to be at least until December 2014, to enable a funding commitment of at least two years.

If the number of interested countries meeting the primary participation criteria is larger than four or five, one or both of the following secondary criteria will be used to reduce the number:

- The country did not have an approved HSS cross-cutting request in Round 10.
- At least one other Platform funding partner intends to provide funding for this country based on the jointly assessed national health strategy.

At its meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, the Board made some small changes to existing policies in order to allow the pilot to proceed.

Information for this article was taken from the Report of the Policy and Strategy Committee, Document GF/B22/4, and from Decision Point 26 in the Board decision points paper. Document GF/B22/DPs. The latter is available at www.theglobalfund.org/en/board/meetings/twentysecond/documents. The committee's report should be posted at the same site shortly.

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