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GLOBAL FUND PROVIDES CCMS WITH NEW TOOL FOR GRANT OVERSIGHT

The Global Fund has introduced the “dashboard,” an information tool designed to support country coordinating mechanisms (CCMs) as they carry out their grant oversight functions. According to the Global Fund, the dashboard “provides CCM members with a highly visual, strategic summary of key financial, programmatic, and management information drawn from existing data sources (PU/DR) for each Global Fund grant.” Although the term “dashboard” is widely used, the Fund now calls it a “grant oversight tool.”

The dashboard focuses on key performance indicators. It uses bar charts, tables and multiple colours to make the information easy to read and understand.

The Global Fund is quick to note that use of the dashboard is voluntary. It is not a new requirement and it will not be made mandatory.

The dashboard, which is in the form of a Microsoft Excel file, was developed through a partnership between Grant Management Solutions (GMS), a project led by the U.S.-based Management Sciences for Health (MSH), and the Global Fund.

In 2006, MSH started using the dashboards in its work with CCMs in several countries. Initial testing showed that the development of the dashboards had to be embedded in a broader effort to strengthen CCM capacity for oversight (e.g. establishment of formal oversight bodies, development of oversight plans and other governance documents). In 2007, GMS and the Global Fund’s CCM Team decided to launch a seven-country pilot to formalise the methodology and tools.

The pilot was conducted in Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia and Peru. However, the project in Madagascar was not completed due to political tensions that developed in that country.

Evaluation of the pilot is not fully completed, but preliminary results indicate that the ability of most participating CCMs to oversee Global Fund grants improved significantly after structural and procedural reforms were initiated, capacity building activities were implemented, and grant dashboards were introduced.

According to the Global Fund, the dashboard was enthusiastically received by many CCM members; and some PRs have decided to use the dashboards themselves for implementation tracking and grants management. In addition:

- In Morocco, the dashboard allowed the newly established CCM oversight committee to identify several critical issues requiring urgent CCM intervention, and to take steps to resolve them.
- In Mali, Mongolia and Peru, the dashboard enabled the CCM to identify procurement and supply management issues and address them with the PRs.

Of course, the dashboards are only as good as the information that is fed into them. Where there are serious weaknesses in data collection, it will be difficult to implement dashboards effectively. And where a lack of resources or frequent turnover of members is hampering the ability of the CCM to oversee grants, the dashboard will not be a magic pill.

A generic dashboard template is available with supporting documents on the Global Fund's website under "Grant Oversight Tool" at www.theglobalfund.org/en/ccm, as follows:

- "Introduction" – a brief introduction to dashboards;
- "Oversight Tool" – a generic version of a working dashboard;
- "Set-up and Maintenance Guide" – a technical guide on how to use the dashboard;
- "TS Summary" – a summary of the process used during the pilot to work with CCMs on grant oversight and the use of the dashboard; and
- "Feasibility Study Executive Summary" – the executive summary of a report on the results of the pilot project.

All of the above documents are currently available in English only.

The Global Fund says that an enhanced dashboard package will be developed once the final results of the pilot evaluation are known.

An older sample dashboard is contained in "Strengthening Management and Oversight of Global Fund Grants: Lessons Learned from the OGAC Pilot Experiences with Executive Dashboards in Nicaragua, Zanzibar, Tanzania and Nigeria," written by MSH in December 2007. The report is available under "Lessons Learned Report MSH" and "Attachment A: Dashboard CCM Honduras" at www.theglobalfund.org/en/ccm/guidelines. However, the template for the dashboard has evolved since those documents were written.

In March 2009, Aidspace released a guide on the roles and responsibilities of CCMs in grant oversight. Copies are available in English, French, Spanish and Russian at www.aidspace.org/guides.

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