Global Fund
Gender Equality Strategy
Action Plan summary

Gender inequalities are a strong driver of the HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria epidemics and close attention needs to be paid to how such inequalities fuel the spread of disease and affect the ability of women and girls, men and boys to access health care and other services equitably. The Global Fund is committed to ensuring that its grants support the equal and equitable access to prevention, treatment, care and support for all those who need it.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL FUND GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

The Global Fund is a financing institution. It does not provide normative guidance or technical assistance, and is not an implementing agency. The strength of the Global Fund is its ability to be a catalyst, supporting countries’ efforts to take the gender dimensions of the three epidemic(s) into account in their proposals and subsequent program implementation, while recognizing the need for a broad network of partners to support countries to do this.

The Gender Equality Strategy (2008) explores how the Global Fund can encourage a positive bias in funding towards programs and activities that address gender inequalities and strengthen the response for women and girls. In many societies women do not enjoy the same rights, opportunities and access to services as men. Because it is the needs of women that are often marginalized, this strategy focuses primarily on the needs of women and girls. However, the most vulnerable in society also includes men who have sex with men, transgender people, bisexual and lesbian populations – groups that have failed to receive the attention and focus they rightly deserve. Recognizing that there is a gender dimension to the issues affecting these key populations, the Global Fund is developing a separate but complementary Key Populations Action Plan based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identify Strategy (2009) focused on their specific needs.

Although we are making progress, there is one significant cautionary note. We are concerned that issues related to the vulnerability of women, in particular young women, are not receiving adequate attention. Addressing the needs and vulnerabilities of girls and women is an important challenge for all of us and will require a collective effort.

Mark Dybul, Executive Director
Global Fund

Societal gender norms strongly affect the ability of women, men, transgender persons and young people to access HIV information and services, and affect their attitudes and sexual behavior. Much has been written on the links between gender inequality and HIV and AIDS. When the Gender Equality Strategy works we will enjoy the same rights.

Setia Perdana - Fokus Muda - Indonesian Young Key Affected Forum, Indonesia
In 2008, the Board of the Global Fund adopted the Gender Equality Strategy, setting an important precedent and sending a strong message on the importance of meeting the health needs of women and girls in the response to HIV, TB and malaria. In line with the Global Fund Strategy 2012-2016: Investing for Impact, the action plan of the Gender Equality Strategy focus on achieving strategic, high-impact, gender-responsive investments that will save lives and prevent new infections among women and girls in all their diversity.

Gender-responsive programming for HIV, TB and malaria is solidly anchored in both human rights and scientific evidence. On the one hand, responding to gender inequalities is largely a matter of protecting women and girls’ human rights, which is part of the strategic objectives of the Global Fund. On the other hand, gender-responsive programming responds to identified gaps through technically sound proposals, and thus responds adequately to the needs of women and girls who are vulnerable to, living with or directly affected by HIV, TB and malaria.

In order to ensure that Global Fund grants address gender inequalities, this action plan takes up the four strategic objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy and proposes specific actions to be taken to implement each one, including measurable outputs. A number of cross-cutting actions run throughout the proposed actions:

**SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE NEW FUNDING MODEL**

The new funding model, which determines the way Global Fund investments will be made in implementing countries, opens a number of opportunities and entry points for gender equality and for the engagement of women in all their diversity. Several of its features can be leveraged to include and sustain programming that respond to the needs and rights of women and girls, such as the institutionalization of multistakeholder participation in the country dialogue process, the attention given to gender balance and to the presence of women representatives on Country Coordinating Mechanisms, evidence-informed programming with sex- and age-disaggregated data that allows investing for impact, the encouragement of more active grant management by Secretariat country teams, as well as the general focus on human rights.

**PARTNERSHIPS, PARTNERSHIPS, PARTNERSHIPS**

The full integration of principles of gender equality throughout the work of the Global Fund will be impossible without strong partnerships with a range of stakeholders: technical partners, United Nations (UN) agencies, civil society organizations including organizations of women who are living with or directly affected by HIV, TB and malaria, as well as “gender champions” within the Global Fund Board, Technical Review Panel and the Secretariat.

**IMPROVED COMMUNICATION ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY**

Renewed efforts and attention will be dedicated to making the Gender Equality Strategy and its implications accessible and relevant to all stakeholders. The external communications will include strong messages from Global Fund leadership, complemented by various tools and guidance for accessing funding. Internally, staff members of the Secretariat will be offered training on cross-cutting issues including modules related to gender, as well as targeted materials and periodical technical seminars on gender topics in the context of the three diseases.

Through these and other actions, the Global Fund will lay the groundwork to ensure that countries better respond to the needs and protect the human rights of women and girls with increased investment in gender-responsive interventions, stronger partnerships and the improved integration of gender considerations throughout the grant cycle.

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On the first day of the advocacy, communication and social mobilization training in Cambodia, I met with the TB staff. I walked into the training room and to my shock I was met by 30 men. I asked “WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?” The answer was “TB is difficult, women don’t work on TB.” This strategy will change this mindset and women WILL be acknowledged for the work we are doing on TB – in the lives of our families and in our communities and countries.

Hara Mihalea, Public Health and Tuberculosis Control, Thailand
The Gender Equality Strategy creates equal opportunity for men and women irrespective of their background! Just because women are not at the table – which is often the case – it does not mean we are not able! We are part of society and must be meaningfully involved in all Global Fund processes. The Gender Equality Strategy would help to ensure that this happens.

Angeline Chiwetani, Widows Fountain of Life, Zimbabwe

If the Gender Equality Strategy was implemented it would give us equal rights... without stigma and discrimination. It could provide employment, fulfill our needs or desires because all women and men are worthy of enjoying a full and just life as children of God. Women in all our diversity have hopes, dreams, desires and deserve the right to access treatment, care, support, just as our fellow men - especially if we are living with HIV.

Elisha Kor Krishnan, Pink Triangle; Asia-Pacific Network of Sex Workers, Malaysia

The Gender Equality Strategy is critical to ensuring the gender perspective is entrenched in the funding partnerships that Global Fund will have with beneficiaries. It may be the only sure way the new funding model includes women and gender equality.

Olive Edwards, Jamaica Community of Positive Women, Jamaica

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