Webinar Notes: Women engage in the Global Fund Strategy Development Process

On 27 May 2020, Women4GlobalFund (W4GF) in partnership with Developing countries NGO Delegation hosted the webinar to enable women to engage in and understand the Global Fund Strategy Development Process. Approx. 38 participants joined the webinar.

1. Introduction
The Global Fund is commencing a lengthy process to develop their next six-year strategy (2023–2028). A key priority is to ensure that diverse community voices are meaningfully engaged and heard throughout the strategy development process – especially the voices of women and girls. As highlighted on the webinar, W4GF will work to ensure that emphasis continues around Strategic Objective 3 in the current Global Fund Strategy ‘to promote and protect human rights and gender equality’.

In addition to hearing from the Global Fund Secretariat leading the strategy development process, the Developing Country NGO Delegation also provided an update of key decisions made at the most recent 43rd Global Fund Board meeting relating to human rights, gender, communities more broadly. These notes highlight key discussions and questions. To listen to the entire webinar recording click here. The slides presented by the speakers are available in the links below:

- The Global Fund slides were presented by Hannah Grant - Senior Strategy and Policy Advisor in the Global Fund Strategy and Policy Hub and the lead in the strategy development process at the Global Fund
- The Developing Country NGO Delegation to the Global Fund slides were presented by Dr. Carolyn Gomes - Alternate Board Member for the Developing Country NGO Delegation

2. Presentation key highlights
Key points on the Global Fund Strategy Development Process

- The two years process to develop the Global Fund strategy kicked off in March 2020.
- On 29 May 2020, virtual consultations began due to COVID-19 and social distancing. To access the open consultation click here. The questions are grouped into 5 areas: Overall, Strengthening Program Implementation, Supporting Stakeholders and Partnerships, Delivering Results and Innovation, and Best Ideas for Change. This will be open throughout the year but the first round of input received by 1 September will be reviewed by the Global Fund Strategy Committee in October 2020. The questions may evolve depending on how the input goes.
- The general agreement on the strategy development process at the 43rd Global Fund Board meeting (14-15 May) was to keep the aims and objectives of the current strategy relevant.
- The partnership forums may take place in the first quarter of 2021 and will be held virtually if necessary.
The Strategy Framework will be approved in the middle of next year with the full strategy approved by the end of the next year (Nov 2021). The 7th replenishment kicks off in early 2022 and this will be based on an approved Global Fund Strategy.

In addition to an interactive website the Global Fund will also do a synthesis of the Global Fund Key Performance Indicator (KPI) strategy to see what can be done differently moving forward.

Key Updates from the Developing Country NGO Delegation

- The Delegation requested the strategy development process ensure meaningful engagement of civil society and communities outside of the online written feedback as access to the Internet is not available to all. They have recommended in-depth interviews with key stakeholders from civil society and communities as well as focus groups discussions with partners and stakeholders feeding back up to the entire process.
- The Delegation has advocated for the three diseases and four Strategic Objectives to remain, with an emphasis on innovative ways to address shortcomings, strengthening implementation of these strategies in new contexts, while working towards achieving the Global Funds purpose and goals. There has been a clear push on Strategic Objective 3: protecting and promoting human rights and gender equality.
- The review of the current strategy needs to be informed by the gaps and challenges like the ones flagged by the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) with the areas of concern being adolescent girls and young women. Governments still do not collect disaggregated data that shows what percentage of the funding goes to girls and women and key populations.
- Suggestions and concerns as well as challenges around the engagement of women in the strategy development; country funding requests and the COVID-19 response mechanism can be addressed to the Delegation through Lesley Odendal the Constituency Focal Point for the Delegation. We must ensure that virtual participation on this process is meaningful. Please share examples of successful engagement and challenges with the Delegation to inform the process.

3. Key questions and answers

Question: How can civil society and communities influence the evaluation other than the open consultation, which actions can we have an advocacy agenda in? Answer: Over the coming month, the Global Fund will be mapping consultation that constituencies are hosting and input into those processes and the partnership forms will be important.

Question: Accessing information digitally is a challenge. How can the Global Fund accommodate the real challenges to ensure meaningful engagement? Answer: The Global Fund is working across departments to ensure meaningful virtual engagement. The Global Fund is securing free Microsoft teams that can be granted to civil society partners. We are also looking at other avenues to avail airtime and this is something the CCM hub has been doing. Through the Community, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiative (CRG SI) we are looking at the Technical Assistance (TA) and how it can be provided to ensure meaningful engagement.

Question: We have noticed that the Global Fund went through a rebranding process – very similar to The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (The Partnership, PMNCH) who are also revising their strategy. What is happening to review these two in parallel given that reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) as well as sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
are also key to women and gender? Answer: There is alignment with partners (especially those also reviewing their strategy) to see who will set the direction and how we work together across the partnership landscape. In terms of sexual and reproductive health and rights and integration this has been a big focus. In countries where we have had a focus on adolescent girls and young women in Eastern and Southern Africa as well as West Africa we are starting to see more encouraging programmes of integration. This is especially post echoed in post Evidence for Contraceptive Options and HIV Outcomes (ECHO) trial results. COVID-19 as Ebola did has shown the need to invest and think about how services are integrated and how we invest in community responses as part of Resilient and Sustainable Systems for Health (RSSH).

Question: What will transitioning look like in the age of COVID-19 for middle income countries? Answer: COVID-19 has impacted national economies and their income scales. This was flagged in the Board and COVID-19 will affect transitioning countries but we are not yet able to make effective decisions beyond contingency plans.

Question: Is there community monitoring in the Global Fund current strategy and how can we ensure these findings are integrated into the SR2020 Report to learn from the experience? Answer: Community based monitoring is part of the current strategy and should be covered by the SR2020 to guide what we could be doing differently going forward. Community based monitoring is something that all the Delegations are passionate about and are advocating for. The more lived experiences that are shared the better off our reporting will be as well as shaping the next strategy.

Question: How can most affected communities be part of the COVID-19 decision making? Answer: Sharing challenges from the national level in the consultation will ensure that these inputs are part of the new strategy moving forward. We need to be talking about what the Global Fund can do differently to ensure community engagement and meaningful engagement? What do we need to change in the implementation to get it right? “How do we change the Global Fund implementation processes so that our strategy aspirations are realised on the ground?” Carolyn Gomes.

Question: We know that “what’s gets measured gets done!” What would be the process to review the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Framework and to engage communities in that? Is there a creative way we can formally pull community based monitoring into the KPI Framework that is thought of so that CCMs are accountable to be able to track qualitative and quantitative data? Answer: The Strategy Committee will review the KPIs at the end of this year (in the October meeting). Inputs are welcome to strengthen the M & E. We need to have a strategy that drives results and impact and is grounded in how targets get desegregated and how we drive equity in the response and we must start this dialogue as early as possible.

Participants during the webinar included: Abhina Aher; Ahmed Abdelmoety; Alice Welboun; Amal El Karouaoui; Amina Agami; Anna Watkins, Ata Hamid, Azzi Ahlem; Boingatlo Gupta; Carine Diboue; Cindy Maimbolwa; Daisy David; Elisa; Gemma Oberth; Grace Kumwenda; Ingunn sin; James Sale; Job Mutombene; KTR; Kutadza; Olayide Akanni; Olivia Ngou; Parvana Vaiyeva; Rachael Hore; Sonal Mehta; Violeta Ross; Yougang Tame Nafissa; and Zanenkoune Menkande Mouangue. The Global Fund Secretariat was represented by: Hannah Grant; Kate Thomson; Heather Doyle and Jack MacAllister. The Developing Country NGO Delegation was represented by: Dr. Carolyn Gomes and Lesley Odendal. The webinar was hosted by the W4GF Team: Lucy Wanjiku Njenga (Programme Officer); Robin Gorna (Strategic Advisor); Sophie Dilmits (Global Coordinator).