



WOMEN4GLOBALFUND: Women mobilising for their health and lives

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women4GlobalFund: Who we are and what we do?

Women4GlobalFund (W4GF) is a movement that unites and mobilises activists to advance gender equality throughout all policies and processes of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), especially through the programmes funded at national level in implementing countries. Created and led by women, W4GF is the only space for women in all their diversity focusing on the Global Fund, and the impacts it has on the three diseases.

W4GF focuses primarily on educating and advocating. It uses both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ strategies in its efforts to raise awareness of and attention to critical issues for women (including adolescent girls and young women) within the overall Global Fund environment. This means that it works closely with the Global Fund Secretariat, including its Community, Rights and Gender (CRG) department, and also sometimes pushes the Secretariat or Board to do more and to do things differently – through letters, policy statements, activist manifestoes and participating in the formal structures and ‘machinery’ of the Global Fund.

As its name suggests, Women4GlobalFund (W4GF) is ‘for’ something: making sure that the Global Fund, one of the most influential actors in the world of infectious diseases, advances gender equality and guarantees the health and rights of women and girls in all their diversity.

W4GF has built a platform and framework for women to learn, share and advocate together for policies, approaches, programmes and funding that can in turn deliver access to the services that respond to the priority needs of women, girls, their families and their communities. Through such work, W4GF aims to make the Global Fund more accessible and practical to all women and girls, as well as more connected with women most in need of the programmes and services supported

by the Global Fund, and to make these fit for purpose and relevant to women’s lives.

At the core of W4GF are nearly 200 community-based Advocates from more than 50 countries. All Advocates have participated in at least one W4GF workshop or other training or educational initiative focusing on the Global Fund and gender, and many remain engaged regularly through the W4GF platform and take action at country and global levels.

Women4GlobalFund: History and evolution

W4GF’s triple role of prodding, monitoring and supporting the Global Fund – often at the same time – on all issues related to women and gender equity has been evident from the start. The movement was founded in June 2013 in response to a women-led evaluation (conducted in 2011–2012) of the Global Fund’s Gender Equality Strategy (GES), which had been endorsed by the Global Fund Board in 2008. The evaluation was conducted by AIDS

Strategy, Advocacy and Policy (ASAP), an independent community-based consulting group, which was commissioned to carry out the work by the gender adviser at the Global Fund Secretariat and UN Women.

The main goal of ASAP's evaluation was to understand the extent to which the GES had been implemented in the three years since it had been adopted, by documenting the depth and breadth of gender equality activities in Global Fund-supported programmes and services. Overall, ASAP's main finding was that the progressive and far-sighted intentions of the GES were not realised in practice. The GES was not having the kind of reach and impact it should have – to the detriment of all people the Global Fund was supposed to serve, not just women.

Based on its findings, ASAP not only made several recommendations to the Global Fund and its key partners, but also decided to be part of the solution. The small team of women began reaching out to existing organisations and networks focusing on and led by women living with and affected by HIV, TB and malaria – in an effort to mobilise action to respond to the lack of progress on the GES and broader gender-related issues throughout the Global Fund. W4GF is the result of that mobilisation work and was set up in direct response to the women's input.

The first main activities underscored the ambition and breadth of the new initiative. With initial financial and organisational support from the Global Fund Secretariat and other multilateral and bilateral partners, ASAP helped to organise and arrange support for a series of 12 funded workshops over more than three years from July 2013. These workshops gathered together advocates working on or interested in the Global Fund's work or women's rights in countries implementing Global Fund grants worldwide. They were joined by representatives from the Global Fund Secretariat, technical partners, experts in gender and women's rights, advocacy, campaigning and movement-building. The workshops focused on supporting advocates to understand the complexity and language of the Global Fund and the strategic entry points and opportunities within its structures and processes, - all of which - were in a state of massive transition at the time.

Since 2016, W4GF has shifted its approach slightly to become a more virtual learning and sharing platform for advocates to use and support. Currently, the W4GF movement's educational, training and communications activities are primarily conducted virtually, through webinars, teleconferences and listservs. These activities often include representatives of the Global Fund Secretariat who help to describe possible entry points for influence and engagement at global and national levels. This is an example of the close links that W4GF maintains with the Secretariat, particularly staff who focus on gender, human rights and the engagement of communities.

W4GFs' advocacy work, meanwhile, includes advocacy statements and calls for action (all highlighted and promoted on its website) and the creation of a W4GF accountability toolkit, which is being rolled out independently in handful in a handful of countries that have received focused funding and other resources to highlight the successes and challenges in Global Fund-supported programmes for adolescent girls and young women. The movement also brings into focus other key issues central to women's lives that have often been neglected in programmes and services supported by the Global Fund, such as cervical cancer and its long-standing, but under-addressed, links to HIV.

This critical learning, engagement and advocacy work has continued even as W4GF has moved from being hosted by ASAP to a series of community-based organizations. Since early 2019, ICASO (the International Coalition of AIDS Service Organizations) has served as W4GF's fiscal agent and the movement has continued to grow and mobilise greater engagement from even more partners as well as individual advocates.

Women4GlobalFund: Impact and future

Through W4GF's efforts since 2013, gender equality has slowly but steadily become more than just a slogan, and instead is an actual priority within and across the Global Fund that shows signs of being acted upon responsibly and directly so that the Global Fund drives gender-transformative approaches to the three diseases. For example, in response to targeted advocacy in which W4GF played a key role, gender equality was elevated to one of only four key strategic objectives in the Global Fund Strategy 2017–2022 ('Investing to End Epidemics'). W4GF's longstanding advocacy work also was a major factor in the Global Fund finally requiring countries to report sex- and age-disaggregated data.

W4GF's focus on country-level meaningful engagement has had vital results. The movement's engagement has strongly contributed to a steep increase in the share of Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) that have members who either represent women or who are gender specialists and advocates. This achievement has had important benefits regionally and globally, including by helping to enable women to step into leadership roles more generally, including on the Global Fund Board and other influential structures.

W4GF continues to explore new ways to reach and support women who want – and should have – the opportunity to decide what, how and why the Global Fund operates at all levels, and particularly in implementing countries. The core advocacy work that it supports is evident in the processes and structures it has created to build and maximise engagement between women and girls and the Global Fund. The W4GF movement is moving forward and Advocates will continue to seize opportunities to serve as both a supportive partner of the Global Fund and external advocates, seeking to ensure that gender equity and the needs of women and girls are central so that the Global Fund has the greatest possible impact.

WHAT DOES W4GF MEAN BY DIVERSITY?

Women in all our diversity are those of us who are engaged at global; regional and national levels in Global Fund processes and structures in key regions most affected by HIV, TB and malaria. We are not homogenous, and we include women living HIV, affected by TB and malaria; heterosexual; lesbian and bisexual; transgender; women who use drugs; sex workers over 18 years old; adolescent girls and young women; Indigenous; sometimes displaced; migrants and are/have been incarcerated; and women with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE W4GF MOVEMENT

Women4GlobalFund (W4GF) is a movement that unites and mobilises activists to advance gender equality throughout all policies and processes of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), especially through the programmes funded at national level in implementing countries. Created and led by women, W4GF is the only space for women in all their diversity focusing on the Global Fund, and the impacts it has on the three diseases. It has built a platform and framework for women to learn, share and advocate together for policies, approaches, programmes and funding that can in turn deliver access to the services that respond to the priority needs of women, girls, their families and their communities. Through such work, W4GF aims to make the Global Fund more accessible and practical to all women and girls, as well as more connected with women most in need of the programmes and services supported by the Global Fund, and to make these fit for purpose and relevant to women's lives.

At the core of W4GF are nearly 200 community-based Advocates from more than 50 countries. Most Advocates have participated in at least one W4GF workshop or other training or educational initiative focusing on the Global Fund and gender, and many remain engaged regularly through the W4GF platform and take action at country and global levels. Through their engagement in the movement, these Advocates from countries and regions around the world now better understand how the Global Fund works; where they can focus their efforts for the greatest impact; and how, when and where to raise their voices so that their concerns are heard and taken seriously. The movement's impact and reach extend beyond these Advocates because W4GF is not restricted to them. All who are interested (women, men, transgender and non-binary people) are welcome and encouraged to participate in W4GF advocacy, campaigning, educational and information-sharing efforts.

How Women4GlobalFund works: educating and advocating

W4GF uses both 'inside' and 'outside' strategies in its efforts to raise awareness of and attention to critical issues for women (including adolescent girls and young women) within the overall Global Fund environment. W4GF works closely with the Global Fund Secretariat, including its Community, Rights and Gender (CRG) department, and also sometimes pushes the Secretariat or Board to do more and to do things differently – through letters, policy statements, activist manifestoes and participating in the formal structures and 'machinery' of the Global Fund. Through such efforts, gender equality has slowly but steadily become more than just a slogan, and instead is an actual priority within and across the Global Fund that shows signs of being acted upon responsibly and directly so that the Global Fund drives gender-transformative approaches to the three diseases.

WHY WOMEN'S VOICES AND LEADERSHIP MATTER: THE REALITIES OF HIV, TB AND MALARIA EPIDEMICS

W4GF is necessary for many of the same reasons the Global Fund is necessary: to contribute to ending epidemics of HIV, TB and malaria. These three diseases are the world's leading killers and are collectively responsible for some 2.5 million deaths worldwide annually, mostly in countries with the least resources to respond.¹ Tens of millions of people face the prospect of poor health or worse every year because they are already living with one or more of the diseases and need treatment to survive.

Although all people are technically at risk for one or more of the diseases, not all risks are equal. The threats and impact of HIV, TB and malaria are different among women than men globally and in nearly every country worldwide. For example:

HIV

In sub-Saharan Africa, home to the world's greatest HIV burden, more than 60% of all people living with HIV are women, and every year in the 15–19 age group, 4 out of 5 new cases of HIV are among girls. In that region, young women and adolescents (10–24 years old) are twice as likely to acquire HIV as young men of the same age, and girls and women aged 15–24 account for 25% of all new infections globally despite representing just 10% of the population.² This disproportionate picture is often due to unequal power dynamics, including the lesser cultural, social and economic status that women and girls have in society. In many cases and contexts, women's vulnerability is further exacerbated by gender-based violence.

TB

The heightened risk for HIV among women and girls translates into heightened risk for TB because people living with HIV are some 15–22 times more likely to develop active TB, including among those taking on antiretroviral therapy (ART), and TB is the major cause of HIV-related deaths.³

MALARIA

While all people exposed are affected, the risks of exposure and limitations to accessing adequate prevention and treatment remain disproportionately high among women.⁴ Moreover, unequal gender roles and gender dynamics give rise to different vulnerabilities.⁵ A combination of biological, socio-economic and cultural factors increases susceptibility among many women and girls, including adolescent girls between the ages of 15–19, women living with HIV, pregnant women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.^{6,7} About 70% of malaria deaths are among pregnant women and children under five.

Almost since it was founded, the Global Fund has been pushed by women's advocates and their allies to recognise these realities and to ensure that its programmes identify and break

down the barriers that put so many women and girls at risk and fail to meet their needs and rights. The Global Fund has tried to do this for many years and in many different ways, with some notable achievements, but progress often has been slow and inconsistent – especially on the ground, where most decisions are made about what Global Fund money is used for and who receives funding.

The Global Fund cannot make national HIV responses more receptive to gender priorities on its own. However, its high-profile and deep-pocketed role in global HIV, TB and malaria efforts gives it major influence over whether and how gender-related inequity and inequality, women's health and rights, and gender-transformative approaches are understood and integrated. Changes and improvements in these areas rely on the Global Fund's leadership and example so that funding follows need. For such reasons, there is a strong need for women's voices to be heard and their input valued across all Global Fund structures at global, regional and national levels, including the Global Fund Secretariat, the Global Fund Board and its committees, the Technical Review Panel (TRP), fund portfolio managers (FPMs) and country teams, local fund agents (LFAs), CCMs, principal recipients (PRs) and sub recipients (SRs). The input and influence of gender advocates are particularly vital in the Global Fund's funding cycle and its critical allocation, proposal and grant-making components at country level. Individuals, organisations and institutions that serve on and support these structures and contribute to the funding cycle process must be committed to better meeting the needs and rights of women and girls living with and at risk for HIV, TB and malaria. In addition to this, their actions must follow their commitments.

Women's guidance, experience and lived reality are essential for this critical work. That is why the W4GF movement was founded and continues to hold the world accountable on behalf of all women – living with or affected by HIV, TB or malaria. W4GF presses for women most affected by the epidemics to be meaningfully engaged at all stages of Global Fund processes to take part in the decisions that will deliver funds for the services that can change their lives.

W4GF AT A GLANCE



What do we mean by diversity?

Women in all our diversity are those of us who are engaged at global, regional and national levels in Global Fund processes and structures in key regions most affected by HIV, TB and malaria. We are not homogeneous, and we include women living with HIV, affected by TB and malaria, heterosexual, lesbian and bisexual, transgender, intersex and non-binary, women who use drugs, sex workers (over 18 year olds), adolescent girls and young women, Indigenous women, women who are sometimes displaced, migrants and women who are or have been incarcerated, and women with visible and invisible disabilities.



THE HISTORY OF WOMEN4GLOBALFUND

Impetus for creation: poor implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy

W4GF's triple role of prodding, monitoring and supporting the Global Fund – often at the same time – on all issues related to women and gender equity has been evident from the start. The movement was founded in June 2013 in response to a women-led evaluation (conducted in 2011–2012) of the Global Fund's Gender Equality Strategy (GES), which had been endorsed by the Global Fund Board in 2008. The evaluation was conducted by AIDS Strategy, Advocacy and Policy (ASAP), an independent community-based consulting group, which was commissioned to carry out the work by the gender adviser at the Global Fund Secretariat and UN Women.

The main goal was to understand the extent to which the GES had been implemented in the three years since it had been adopted, by documenting the depth and breadth of gender equality activities in Global Fund-supported programmes and services. The analysis was done in two phases, with a desk review of overall progress in rounds 7, 8 and 9, looking in depth at nine countries (Armenia, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Jamaica, Lesotho, South Africa, Tajikistan, and Zambia)⁸ with in country assessments to allow for a deeper dive in four of those countries (Jamaica, South Africa, Tajikistan and Zambia). The findings from the evaluation included the following:

- Most of the documentation from countries revealed programmes that were 'gender-blind', meaning that they were not specifically focused on different needs of women and men;
- Countries included a fair range of activities that addressed gender issues – and would be defined as 'gender sensitive' – but many of these activities fell away over time or could not be tracked;
- There was limited evidence of any countries reporting the 'gold standard' gender-responsive or gender-transformative programming that the GES recommended;
- In nearly all cases that data was weak (and not aggregated by sex or age), documentation was insufficient, programmes could not be tracked in the budgets and there was no gender-based budgeting.
- There was very little attempt to create environments that supported improve health outcomes for women and gender equality.
- No countries tried to engage gender experts and women living with HIV in HIV decision-making.

Overall, ASAP's main finding was that the progressive and far-sighted intentions of the GES were not realised in practice. The GES was not having the kind of reach and impact it should have – to the detriment of all people the Global Fund was supposed to serve, not just women. The weak implementation contrasted sharply with the much more robust and wide-ranging impact across the Global Fund sparked by the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities (SOGI) strategy, which had been approved and introduced alongside the GES.

Based on its findings, ASAP made the following key recommendations in its evaluation to the Global Fund, the technical partners such as UN Women and other UNAIDS co-sponsors (e.g., UNFPA and UNICEF):

- Epidemiological information should be complemented by anthropological and sociological information.
- Sex and age-disaggregated data should be requested in performance indicators, budgets, progress updates and disbursement requests.
- CCMs should have capacity to develop gender-responsive strategies and be leveraging the GES and engage with civil society, especially women's rights organizations and women living with HIV.
- Implementation of the GES should be a joint responsibility across the Global Fund Secretariat, and country teams.
- Countries and the Global Fund need to move beyond a 'tick box' approach to gender interventions (e.g., one-off interventions or approaches that are not systematic or thought through from funding requests to implementation)
- Operational plans for girls and women, sex workers and people who use drugs, linked to GES, should be prepared as part of the implementation of the new Global Fund strategy (2012–2016)
- Countries require technical assistance.

ASAP did more than just deliver an evaluation report to the Global Fund that highlighted such findings. It also decided to be part of the solution. As a community-based consultancy, the small team of women who had conducted the assessment began reaching out to existing organisations and networks focusing on and led by women living with and affected by HIV, TB and malaria- in an effort to mobilise action to respond to the lack of progress on the GES and broader gender-related issues throughout the Global Fund.

W4GF is the result of that mobilisation work and was set up in direct response to the women's input. Most acknowledged that the GES was a strong strategy with great intentions, but agreed that it was not being transformed into action at the local level where it could make the change that was needed.

The following are key points made by those participating in the review that underpinned the W4GF movement early on:

- Countries need to develop their understanding of ‘gender’, especially what is meant by ‘gender transformative’, and build on this understanding to ensure scale-up of the programmes and services that meet the comprehensive needs/rights of women and girls;
- More support is required through Global Fund processes and from technical partners in the proposal and implementation phases to enable meaningful engagement;
- More women and gender champions are needed to engage in Global Fund processes. There are simply not enough women engaging with the Global Fund or on CCMs, especially women living with HIV and from key affected populations;
- Women and gender champions need to be more organised and understand the entry points, and to push the Global Fund to keep the GES central to its actions globally and at country level.

Education, training and learning: the workshop model

With initial financial and organisational support from the Global Fund Secretariat, as well as UNAIDS, GIZ and UN Women⁹, ASAP, the ATHENA Network and the South African AIDS Legal Network (ALN) organised the first in a series of funded workshops in July 2013. The emerging W4GF movement was then supported by ASAP to organise a further 12 workshops held over the next four years (partnering with many other groups, including the Stop TB Partnership and the Communities Delegation to the Global Fund) These workshops gathered together advocates working on or interested in the Global Fund’s work or women’s issues in countries implementing Global Fund grants worldwide. They were joined by representatives from the Global Fund Secretariat and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), experts in gender and women’s rights, and other women with expertise in advocacy, campaigning and movement-building.

Much of the early work of W4GF, including the workshops, focused on supporting advocates to understand what was then known as the ‘new funding model’. The Global Fund was in the process of transitioning from its original ‘rounds-based’ structure to its current model, which is centred around three-year funding cycles, country-based processes and complex models to allocate money. The shift required all people involved in Global Fund programming and advocacy to learn and understand new terms, processes, expectations and opportunities. W4GF used these changes as an opportunity to spark engagement in the Global Fund by a broad range of gender equality advocates. In this way W4GF played a critical role in filling gaps in knowledge when few other education and supportive options were available for many country-level advocates outside of more formal structures such as CCMs.

W4GF WORKSHOPS

- 1 **W4GF Global Workshop**, 10–12 July 2013, Geneva Switzerland
Strengthening Women’s Engagement with the Global Fund to Champion Gender Equality through the New Funding Model and Beyond
- 2 **W4GF Global Workshop**, 27–29 October 2013, Paris, France
Improving the TB Response from a Gender Perspective
- 3 **W4GF Asia-Pacific Workshop**, 14–16 November 2013, Bangkok, Thailand
Gender Equality and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- 4 **W4GF Africa Workshop**, 4–6 December 2013, Cape Town, South Africa
Gender Equality and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- 5 **APNSW & ASWA Workshop**, 8– 13 August 2013, Siem Reap, Cambodia
Capacity Building on the Global Fund, Human Rights, and Gender
- 6 **Global Fund Board Workshop**, 3 March 2014, Jakarta, Indonesia
Gender Equality within Global Fund Processes
- 7 **W4GF Francophone Workshop**, 7–10 December 2014, Marrakech, Morocco
Gender Equality and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- 8 **Stop TB Partnership Workshop**, 13–15 January 2015, Nairobi, Kenya
TB/HIV Gender Assessments: Building capacity for TB Activists to Advance Gender Equality through Global Fund and National Programmes
- 9 **W4GF Africa Workshop**, 6–8 December 2015, Harare, Zimbabwe
Strengthening and Integrating TB & Malaria within the HIV Gender Response
- 10 **W4GF Global Workshop**, 28 June – 1 July 2016, Bangkok, Thailand
Supporting Gender Equality and Human Rights Champions in Global Fund Country Processes
- 11 **W4GF Session at AIDS 2016**, 22 July 2016, Durban, South Africa
Global Village Session on Gender Equality and Human Rights in the Global Fund Strategy 2017 – 2022
- 12 **W4GF Africa Workshop**, 12–14 December 2016, Johannesburg, South Africa
Strengthening Capacity of Women’s and Gender Equality Advocates to Effectively Participate in Global Fund Country Processes under the New Strategy and Workshop Report

Administrative, financial and governance evolution

ASAP was the host organisation for the emerging W4GF movement over the first few years of this initial phase, including supporting organisation of the series of workshops. It supported the movement’s ongoing work on a pro bono basis and solicited external funding for W4GF. In late 2014, W4GF received its first major grant for core work, from ViiV Healthcare’s Positive Action Programme (Positive Action). This was for one year (beginning in December 2014) and was used to establish the W4GF secretariat team, to develop governance structures, and to build further momentum by strengthening the growing a network of W4GF Advocates.

Positive Action has continued to support W4GF as it has evolved and grown as a movement and has administratively moved to different hosts. W4GF has never been a formal legal entity, which is why it has always been hosted by a legal entity to handle the movement's financing and funding matters and basic human resources responsibilities. The strategic decision to operate in this way was made in part to keep the movement lean, nimble and highly focused on its main objectives.

It had always been intended that W4GF should be located within a community-based organisation, ideally of women directly affected by the three diseases. For that reason, W4GF, which was then more established, migrated in March 2018 from ASAP to be hosted by ICW Global (the International Community of Women Living With HIV). Unexpectedly, ICW Global faced some organisational challenges and so W4GF decided to pause work for a few months. Since early 2019, ICASO (the International Coalition of AIDS Service Organizations) has served as W4GF's fiscal agent and the movement has continued to grow and mobilise greater engagement from even more partners as well as individual advocates.

W4GF's evolution and engagement processes over the years have included numerous partnerships. The first one, in its early days of organising, consisted of all key discussions around activities and workshops being guided by a Steering Committee made up of ASAP, the ATHENA network and the South African ALN.

W4GF also developed strategic partnerships with organisations to host and organise the early workshops and subsequent webinars, to prepare and publish documents, and to educate and train a wider range of Advocates. This has been important to expand the reach of the movement and to mobilise more Advocates, especially those already engaged with the partner organisations who may not have other reasons to think about the W4GF agenda. Key partners have included networks of women living with HIV; global networks of key affected populations (e.g., the Global Network of Sex Work Projects [NSWP], the African Sex Workers Alliance [ASWA] and the International Network of People who use Drugs [INPUD]); the Stop TB Partnership; the three Civil Society and Communities Delegations to the Global Fund Board;¹⁰ W4GF also works closely with the Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN), the Civil Society 4 Malaria Elimination (CS4ME) network as well as the regional Global Fund civil society and community support, coordination and communications platforms-- in particular the one for Anglophone Africa, hosted by the Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS and Health Service Organizations (EANNASO), and the one for Francophone Africa, hosted by Réseau Accès aux Médicaments Essentiels (RAME).

W4GF maintains close links with the Global Fund Secretariat, particularly staff who focus on gender, human rights and the engagement of communities. Many of those individuals have attended workshops and provided training and technical assistance in dedicated webinars for W4GF Advocates. Their engagement with W4GF has changed and deepened over time because the Secretariat's formal processes and structures related to gender and communities have evolved, with the most notable shift being a move from having just one gender advisor to an entire department that focuses on such issues: the Community, Rights and Gender (CRG) department. More recently as well, the Access to Funding Department (also in the Strategy Division with the CRG Dept) has worked closely with W4GF to develop

the W4GF package, which includes guidance on [navigating the Global Fund's 2020–2022 funding cycle](#).

The Global Fund Secretariat's engagement with W4GF is a strong indication of mutual goals of improving, expanding and embedding gender equality and women's issues in its HIV, TB and malaria programming. It also underscores W4GF's triple role as watchdog, co-creator and supporter of the Global Fund and how the movement's efforts are valued highly as essential for shared overall goals worldwide.

Shift to virtual engagement and strengthened leadership structures

W4GF last held a workshop in December 2016. Reflecting the changed approaches in global organising – and respecting the need to respond to the climate emergency, as well as the growth in effective new technologies and a desire to focus resources most efficiently – W4GF has shifted its approach slightly to become a more [virtual learning and sharing platform](#) for advocates to use and support. Currently, the W4GF movement's educational, training and communications activities are primarily conducted virtually, through webinars, teleconferences and listservs. For example, W4GF recently set up a WhatsApp group for young women who want to know more about the Global Fund. This new approach aims to support their advocacy and create accessible spaces to learn and share their own experience with Global Fund policy, processes and in national structures and levels. The WhatsApp group has proven extremely popular and was fully subscribed, with over 250 people signing up, within just half a day of being announced.

W4GF was founded on being women-centred and with MIPA principles (meaningful involvement of people living with HIV), and this underscores the leadership and staffing in all activities. W4GF has a small team that regularly coordinates discussion around – and preparation of – guidance documents on the Global Fund, including in regard to policy and process changes and new funding cycles, as well as sign-on letters that focus on issues central to gender equality and the rights and needs of women in all their diversity. The [W4GF team](#) also helps to arrange and support technical assistance (TA) for local and regional advocates and their organisations that are trying to influence Global Fund processes and structures and priorities in their own countries and regions.

Over the years, W4GF has continued to explore ways to ensure that its work reflects and is guided by the priorities and needs of its Advocates – the women who have participated in workshops or webinars and are doing much of the vital work on the ground and globally to improve the Global Fund's environment in respect of gender and women's rights. In 2015 a [W4GF Advisory Group](#) was established to provide technical and strategic advice to the W4GF team. The Advisory Group comprises a maximum of eight members, all community-based advocates or representatives of civil society organisations with expertise in Global Fund-related advocacy or awareness-raising.

At a W4GF strategy meeting in 2018, participants agreed to create a more formal governance structure that would enable even deeper engagement from the Advisory Group

so that it could better oversee, advise and support the W4GF team and play a stronger role in determining the movement's direction and strategy. The Advisory Group reflects the diversity of the movement, including by having a good geographical balance and a wide range of members in other areas (e.g., women openly living with HIV and affected by TB and malaria, as well as people engaged in the governance structures of the Global Fund). In 2019 the Advisory Group selected Maurine Murenga, the Global Fund Board Member for Communities, as chair. While W4GF remains a hosted organisation, the Advisory Group increasingly functions like a Board of a legal entity.

In 2019, W4GF took further steps to ensure a more systematic flow of information between women engaged at the national level and the secretariat team, and vice versa by creating a new position of W4GF Collaborators. In 2019, ten advocates from eight countries took on the mandate to ensure that the movement has systematic information from a range of different contexts to keep the work grounded in realities at country level. The Collaborators are expected to help strengthen the dynamic dialogue between the W4GF secretariat team and Advocates, contribute to the development of more coordinated global advocacy actions and priorities that align with national realities, and identify communication resources that will assist women working at the national level in the context of the Global Fund to have greater impact.

Tools and approaches for learning, sharing and addressing emerging priorities

W4GF has developed and used several different approaches and tools to facilitate learning, information-sharing and accountability. The workshops were a prominent feature in the first several years. Through them, W4GF undertook the following during that period:

- Began a 'Global Fund literacy' dialogue to educate new advocates from implementing countries about how the Global Fund is structured and operates; the reform at the Global Fund; how the (then) new funding model worked; and how best to engage with and influence the Global Fund policy and processes, and the programmes and services it supports nationally and regionally;
- Delivered 'gender literacy', which included discussion and clarity on gender-sensitive and gender-transformative programming and interventions, and why that matters;
- Expanded that dialogue to engage with the Global Fund Board as well as staff at the Global Fund Secretariat, including fund portfolio managers (FPMs), and with key technical partners;
- Advocated for several priority actions by the Global Fund, including to address the recommendations from the ASAP review of the GES, such as creation of a GES action plan; routine sex- and age-disaggregated data in countries' reports; and gender focal points on all CCMs.
- Advocated for the GES action plan to be integrated and given more prominence in the new Global Fund Strategy, 2017-2022, 'Investing to End Epidemics'.

Many workshop participants became and remain prominent HIV, TB and women's health and rights advocates at local or global levels (or both). Women who have participated in W4GF workshops have served on the Global Fund Board and in high-level and influential positions in their countries, such as CCM Chairs, where they have been able to persistently and often successfully bring W4GF priorities and concerns to decision-making tables.

WHY AND HOW W4GF ADDS VALUE

- W4GF *inspires and supports advocates* to do more to encourage the Global Fund to make women's needs and realities central to all its work.
- W4GF increases *capacity* and confidence of advocates, their connections and access to information, and their ability to collaborate with and learn from each other.
- W4GF prioritises *simplicity and relevance*. In all its activities, W4GF helps to support women's engagement by *interpreting jargon* and *explaining technical details* in ways that make sense to advocates working at local and national levels, especially in implementing countries.
- W4GF offers access to a platform of information and advice on how women can influence Global Fund programmes in their own countries. This in turn *strengthens the quality of programmes* not only from a gender perspective, but far more broadly as well.
- Examples include enabling women to know what parts of the overall Global Fund structure in their countries are most important, who to speak with to maximise impact, and how and when they might *engage in various key processes associated with their countries' grants*. This could include being on writing teams for country proposals; overseeing and tracking grant applications; and monitoring whether interventions reflect key priorities such as ensuring gender and human rights and that they are meaningfully integrated and funded in final grant budgets.
- W4GF makes strong and regular efforts to *reach and support young women*, including those with little or no background or history in Global Fund work. These efforts are important because young women face different and unique challenges to accessing services, and the perspective of young women is often missing in discussions and decision-making that directly affects their lives. The future of passionate and successful advocacy relies on young women supporting action and leading the way.
- W4GF's commitment to diversity has included consistent outreach to *include and work with networks of key affected populations* and to *integrate their concerns into the movement's priorities and actions*. W4GF Advocates come from across the full spectrum of gender identities and populations, many of which are disproportionately vulnerable to HIV, TB or malaria and experience 'double' or 'triple' marginalization due to being a woman from a key population (e.g., a sex worker) or transgender, for example.
- This diverse range of engaged Advocates has helped to *build solidarity among women from different experiences and contexts* who might otherwise have only engaged with the Global Fund from a narrower perspective. W4GF's approach - placing diversity at the heart of the movement - has also *raised the visibility of key affected women* in places where epidemics are mostly characterised as being among heterosexual cisgender women who are not sex workers and do not use drugs.

More recently, W4GF has focused on [webinars](#) as a useful approach to build Global Fund and gender literacy. W4GF hosts up to ten webinars a year, many in partnership with the Global Fund Secretariat. Each webinar has a defined topic, most of which are related to specific Global Fund initiatives (e.g., CCM evolution) or broader issues of importance across the W4GF movement (e.g., cervical cancer). The webinars have multiple objectives: to connect Advocates to the Global Fund, which supports their own national advocacy and understanding of Global Fund policy and processes; to enable a dialogue that encourages questions and clarifications; and to help build 'ownership' of the movement among Advocates, which can be advanced by sharing experiences as well as building confidence. The webinar discussions are also key opportunities that inform W4GF and strengthen its knowledge and understanding of how to influence Global Fund policy and processes.

W4GF's [website](#) is a repository of information primarily for national and regional Advocates. It includes [advocacy statements and calls for action](#) recognizing and responding to the specific needs of women living with and affected by HIV, TB and malaria. As part of W4GF's role as a partner and watchdog of the Global Fund, the website includes resources on Global Fund processes and developments of interest to national W4GF Advocates. Those resources are produced by other civil society and community groups, as well as by the Global Fund itself. The website remains close to the movement's roots by also including [inspirational stories](#) about diverse women working and advocating for gender equality and wider access to resources.

W4GF shares the growing focus on community-based monitoring (CBM) and accountability of HIV, TB and malaria responses at national levels, and it advocates for gender equality to be central to these efforts. W4GF developed a CBM and accountability feedback toolkit to enable W4GF Advocates to track Global Fund investments and ensure that countries deliver gender-responsive programmes that address inequalities and human rights barriers to accessing services. This [W4GF accountability toolkit](#) is being rolled out independently in a handful of countries that have received focused funding and other resources to highlight the successes and challenges in Global Fund-supported programmes for adolescent girls and young women. This tool is an example of the type of initiatives and approaches W4GF hopes to support to further enhance the capacity of W4GF Advocates to influence Global Fund programmes at national levels.

W4GF has also brought back into focus key issues central to women's lives, most of which have been neglected and ought to be addressed by programmes supported by the Global Fund. The most recent example is a focus on [cervical cancer](#) and the long-standing, but under-addressed, links to HIV. One of the three AIDS-defining cancers, cervical cancer has disproportionately affected women living with HIV since the beginning of the epidemic – which is why W4GF has been such a strong, public supporter of the cervical cancer

Elimination Initiative led by WHO. The Global Fund is a key partner in this global initiative and W4GF has advocated for the Global Fund to focus more systematically on this major health priority for women. W4GF believes that greater emphasis on cervical cancer by the Global Fund – even with relatively small amounts of funding supporting country grants – will provide opportunities for countries to offer integrated sexual and reproductive health and HIV programmes and services, and to achieve the aims of the WHO initiative.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT: ENHANCED WOMEN'S VOICES AND VISIBILITY ACROSS THE GLOBAL FUND

W4GF has evolved into a dynamic, global platform of women and gender equality advocates dedicated to achieving programmes and health systems that meet the rights and needs of women and girls in all their diversity. W4GF has been instrumental in making women and their priorities more visible throughout all parts of the Global Fund environment. Its impact can be seen in many developments since 2013, including the following:

W4GF played a key role in ensuring that **gender equality** was elevated to one of only four key **strategic objectives in the Global Fund Strategy 2017–2022** ('Investing to End Epidemics'). Continuous advocacy work from W4GF before and during the strategy development process, including at three influential partnership forums organised by the Global Fund for consultation purposes, was a crucial part of a broader effort that culminated in Strategic Objective 3 ('Promote and protect human rights and gender equality'). The W4GF movement's powerful presence, working with ICW Global and other gender equality and women's rights advocates to provide a 'living advocacy brief' during this process, is a good example of how it has been able to **bring the voices of grassroots women to decision-making processes**. The initial advocacy brief that highlighted W4GF's priorities was based on advocacy asks from W4GF Advocates who engaged (virtually) in the first partnership forum, as well as inputs from 47 women who participated in the W4GF Strategy Development Working Group. The brief was then updated for each partnership forum by the working group as key messages were discussed and evolved.

This achievement has practical as well as symbolic importance. It means that there is an expectation and assumption that all Global Fund processes and decision at all levels, from global to local, must take into account gender equality and that programming decisions should be assessed from the perspective of how and whether they address this part of the Strategy. W4GF considers one of its main priorities to be consistent monitoring of this commitment at national and global levels. As one Advocate noted, "Getting gender in the current strategy helped embed it into the DNA of the Global Fund", which leads to progress and accountability.

W4GF has played a substantial role in **increasing women's meaningful participation in CCMs and the understanding and awareness of women and gender on these important country-level structures**. When W4GF was launched, just 6% of CCMs had members who either represented women or who were gender specialists and advocates. By 2017, the share had risen to 40%. This improvement is due in large part to advocacy efforts by W4GF and allies to get the Global Fund to make and better enforce requirements for women's engagement and representation on all CCMs.

W4GF has supported **women to step up into leadership roles** and, for many women, it has been the only detailed introduction to the Global Fund and CCMs available to them. Many Advocates trained and supported through W4GF initiatives have, over time, **achieved high-profile and influential positions** within community-based groups and other civil society organisations and on **global and national Global Fund structures**. Several have joined CCMs, for example, and some have served in Delegations to the Global Fund Board and even on the Board itself. Because their Global Fund work started with and was grounded in gender and human rights issues, they are strong advocates for increased attention to, and funding for, activities in such areas across all HIV, TB and malaria programming. Women who are a part of W4GF have engaged in writing teams to influence country proposals and are also now CCM Chairs and oversee regional Global Fund grants. In some countries, women have used their power and refused to sign off on grant submissions to the Global Fund until certain changes were made – including to the grant itself, as well as to the ways in which the CCM works.

**Direct impact:
Gender training in South Sudan**

In South Sudan, a W4GF Advocate who had attended a workshop briefed the staff from the National Empowerment of Positive Women United on gender-transformative programming and discussed how to involve more men in implementation.

The advocate said: “A strong request was made to the CCM to ensure more female CCM members given that we now know this is part of the CCM eligibility criteria and this was agreed to be addressed. I also discussed the representation of the different diseases, which is lacking in our CCM and it was agreed that both the TB and malaria constituency must elect male and female representatives.”

In 2018, this advocacy led the South Sudan CCM to request the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support a gender training for all members focused on addressing gender inequities, with an emphasis on women and girls

W4GF’s longstanding advocacy work was a major factor in the Global Fund finally **requiring countries to report sex- and age-disaggregated data**. This was a critical development from a gender perspective and represents the first essential step in ensuring that countries have the capacity to track and report on data relevant to gender equality, which in turn should lead to better focused programmes. Through its monitoring and accountability work, W4GF is now assessing whether countries are meeting this requirement – and doing so in a quality, meaningful way – and whether and how it is being enforced by the Global Fund.

W4GF advocated to **unlock more finances for communities and gender-relevant interventions through the Global Fund** in the 2017–2019 funding cycle in its strategic investment set-asides. This included funding for technical assistance (TA); supporting the six regional civil society communication platforms; and advocating for more funds to reach women in communities, one result of which was the establishment of the HER Voice Initiative (see box on page 22). That initiative is supported by the more than US\$300 million designated for ‘**matching funds**’ over six priority areas, one of which was ‘HIV: adolescent girls and young women’. (Another of the six priority areas, ‘HIV: key populations impact’, is also a priority for many women.) Due to the successful Global Fund’s Sixth Replenishment, even more money is available for such catalytic investments in the 2020–2022 funding cycle, which means more funding for strategic initiatives and thus for adolescent girls and young women.

One important consequence of gathering more consistent and clearer disaggregated data is a **stark, evidence-based recognition of the gaps and challenges women and girls face in HIV, TB and malaria responses**. Among the impacts of that recognition has been more funding and support for focused interventions and programming. In 2018, the Global Fund initiated (in a pilot phase) the HER Voice project aimed at reducing the number of new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women by more than 50% by 2022 in 13 sub-Saharan Africa countries where young women are especially at risk. In addition to setting aside US\$200 million of its own resources for this project, the Global Fund is also mobilising additional funds from other donors and private-sector partners. (Box on page 22 contains more detailed information about the HER Voice project.)

There is nothing like W4GF! The hand holding and supporting of women! We live in a patriarchal system and in a male-dominated world and the less capacity we have the less likely we will have a seat at the table – otherwise our engagement becomes ceremonial.

*Talent Madziva, Zimbabwe
CCM member, 2016–2018*

W4GF's workshops and webinars have helped to create and sustain momentum toward positive change in the gender and human rights environment across the Global Fund. Observers have noted that the webinars continue to help to 'demystify' and simplify some of the confusing Global Fund documents related to all stages of the grant cycle. Advocates from a variety of countries and contexts have said that the information and assistance they received helped them know how and why to **bring issues related to gender into country dialogue sessions and to CCMs**. The Advocates' informed input

and recommendations have contributed to **more funding for interventions that directly or indirectly promote gender equality** and seek to remove barriers to quality HIV, TB and malaria services and support among women (and including adolescent girls and young women). Much more progress needs to be made to have the full, sustained impact needed, but the groundwork for far more transformative change is being laid.

The workshops and webinars have been a big part of the W4GF movement's efforts to **create a sense of community and solidarity among women's health and rights advocates worldwide**. This is an important and welcoming feature regardless of where they are living and working, but it has been especially valuable for women focusing on HIV, TB and malaria in places where the diseases and those who are vulnerable to them are less visible, such as in Latin America and the Caribbean. The opportunity to talk, to share experiences and to make joint plans and advocacy priorities can help many of these women to feel less alone and isolated, as well as more confident that their ideas and priorities would be recognised and supported.

GLOBAL FUND'S HER VOICE FUND: HOW W4GF BUILT ENGAGEMENT AND MOMENTUM TO STRENGTHEN A NOVEL APPROACH

The HER Voice Fund was set up in August 2018 as part of the Global Fund's CRG Strategic Initiative to support adolescent girls and young women to address the financial access barriers limiting young women from fully participating in national Global Fund processes in the 13 focus countries. Young women could apply for a broad range of work related to advocacy: to support engagement in country dialogues across concept note development, grant-making, implementation and monitoring. It supported meaningful participation in national strategic plans, frameworks, policies, guidelines- development and reviews and their accompanying or related monitoring and evaluation and operational plans; as well as strategies, policies and guidelines related to adolescent health and their well-being. The creation of this fund is important to W4GF, which has consistently advocated for more funding to reach women to support their participation in Global Fund processes at national level. In its pilot year 200 small grants were provided to networks and organizations led by women and girls across the 13 focus countries.

In its first phase, the HER Voice Fund provided up to US\$2000 to each applicant to support their logistics and enable them to engage at the national level in Global Fund-related processes. After an evaluation the Her Voice Fund has been handed to The Global Network of Young People living with HIV (Y+), supported by ViiV, and will be opening their first call for applications in March 2020.

W4GF was part of a collaborative group convened by the Global Fund to help think through how it could work best. W4GF presented key findings from a 2016 review of the [meaningful engagement of women in the \(new\) funding model in Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe](#). This research influenced momentum around the importance of the HER Voice Fund, with W4GF recommendations calling for the following:

- Bolster support for women in all their diversity on CCMs and beyond through providing technical and financial resources to meaningfully participate in National Strategic Plan (NSP) development, CCMs and Global Fund processes – including for capacity development and advocacy; and
- Channel greater funds for civil society implementation: The Global Fund must refocus and promote funding for community-based responses, community systems strengthening, and rights-based programming.

CONCLUSION

W4GF has been both a leader and bellwether of change at the Global Fund. At the time it was founded, in 2013, there was general agreement that gender and women's rights issues were insufficiently recognised and addressed at all levels of the institution. And there was limited interest or appetite in finding solutions that could help to overcome the gaps that prevented women from participating meaningfully in the processes that might lead to change,

The women who started the W4GF movement not only understood and were affected by these gaps, but were determined to overcome them. As noted throughout this document, W4GF has helped to influence the Global Fund to take important steps to hear and respond to the voices of women at national, regional and global levels. As both the Global Fund and W4GF evolve – in recognition of the realities of what women and girls face in HIV, TB and malaria responses worldwide – it is clear that a positive, symbiotic relationship has had important results.

W4GF continues to explore new ways to reach and support women who want – and should have – the opportunity to decide what, how and why the Global Fund operates at all levels, and particularly in implementing countries. The core advocacy work that it supports is evident in the processes and structures it has created to build and maximise engagement between women and girls and the Global Fund. The W4GF movement is moving forward and Advocates continue to seize opportunities to serve as both a supportive partner of the Global Fund and external advocates, seeking to ensure that gender equity and the needs of women and girls are central so that the Global Fund has the greatest possible impact.

“The civil society network Women4GlobalFund (W4GF) works with the Global Fund as an interface with women and girls in all their diversity. Many of these women are leading Global Fund community related work and discussion in their own countries. In 2018 and 2019, W4GF worked with the Secretariat to organize a monthly webinar series on pertinent topics, which enabled community members to engage directly with the Secretariat and receive updates on relevant policy and program issues. W4GF has also developed a community-based monitoring and accountability feedback toolkit to support communities to track and review the impact of national programs and services supported by the Global Fund. This was adapted from technical assistance work provided by the CRG SI. W4GF is supported by ViiV Healthcare to bring together women's rights advocates, especially women living with HIV, and directly affected by TB and malaria — to advance gender equality through the Global Fund. Community-based monitoring is a means for service users and/or local communities to gather, analyze and use information to improve access to and quality of services on an ongoing basis. This can include monitoring human rights or gender related-barriers to accessing services as well as barriers related to service delivery, governance, budget tracking, performance-based financing, domestic financing and procurement and supply chain. It can be focused on a specific area such as the quality of programs for adolescents.”¹¹

ENDNOTES

- 1 Sources for this: 770,000 [570,000–1.1 million] people died from AIDS-related illnesses (end 2018). (www.unaids.org/en/resources/fact-sheet); a total of 1.5 million people died from TB in 2018 (including 251,000 people with HIV) (www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/tuberculosis); the estimated number of malaria deaths stood at 435,000 in 2017 (www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malaria).
- 2 Karim S and Baxter B. HIV incidence rates in adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa. The Lancet. Vol 7, Issue 11, 1 November 2019. <https://bit.ly/34PTMZX>
- 3 World Health Organization (WHO) website: www.who.int/tb/areas-of-work/tb-hiv/en/ (accessed 15 February 2020).
- 4 UNDP. HIV, health and development. Discussion paper: gender and malaria. (December 2015)
- 5 Measure evaluation. The importance of gender in malaria data (March 2017)
- 6 LGBTI individuals who are homeless and live on the street and do not have access to ITNs or treatment. Roll Back Malaria partnership: Gender and Malaria. Factsheets on malaria and the SDGs (September 2015)
- 7 Measure evaluation. The importance of gender in malaria data (March 2017)
- 8 The country selection was based on geographical distribution, variation of epidemiology and level of Global Fund support. For all countries, the documentation reviewed included the proposal, performance framework, summary and detailed budget, progress update and disbursement request, and enhanced financial reporting forms.
- 9 UNAIDS = Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); UNDP = United Nations Development Programme; GIZ = Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
- 10 The Developed Country NGO Delegation, the Developing Country NGO Delegation, and the Communities Delegation.
- 11 Investing in the Future: Women and Girls in All Their Diversity; Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria; 2019

The information and observations in this document were informed by a basic literature review and interviews with several women who have been involved and interested in the W4GF movement since it was launched. They included W4GF Advocates, former and current members of its leadership, and representatives from partners including the Global Fund Secretariat.