



## Learning from Women4GlobalFund Advocates

### 1. Introduction

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 programmes and services funded at national levels in implementing countries.

The W4GF core team (working virtually from Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe) supports W4GF Advocates from a wide range of diverse backgrounds to influence how the Global Fund achieves gender equality and human rights at all levels. The team works to achieve the following key objectives to:

- improve awareness and understanding of Global Fund policies so women are able to influence how the Global Fund seeks to achieve gender equality and human rights;
- create a platform where women make connections, learn from each other, strategize and collaborate to set priorities for Global Fund advocacy; and
- secure accountability and critique of Global Fund investments, track Global Fund-supported programmes and services, and influence global and national processes to inform stronger programming for women and girls.

The W4GF team regularly seeks to learn how to improve the support provided to the W4GF Advocates and other women in implementing countries. Over a seven-year period, W4GF trained 179 Advocates through 11 workshops and since then the movement has expanded to reach nearly 250 Advocates from 54 countries. Many W4GF Advocates leveraged the trainings as a springboard to engage at the national level and some also went on to advocate for changes at the global level. Over the years, the W4GF team has focused on providing accessible and relevant information, and creating opportunities to share lived experience through webinars and in e-learning social media groups for young women under 30 years of age. The team now communicates virtually with Advocates through the website, newsletters and social media (Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp groups) while also organizing and supporting webinars and other advocacy activities related to gender equality and the Global Fund.

In order to understand better how the W4GF team can support existing and new W4GF Advocates, the team in July 2020 conducted an online semi-structured survey in English and French and conducted open-ended interviews with a representative sample of 11 W4GF Advocates, including those who have excelled in influential roles as well as those who have fallen out of touch with the W4GF team. These interviews further strengthened the results of the survey, including by providing opportunities to clarify written inputs and obtain additional information related to survey questions. This report outlines the research findings, which will guide W4GF to improve how the team can support W4GF Advocates and mobilise the voice of women working in implementing countries, and in particular to understand the relevance, adequacy and accessibility of the information W4GF provides.

## 2. Methodology and Demographics

The online survey was sent to all W4GF Advocates and included some open-ended questions and was conducted in English and French. A total of 27 people: (13 Anglophone and 14 Francophone)<sup>1</sup> responded to questions that explored the following key areas:

- reasons for remaining involved with W4GF;
- W4GF's influence and support around their own advocacy;
- access to W4GF information, activities and tools and their relevance;
- importance and relevance of W4GF webinars; and
- awareness and use of W4GF guidance documents and accessibility to technical guidance offered by the Global Fund relating to gender equality and women.

Annex 1 provides the survey questions.

Of the 27 survey respondents, ten were openly living with HIV and four represented people affected by malaria; eight were adolescent girls and young women/people; four represented women who engage in sex work; six were from lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender communities; five were living with disabilities; four were from Indigenous communities; four were male; three were incarcerated individuals and two were miners.

The eleven advocates interviewed (all female) came from eight implementing countries.<sup>2</sup> Those interviewed had all participated in at least one W4GF workshop and had experience across HIV, TB and malaria; they had variously stayed engaged or lost touch with the W4GF team. Nine were openly living with HIV and one each represented people affected by TB, adolescent girls and young women and young people, and women who engage in sex work. Eight of the 11 have been part of developing their country's National Strategic Plans, participated in the country dialogue and/or helped to develop a national funding request to the Global Fund. Five of them are members of their national Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) and two have engaged in grant making.

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<sup>1</sup> From Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, India, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.

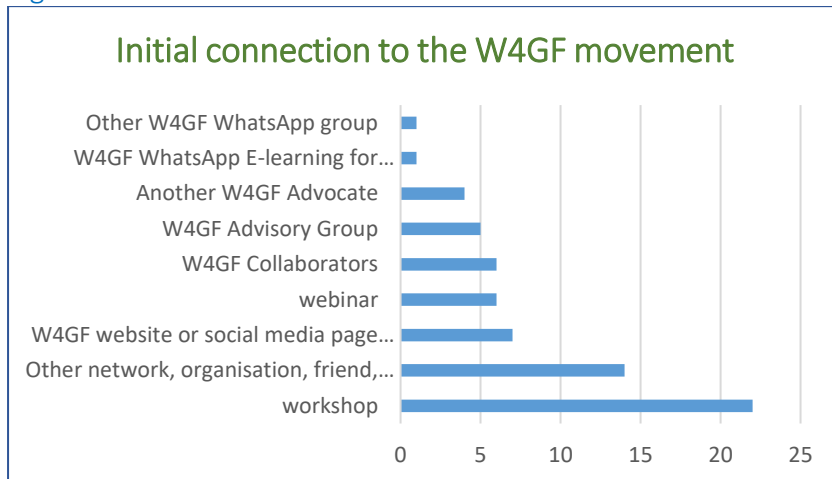
<sup>2</sup> Botswana, Indonesia, Kenya (3), Malawi (2), South Sudan, Thailand, Ukraine, Zimbabwe

### 3. Value added and benefit of W4GF in general

#### 3.1 Connecting with W4GF

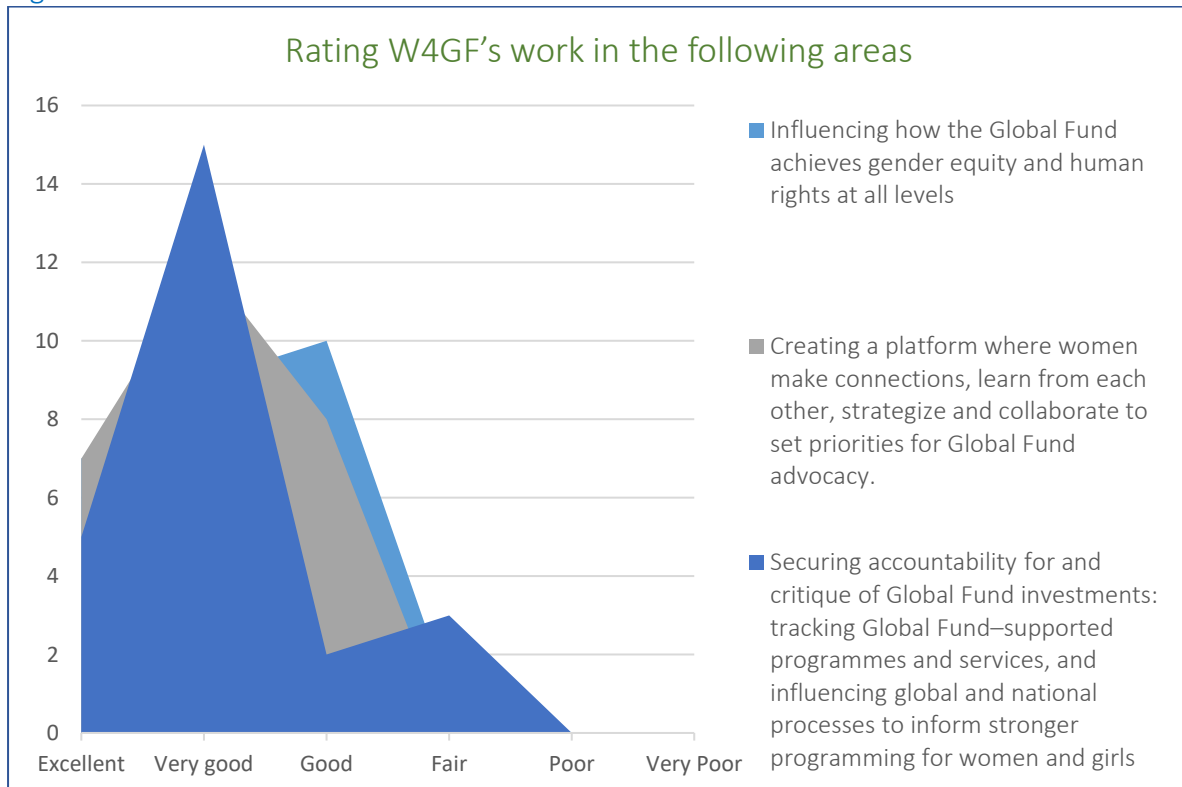
All respondents (including the 11 Advocates who were interviewed) initially engaged with W4GF in different ways, as highlighted in Figure 1 below. The women selected for interview were longstanding W4GF Advocates who had attended workshop trainings, and a key question (to inform future interventions) was why some sustained engagement while others fell out of touch.

Figure 1



62% of the online respondents remained in touch with W4GF, and Figure 2 shows how well they rated W4GF’s work against various objectives.

Figure 2





W4GF was especially interested to understand why 37% of the advocates interviewed – who remain active at the national level – had lost touch with W4GF. They reflected on a range of concerns including feeling overwhelmed by the level of understanding required to meaningfully engage in Global Fund discussion and that – in the words of one interviewee – it was “hard to understand and work with”. Language was another key barrier, especially noted by many Francophone speakers who want to engage with the W4GF movement but are challenged by insufficient information in French and W4GF webinars being conducted in English. Internet connectivity creates a real barrier for many, especially young women, from being able to access W4GF virtual platforms; in some countries (like South Sudan) their only access is email newsletters that are shared regularly highlighting key activities, information, advocacy and upcoming virtual events for engagement.

### 3.2 Reasons for engaging with W4GF

Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents thought that W4GF was extremely important (40%) or very important (48%) to their work and in supporting their ability to engage with the Global Fund. This was affirmed by interviewees who confirmed that W4GF is an important platform that continues to ensure that gender equality champions have the information they need on the Global Fund through the webinars and related advocacy as well as through the supportive team. One Francophone woman living with HIV from Burkina Faso who supports a representative of the CCM and the implementation of a regional grant respondent noted: “As women leaders it is a framework for sharing, it comforts me in my commitment, especially knowing that we have the same difficulties that present themselves to all the women involved. I remain committed because as a woman doctor and activist in the field, this structure will allow me to reconcile these two criteria and bring my know-how to participate and benefit from its activities.”

W4GF has created a hub of information related to gender and women that supports women’s engagement with the Global Fund and its decisions. Survey respondents and interviewees affirmed that W4GF’s passion to fight for gender equality has created an encouraging space and even more so because it is run by women for women. Respondents felt empowered and stronger in their leadership at the national level through their connection to W4GF. The Advocates also appreciate W4GF as a safe space for women in all their diversity to join forces and continue learning and sharing on Global Fund–related matters. All of this helps to bring more visibility to the lives and realities of women and girls.

One woman from Zimbabwe who serves at the CCM and works with women in the rural areas felt that the communication, webinars and sharing have been a resource to the women who are leading in their countries and that “bringing answers to women in the grassroots is what being a W4GF Advocate means.”

Those who have fully engaged with W4GF – including many survey respondents – affirmed W4GF as a platform to access information and support as well as to work with women with whom they would normally not engage. One woman from Botswana who works across HIV, TB and malaria but is not formally engaged in the Global Fund in her country said, “I remain engaged for support, capacity strengthening, learning from each other or sharing of experiences and a safe space to voice your concerns and others.”

### 3.3 W4GF’s ability to support Advocates in their advocacy

One woman from the Caribbean who is on her national CCM connected with W4GF at the 2016 International AIDS Conference and has since then remained engaged. She noted how the information accessed supports their advocacy, with statements including that the interactions with other women

“allows comparison of how your country is managing its grant and this informs strategies and awareness building for community groups.” Another young woman from Cameroon who supports civil society on the CCM and connected with W4GF through a webinar shared that “W4GF provides me – through their webinars and publications – real time updates on the situation of gender participation which guides the development of programmes for advocacy and community outreach in Cameroon.”

Advocates interviewed shared that W4GF offers them tools to engage as technical experts. The learning – especially during in workshops – built advocacy skills required at the national level to ensure the voice of women are heard and taken seriously. Respondents attributed this capacity strengthening as a key factor to their joining CCMs and to advocating for more space for women and key populations around national decision making tables. W4GF has supported women to transition from having very little information on the Global Fund to being able to influence the national agenda strategically in their countries.

A key area of influence highlighted by women was their engagement in the development of the current Global Fund strategy (2017–2022), with many recalling that their advocacy ensured that gender equality became one of the strategic objectives of the strategy. Interviewees who had not engaged consistently in W4GF had been recently pulled back in and have become active again by joining W4GF’s [Global Fund Strategy Working Group \(2023–2028\)](#) and its related webinars and advocacy. Regular check-ins have inspired and encouraged Advocates to keep working and engaging while also affirming that they are not alone. This sense of solidarity is appreciated by many of them.

One interviewee representing sex worker communities from Kenya shared that W4GF has amplified the voice of sex worker networks to ensure that sex workers’ rights are visible and considered as part of achieving gender equality: “Our voices have been raised, we have women representatives in the CCM and have also created space for key populations.” Two interviewees from networks of women living with HIV who use drugs shared the power of jointly working with women in all their diversity on position papers and statements to address inequalities and injustices.

#### 4. Specifics about W4GF support options tools

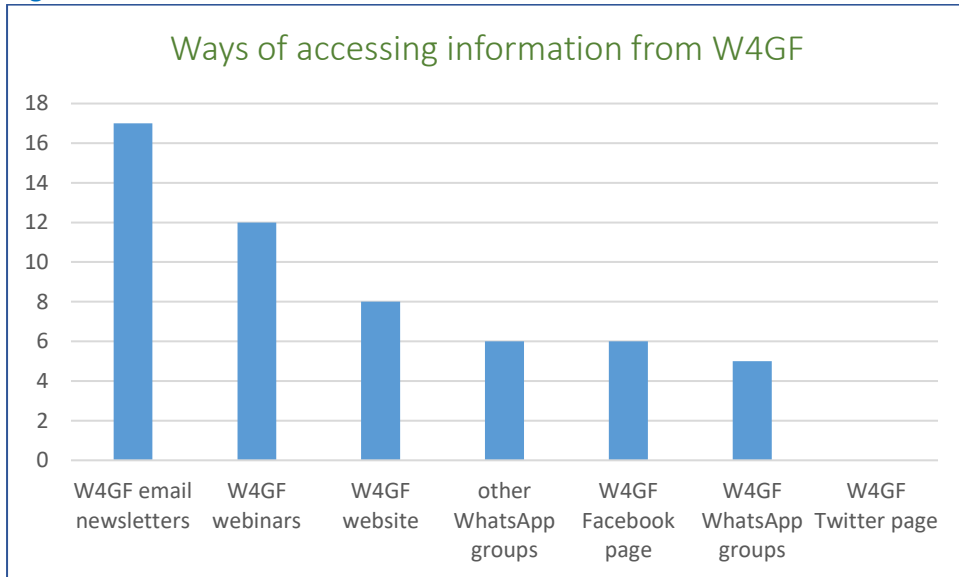
W4GF aims to make information about key Global Fund processes, policies, structures and systems available in easy-to-understand ways that directly relate to the main needs of its Advocates. As a virtual network, W4GF leverages its website, webinars, and social media including Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, as well as email newsletters. W4GF also develops key guidance documents to build understanding.

##### 4.1 Ways of accessing information

Figure 3 illustrates how the 27 survey respondents access information, with the majority finding that newsletters – which are shared regularly, and highlight key activities, information, advocacy and upcoming virtual events for engagement – are most useful, followed by W4GF webinars and the W4GF website.

Eight W4GF Advocates interviewed confirmed that while most of them sometimes visit the W4GF website, they mostly receive information via the email newsletter. Half of the women said that they appreciate the W4GF WhatsApp groups and the useful links that drive them to the website for more information.

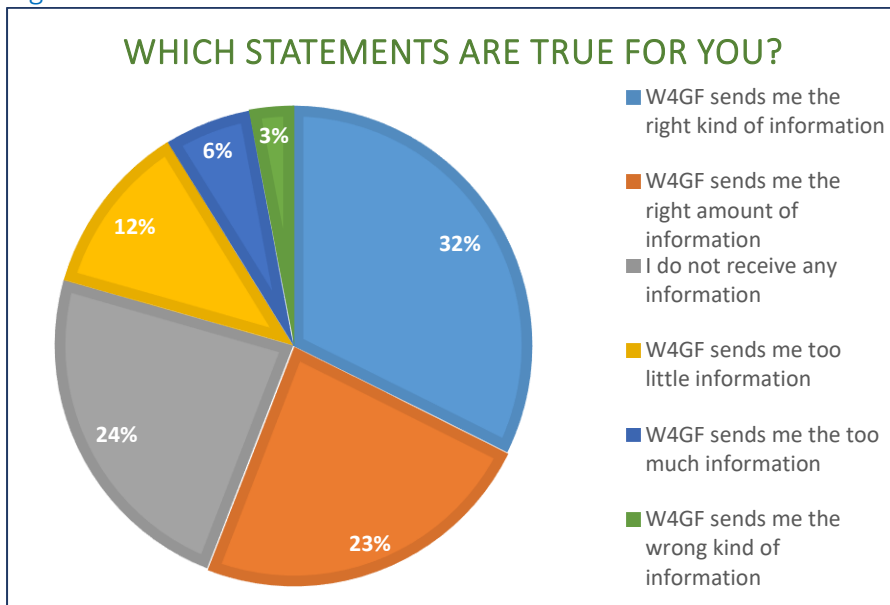
Figure 3



#### 4.2 How the information is received by Advocates

Figure 4 below shows how the 27 survey respondents reacted to the following statements around the information they are receiving from W4GF.

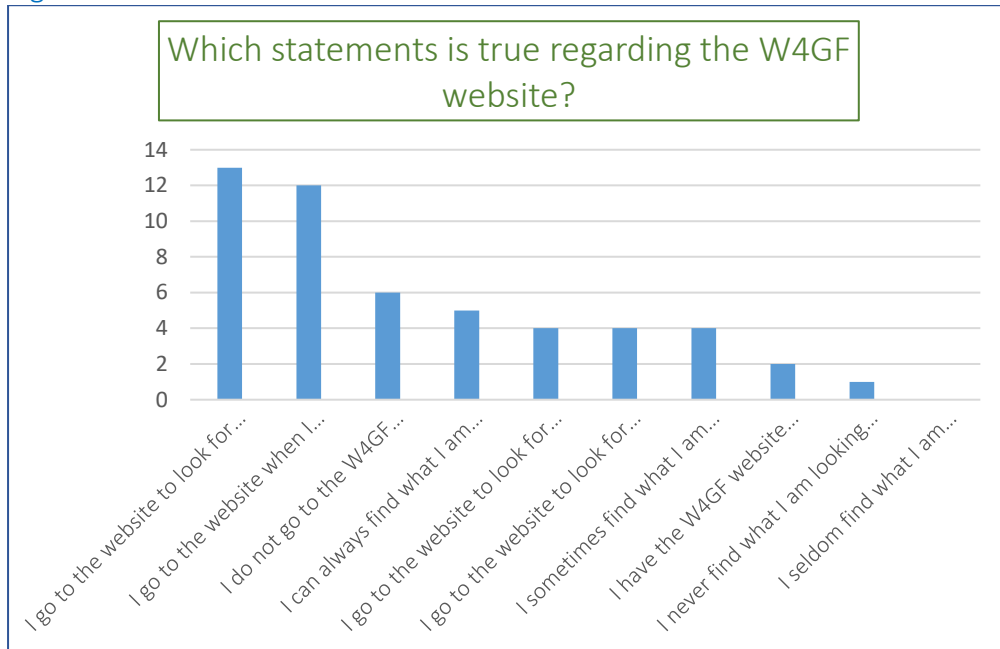
Figure 4



### 4.3 How and why Advocates access the W4GF website

The survey respondents shared specific feedback on how and why they access the website in Figure 5.

Figure 5



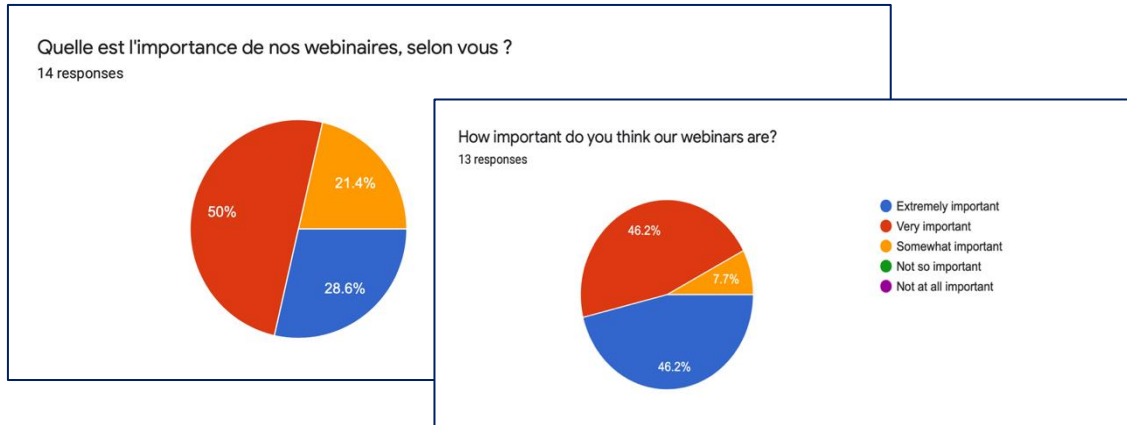
### 4.4 Feedback on the W4GF webinars

Between April – September 2020, W4GF hosted 15 webinars that engaged at least 450 people from a broad range of backgrounds, with especially participation from young women and women living with HIV. The webinars covered:

- the Global Fund’s work at global level (seven webinars);
- UNAIDS and Global Fund Strategy Development processes (three);
- national reflections on meaningful engagement in the most recent allocation cycle in Ghana, India and Uganda; (three)
- engaging young women beginning their Global Fund journey (three).

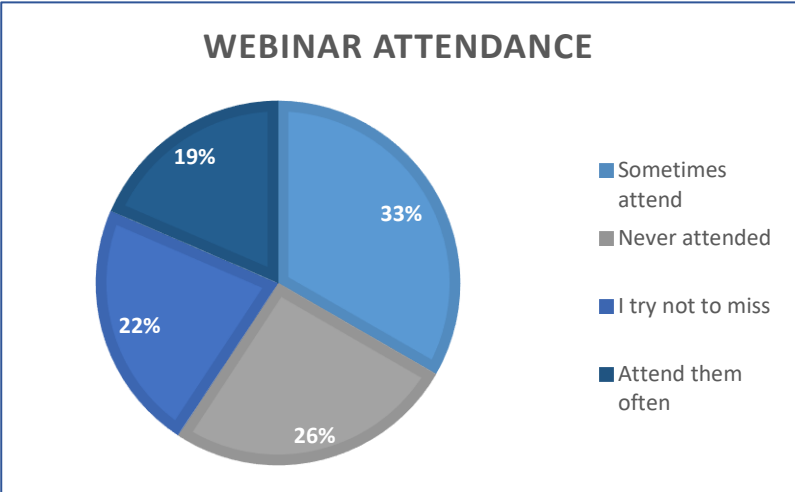
Survey respondents from Anglophone and Francophone countries afforded similar levels of importance to W4GF webinars.

Figure 6



Although attendance was lower than expected (highlighted by survey respondents in Figure 7 opposite), they also commented on the importance of webinars as key opportunities to access information, share their experience and build new connections. W4GF webinars connect them to a global, like-minded group and is a good avenue to engage with the Global Fund Secretariat and receive information first hand.

Figure 7



Francophone respondents expressed that while the webinars are important, not enough are in French. This is a serious gap in community

responses and support to those working to address gender inequalities, especially important given the challenges with Global Fund grants in many Francophone countries.

Half of the interviewees said that they join the W4GF webinars as often as they can or when it is directly relevant to what they are working on at the time. They also affirmed that the webinars are important because they often respond to current challenges in countries, and enable Advocates to be aware of solutions to key challenges that others are facing in their countries, building solidarity as well as providing information. The other half had varied reasons for not joining, including not being aware of webinars, not being able to access the platform used in their country, and language barriers.

#### 4.5 Access to guidance documents

As well as webinars, newsletters and social media, W4GF also produces advocacy documents to influence the Global Fund and, more recently, key guidance documents – notably the [Women4GlobalFund Accountability Toolkit](#) and [Navigating the Global Fund Allocation Cycle Guide](#). These two documents were highlighted in the survey and interviews.



Eleven survey respondents had seen and used the W4GF guide on navigating the allocation cycle, and 11 respondents had also seen and used the W4GF Accountability Toolkit. Those who had used these tools mentioned they had been useful in the development of projects, in providing feedback to their members and being accountable, and in providing more precise information – thereby supporting Advocates to actively engage and participate in the Technical Review Panel feedback to their countries and getting the perspective of the Global Fund grant cycle.

The majority of Advocates interviewed (seven) had seen the guidance documents on the W4GF website. At least half of respondents said that they had read some of the documents and three have used these in their advocacy work.

Only two interviewees were not aware of any W4GF guidance documents. Most of those interviewed were not aware of key documents created by the Global Fund to support countries, such as the technical briefing and information notes that are key to Global Fund proposal development processes.

Key examples of how the tools were used

- 1) A training in Kenya with sex workers used the Navigating the Allocation Cycle guidance tool.
- 2) The Accountability Toolkit was used to assist a women-focused organisation to develop a scorecard in Lesotho.
- 3) A W4GF Advocate in South Sudan used the W4GF guidance on Navigating the Allocation Cycle to understand what to advocate for in relations to women rights in countries in conflict.

## 5 Recommendations

All people surveyed and interviewed affirmed that W4GF makes a strong contribution to advocacy and should continue to keep advocating for the Global Fund to do more and better for women, to ensure that the Fund’s work is conducted through a gender lens, and to support the W4GF Advocates to do the same.

Most interviewees recommended that the W4GF Team continue to organise regular check-ins as this made a huge difference. As one person said, *“We need to be reminded that we are not alone.”* One-on-one personal checking-in was appreciated and reignited a fire for those who had fallen out of touch.

The following recommendations build on findings from this research and will help W4GF to strengthen the work of W4GF Advocates:

### 5.1 Global Advocacy

- . Encourage W4GF Advocates who sit in three civil society Delegations to the Global Fund Board to have more interaction and input from W4GF Advocates on key issues to influence Board level discussions;
- . Improve W4GF partnerships by leveraging relationships with other global networks to engage in their spaces and inject a ‘gender equality agenda’ in other spaces;
- . While not losing sight of the important focus on Africa, take proactive steps to address issues of importance to women in other regions, and ensure that this is also reflected at global levels and in W4GF decision making bodies.

## 5.2 WGF Core team support to Advocates

- . Focus on movement building, reaching out more to grassroots advocates doing great work at country level but who are not joining online virtual discussions activities or other activities.
- . Continue to build and strengthen capacity of women in implementing countries and provide more information on how women organisations can access funding;
- . Explore opportunities for regionally based dialogues that can inform, inspire and support W4GF Advocates;
- . More effectively reach and engage advocates by better packaging information about how W4GF Advocates can get involved and showcasing their stories, diversity, work and collaboration.
- . Advocates urged W4GF to learn from the collective experience and to discontinue activities without follow-up training.

## 5.3 Access to information

- . Make information about the Global Fund simpler and easily digestible – including more infographics – for country advocates;
- . Translate documents to ensure that the information reaches non-English speakers;
- . Consider other models, such as creating content from people who engage with the Global Fund at country level, to develop short documents with information and observations about what is happening in different countries. This can promote the sharing of common challenges and issues that women are experiencing in different contexts.
- . Better support Advocates to access Global Fund Technical guidance and information notes through the new W4GF Website.

## 5.4 W4GF webinars

- . Organise webinars in other languages, e.g., Russian and French, to reach Advocates in non-English speaking countries;
- . Use other platforms with lower bandwidth to reach to Advocates who have trouble joining webinars on Zoom;
- . Request ideas from W4GF Advocates on webinar subjects and make webinars more participatory.

## 6 Conclusions

W4GF is fortunate to have built connections with women and young women working at national levels who – despite the patriarchy – work to address and respond to the inequalities facing women in all their diversity. W4GF is a global movement with Advocates across different countries with diverse contexts and challenges. What unites us is the need to hold the Global Fund and other stakeholders accountable to allocating funds to meet the rights and needs of women and to ensure policy and processes that edge countries towards gender equality.

The online survey and interviews have provided important information for W4GF to continue what is working well and to ensure more cohesive and robust support to Advocates. W4GF is committed to ensuring that information is readily available and accessible. These findings show that while W4GF is providing important and relevant information through its website, webinars, emails, advocacy and guidance documents, it is still not as accessible as it should be. Moving forward, this will be a key area of work, especially given that the impact of COVID-19 has created even more opportunities to strengthen virtual work to support W4GF Advocates.

## Annex 1: Online surveys and guiding interview questions

Both the online surveys in English and French are accessible [here](#) and the questions for the Interviewees are listed below

1. Please can you tell me a little more about you

- **Personal details**
  - Name
  - Date of birth
  - Country of origin and of residence
  - Organisation
- **Which of the following community groups do you work with/for? (Please tick all that apply)**
  - Heterosexual
  - Lesbian, gay, bisexual
  - transgender
  - openly living with HIV
  - affected by TB
  - adolescent girls and young women
  - young people
  - women who engage in sex workers
  - women who use drugs
  - Indigenous
  - Migrant workers
  - Living with disabilities
  - Mine workers
  - Prisoners
  - Affected by Malaria
  - Others
- **Is your main focus on?**
  - HIV
  - TB
  - Malaria
  - Work across HIV, TB and malaria

2. How are/have you been involved in Global Fund processes? (Please highlight as many as apply)

### Country Level Process

- Engaged in developing the National Strategic Plans
- Engaged in costing the National Strategic Plans
- A member of the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM)
- Supporting a CCM representative
- Global Fund Principle/Sub Recipient
- Participated in the Global Fund Country Dialogue
- Involved in developing the Global Fund funding request
- Involved in developing the budget(s) for the Global Fund funding request
- Requestor of CRG SI TA

### Regional Level

- Implementing a regional grant

### Global Level Process

- Community, Rights and Gender (CRG) Special Initiative (SI) Technical Assistance (TA) Provider
- A member of the three delegations:
  - Communities Delegation

- Developing Country NGO Delegation
  - Developed Country Ngo Delegation
  - On the Technical Review Panel
  - No formal role or involvement
  - Other (please specify)
3. Please tell us about how and why you got involved with us
- Do you remember when you initially get involved with us and how that happened?
  - If it was a workshop which of the following did you participate in?
  - You have remained engaged with the W4GF team, what can you say are your reasons?
  - How has W4GF helped you influence the gender agenda in your country and beyond?
  - What can you say is most helpful to you about W4GF?
  - How important do you think W4GF is?
  - How would you say we are performing in these areas:
    - Influencing how the Global Fund achieves gender equity and human rights at all levels
    - Creating a platform where women make connections, learn from each other, strategize and collaborate to set priorities for Global Fund advocacy.
    - Securing accountability for and critique of Global Fund investments: tracking Global Fund–supported programmes and services, and influencing global and national processes to inform stronger programming for women and girls
  - Which three top issues would you like to see W4GF address in our advocacy work to make it most useful tool for you?
  - What are we doing well that we should do more of?
  - Is there anything that we should stop doing?
  - How likely is it that you would recommend us as a movement that your friends and colleagues should join?
4. How are we doing with getting information to you?
- How do you mostly access information from us? From our website, our social media handles, our WhatsApp groups or other WhatsApp groups, email newsletter, our webinars
  - Does W4GF send you the right amount information, too much information, little information, wrong kind of information or you do not receive any information?
  - How could we make access to information easier for you or we are doing fine?
  - Have you visited W4GF website? How often? If you don't go to our website why not?
  - How do you mostly connect with W4GF? Laptop, friend's laptop, smart phone, tablet, computer at work
  - If you do visit our website, do you follow a link shared on specific relevant information, have bookmarked it and visit regularly, looking for key documents the Global Fund and on women, gender equity, key documents related to the Global Fund and on TB or Malaria, do you easily get what you are looking for or it is a little hard?
  - Have you accessed guidance documents on the W4GF website or you do not know they are there or have not been able to find them? Were they valuable to you in your advocacy? Have you read them all or some of them? How do you feel when you open them, easy to read, hard to read or overwhelming? Are you able to download them?
  - How often do you join W4GF webinars?
  - Why do you join W4GF webinars? How important do you think our webinars are?
  - How do you think we can make the webinars better and more useful to you?
  - Do you follow us on Facebook and Twitter? Do you find them helpful? What other social media platforms do you use?
5. W4GF's most recent guiding documents
- Are you familiar with these two guidance documents: navigating the allocation cycle and the accountability toolkit and have you used them in your advocacy or work?
  - Have these tools been useful to you? if so, how?



*Women4GlobalFund (W4GF) mobilises women in all their diversity to ensure that the world's most important finance mechanism for the HIV, TB and malaria supports programmes that meet the rights and needs of women and girls. For more information, visit the W4GF [website](#); [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) or contact Sophie Dilmitis, W4GF Global Coordinator [sophie@women4gf.org](mailto:sophie@women4gf.org)*