

Preparatory Meeting of the Global Fund's Seventh Replenishment

23-24 February 2022

Virtual event

Hosted by:

H.E. Felix Antoine Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo

H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya

H.E. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda

H.E. Macky Sall, President of Senegal

H.E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa

Talking points – Grace Ngulube

1. **As a young person living with HIV, share a personal testimony about working to make HIV and broader health services more accessible and adapted to the specific needs of young people, particularly adolescent girls and young women.**

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor to be with you today. My name is Grace Ngulube, I am 26 years old. I am from Blantyre, Malawi. In my day-to-day life, I provide support to young people who have been recently diagnosed with HIV. I also provide psychosocial support to young people struggling with their HIV status.

As a young woman living with HIV, I have faced several challenges like stigma and discrimination which have taught me to be resilient. My experience drove me to advocate for other young people – especially young women with similar challenges. I have been working as a peer supporter for young people living with HIV for the past six years, attached to the national association for young people living with HIV.

I have faced stigma and struggled to cope with my HIV status. I have also witnessed firsthand the challenges that other young people in remote areas face to access services **[for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the young girls was sent away because she did not have a mask to enter the health facility. Luckily, she called me, and I was able to find her a mask and get her into the health facility to get her prescription.]**

This motivates me to support young people to easily access services and information especially adolescent girls and young women living with HIV for whom stigma and judgment are unfortunately regular occurrence when they want to access SRHR services and when we try to actively engage in decision making spaces.

2. **Share some examples of how the Global Fund supports the engagement and empowerment of young people while referring to your role in the Global Fund Youth Council**

The Global Fund has provided pockets of funds to support capacity-building programs for young people by young people and youth-led organizations but it is nowhere near enough to make a real difference. The Global Fund Youth Council and HER Voice Fund are two concrete examples of how the Global Fund is working with civil society and community partners to support the engagement and empowerment of young people in critical decision-making spheres but this is just the tip of the iceberg to real engagement. We need more engagement and we see all of this as a great start to put people at the centre of the Global Fund. **[As a Global Fund Youth Council member, I have had the opportunity to participate in the Global Fund new Strategy development to present issues faced by young people globally and to suggest concrete actions to address them and we hope that the new Strategy does not remain just words on paper. We cannot continue like this anymore – we need real change and we need it now.. As a young woman I want to live a full life with HIV and I see myself as an integral part of my country’s response to HIV.**

The Global Fund has invested in AGYW programs in 13 priority countries to ensure that girls do not agreement HIV and some countries have invested in ensuring that girls stay in school. We hope that in this next Strategy cycle we can do more to ensure that all countries that receive money from the Global Fund are addressing gender inequality and upholding the rights of adolescent girls and young women in all countries. I value my role on the Global Fund council and appreciate the Global Fund Secretariat team who engage with us.

3. Cite some examples of how youth engagement can be further strengthened, highlighting how this would help address some of the challenges faced by young people affected by HIV, TB and malaria in the current COVID-19 context

Often youth lead organizations especially vulnerable and key populations organizations that include MSM, trans gender and young people living and networks of young women with HIV are not properly funded. Funding such organizations will enable these organizations to be actively involved in shaping and address the response to the challenges that they face. A proper funding of these organizations will also allow them to be properly represented in the different decision-making spheres. Many Global Fund donors recommend a stronger youth representation. **Young people need to be engaged as partners, not just as beneficiaries!**

- We want sustainable and enabling environments that protects the basic and unalienable rights of all people – especially those from key populations and who are young to access services without fear of reprisal. We should feel safe when we walk into health care facilities and this is not always the case. Global Fund make sure you are funding safe and friendly facilities
- We need stronger resilient and sustainable systems for health and robust investments towards HIV. This means that I should be able to access health care when I need it. That I don’t need to jump through hoops of fire to get what I need as a young woman.

- We need stronger community health systems solidly embedded in the national health system. We have been doing this job all along with no validation or payment – this must change
- We need a stronger global solidarity and mutual accountability – what happens to me in Malawi does matter to you in Norway and covid-19 has shown us this None of us are free until all of us are free.
- We need a bigger high-level political commitment and leadership. We want to see the Global Fund show communities the money and We need even more investments in AGYW programs.
- We need to ensure the continuous enrolment and retention of girls to complete secondary and tertiary education.
- We need research generated achievements on what works and what needs to be abandoned.
- We need, as individual actors of the Global Fund partnership, to come together once again and to **Fight for What Counts!!!**

4. Reaffirm that the voice and leadership of young people count, and call on the Global Fund, its donors and partners to continue to fight for what counts

We have come a long way in the fight against HIV, TB and malaria and we are all waiting for the 2030 goal to be achieved. We can never forget about investing in HIV Treatment, care and support to ensure that all people living with HIV are living a healthy life.

I believe it is time for the Global Fund partnership including donor and implementing countries to put in more efforts in terms of HIV vaccine and cure. The world was able to find a vaccine for COVID-19 in a year and so we can see now what can be done when people want to.

Funds for civil society and community-based organizations are shrinking. It is therefore important to support CSOs/CBOs in a more sustainable way to advocate for increased domestic resource mobilization and use leverage to influence the government.

I call on the Global Fund partnership, emphasis on partnership to remain committed to the fight against HIV, TB and malaria and address all inequalities in order to:

- End cultural barriers to access to equitable health services – we really feel the effects of this as young people and even more harshly for young women.
- End gender-based violence for women and girls.
- End stigma and discrimination of marginalized groups and key populations – especially for those of us who are young and have less voice to hold implementers accountable.