

The Global Fund 52nd Board Meeting

Prioritising Gender-transformative approaches, women and community-led Actions, and equitable Allocation of Resources
20 - 22 November 2024

Distinguished Members of the Global Fund Board,

[Women4GlobalFund \(W4GF\)](#) is a global network of 327 advocates from 75 countries, primarily based in the Global South, dedicated to promoting gender equality and equity. W4GF ensures that Global Fund projects are gender sensitive and transformative, and address the specific needs of women and girls in all their diversity. We are committed to empowering women and girls, especially from the youth, advocating for the meaningful participation in decision-making processes, influencing policies, and demanding accountability. Our focus is on improving health and well-being by addressing urgent needs related to HIV, TB, and malaria, which disproportionately affect women and girls in all of our diversity

As the 52nd Board Meeting approaches and critical decision would be made, we, W4GF, representing the unique needs of women and girls in all their diversity¹ living and affected with/by HIV, TB, and malaria, express our appreciation for the opportunity to elevate our priorities. We urge an intensified commitment to advancing gender equality, protecting community-driven and women-led health actions, and ensuring human rights -meaning an equitable allocation methodology that supports women and girls in all of our diversity. As we approach the 8th Replenishment, we advocate for retaining, evaluating and improving the implementation of essential elements that have proven critical to effective and gender-transformative responses and equitable resource distribution.

1. To ensure every Global Fund-supported program addresses the specific health and social needs of women and girls in all their diversity, **mandatory gender assessments, the Gender Equality Marker, the Community priority Annex, and Modular Framework gender actions and performance indicators** must be integral to all funding processes, particularly during the grant-making and monitored all around the implementation cycle, transparently and gender-disaggregated. These tools allow programs to prioritise gender-responsive and transformative strategies that address inequities , aiming to prioritise actions that otherwise would not be. Assessments that meaningfully include the voices of women and girls uncover hidden disparities masked by metrics like Gross National Income (GNI) and are essential to creating inclusive, equitable and gender-transformative health services.

2. The **catalytic investments** of the Global Fund provide crucial support for **gender-transformative and human rights-focused initiatives, especially** relevant in restricted and challenging environments. These funds are often the only source of support for women and girls who face significant structural barriers, enabling access to essential services and fostering inclusive legal and societal reforms. **Even within the lowest replenishment scenario**, we urge these to be financially maintained for gender strategically funded interventions, to promote equity, innovation, and cross-border collaboration, with a strong focus on gender and human rights. We recommend keeping complementary strategies, like the Breaking Down Barriers Initiative .

“The Technical Review Panel’s Observations in 2020-2022 and the SR2023 quotes also noted that, “while funding requests were generally well aligned with national disease strategic plans and national health sector plans, they still overly focused on operating costs and health products rather than strengthening systems for sustainable national responses, including in countries that should be planning for future transition from Global Fund support”²

3. As the 8th Replenishment progresses, it is crucial to ensure decisions towards **an equitable Allocation Methodology**, guaranteeing funding for **gender-transformative actions, human rights, and community**

¹ W4GF focuses attention on women and girls in all of our diversity and our intersections, addressing issues faced by women living and/or affected by HIV, TB, and Malaria including heterosexual, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, non-binary, transgender women, sex workers over 18 years old, and adolescents, girls, and young women. We address challenges of indigenous, displaced, migrant, and refugee women; and women with disabilities.

² <https://aidspan.org/the-global-fund-strategy-navigating-a-tricky-terrain/>

engagement. In regions where civic space is increasingly restricted, human right violations increased and where the gender-backlash is evident, women and girls of MENA, LAC, EECA, depend on Global Fund support for HIV, TB, and malaria services. A reduction in the total funding will compromise gender and human rights, leaving women and girls, and other key populations, even more vulnerable in these high-risk environments. Protecting women and community-led investments is essential to sustaining progress and enhancing community resilience in these challenging unequal contexts. We remind the Board about their commitment to incorporate qualitative adjustments to better reflect the economic capacities of the countries and better understand the structural inequalities that drive the increase of the impacts of the epidemics, on already vulnerable populations, especially women and girls in all of their diversity. **Sustainability and transition** equitable processes, for countries in LAC, EECA and MENA are critical as they face reduced Global Fund support. **The GNI-based eligibility criterion does not account for the socioeconomic realities of marginalised and vulnerable populations or the gender-inequalities in UMICs and ULMICs**, leaving women and girls without access to essential services. Before implementing any allocation revisions, we urge an independent evaluation of the impacts on these populations to make decisions based on equity and evidence. Additionally, the determination of the appropriate period and amount of Transition Funding in line the allocation methodology but particularly the country context³.

“Stakeholders highlighted the need to strengthen sustainability considerations across all countries regardless of income classifications especially with regard to community and civil society engagement”⁴ Strategic Review 2023, 51st board meeting.

4. Acknowledging a current **OPEX budget of \$342.2 million⁵**, we recommend a more efficient use and considering reducing OPEX to free more funds for direct gender-transformative program delivery. **Strategic reallocations in OPEX could strengthen gender-responsive and transformative, women and community-led programs that directly address these inequities.**

5. W4GF supports the **allocation of additional resources to Tuberculosis on the Global Disease Split**, recognizing the high burden of TB among women and girls **with 3.2 million adult women who fell ill and almost half a million who died from TB⁶**. We insist and urge the Board to properly balance and ensure that any changes should also account for the implications on HIV and Malaria responses, promoting comprehensive, linked and integrated responses rather than competitive isolated one-disease approaches. **We call on people-centred approaches with gender-transformative HTM comprehensive programming. We urge the Board to base any disease split adjustments on a comprehensive evaluation of potential impacts, ensuring that women and girls are not left behind.**

In conclusion, these priorities—**gender equality and gender-transformative programming, meaningful participation of women and girls, equitable allocation, and sustainable funding**—are indispensable for a transformative and impactful Global Fund strategy, aiming for a fully funded and successful 8th replenishment, but planning and equitably deciding on more constrained scenarios. Retaining and strengthening these commitments will ensure that women and girls in all of our diversity, receive the healthcare that we need, promoting resilient health systems worldwide.

Thank you for your commitment to fostering a gender-responsive, transformative, inclusive, and accountable Global Fund.

Sincerely,

Lesley Odendal
Steering Group Chair
Women4GlobalFund

Keren Dunaway
Steering Group Co-Chair
Women4GlobalFund

³ https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/7443/core_eligibility_policy_en.pdf

⁴ https://archive.theglobalfund.org/media/14284/archive_bm51-10a-2023-strategic-review_report_en.pdf

⁵ https://archive.theglobalfund.org/media/12500/archive_bm48-02b-strategy-costing-3-year-aggregate-opex-2023-budget_report_en.pdf

⁶ <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/tuberculosis-in-women#:~:text=Overview.million%20who%20died%20from%20TB>