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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE GLOBAL FUND BOARD'S GENDER DECISION POINT

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### **Background:**

In November 2007, the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria passed a decision urging the Secretariat to make important and rapid changes to the staffing structure and strategy of all Global Fund mechanisms to ensure a gender-sensitive response in all Global Fund programming.<sup>1</sup> As a result, civil society organizations engaged with the Global Fund, including members of delegations to the Board, are calling for broad and bold reforms to the operations and policies of the Global Fund to ensure that this decision is taken seriously, that changes are made with an eye toward gender transformation, not merely gender sensitivity, and that all relevant areas of gender—targeted programs for women, girls, men and all sexual minorities—are taken into account and addressed at every appropriate opportunity.

### **The Concept: Gender Transformation:**

While the original decision point taken by the Global Fund Board used the phrase “gender sensitive,” it is essential that the Global Fund go beyond mere sensitivity. The Global Fund is a unique mechanism which, since its creation, has consistently supported technically sound, innovative lifesaving interventions to address HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria. Gender sensitivity is a limiting concept that refers to recognition of the fact that men, women and sexual minorities have different needs and realities based on their gender and the way they are perceived by the rest of society. Gender transformation, on the other hand, goes a step further, by actually creating opportunities to challenge and transform those gender norms, expectations, opportunities and gaps that are damaging or that increase vulnerability to the three diseases. Transformation of gender roles seeks to promote equality, a concept that is consistent with the Global Fund's emphasis on access to services and on addressing the socio-economic and cultural contexts for the three diseases.

<sup>1</sup> Decision Point GF/B16/DP26, available at <http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/boardmeeting16/GF-BM16-Decisions.pdf>, page 28.

Vulnerability due to gender is one of the most important characteristics in the epidemiology of the three diseases in the countries in which the Global Fund works. Gender can be both a determinant of vulnerability to the diseases, as well as of whether or not a person is able or likely to access prevention, testing, care and treatment services. The root of these vulnerabilities is entrenched gender norms, which pose significant challenges for those demonstrating behaviors which are perceived as variations from the expected ideal of a man or a woman. Heteronormativity is an aspect of gender norms that places expectations on sexual identification and sexual behavior to uphold heterosexuality as the dominant, normal and healthy behavior. These norms are held in check by power dynamics. In many cases adherence to them violates the human rights framework on which the Global Fund's work is based. Enhancing gender equality does not pit men against women; it is about creating expanded societal expectations and addressing the burdens gender norms place on individual lives.

The Global Fund's strategy for implementation of the Gender Decision Point must be ambitious, seeking to challenge gender norms in a sustainable way that will lead to an improvement in the disproportionate vulnerabilities and access to services faced by women, girls, adolescents and people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

A gender-transformative approach must be taken at all levels of Global Fund operations. It must be an integral component of new initiatives and processes, as well; for example, recognizing that capacity building on gender can be an important element of Community Systems Strengthening and urging that such considerations be made in implementing the breadth of Global Fund processes. Gender is a cross-cutting concern; as such, its transformation must cut across all Global Fund activities.

### **Secretariat:**

The gender decision has a number of implications for the staffing and operations of the Secretariat. The Secretariat needs to integrate gender thoroughly, and must not isolate the issue as the responsibility only of the three new gender posts, which are soon to be hired. Among the most important reforms that the forthcoming gender strategy should prioritize for the Secretariat are:

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** for the Executive Director and all other senior positions must be revised to include gender expertise;
- Gender must be incorporated into **human resources policies, competency and promotion requirements, staff development and training**. This includes prioritizing staff development to represent a range of gender expertise at the global and community levels, and includes equitable balance of men and women, especially among senior decision makers, as well as people that represent diverse sexual identities;
- A mechanism must be created at the Secretariat to address **complaints of gender and sexuality bias, and to ensure accountability and lessons learned** are incorporated into strategic plans, KPIs, and other human resource and institutional planning considerations;
- Well-publicized and accessible opportunities for **affected countries and civil society** to feed into the Secretariat's **internal gender evaluations and review of the current portfolio for gender indicators** should be provided;
- A consistent **communications plan** must be created, which emphasizes a broader definition of gender and the flexibility required to put into place high-quality gender programming at the country level;
- A consistent and robust method for **coordinating with technical partners** must be established and continually revised and improved so as to ensure current and widespread expertise on gender and exchange of ideas; and
- The ongoing **architecture review** must include gender considerations, including those related to the Secretariat and the TRP, as well as a thorough review of gender in the entire Global Fund system.

### **Technical Review Panel (TRP):**

While increased attention is being paid to ensuring that gender is considered in proposals submitted to the Global Fund from Round 8, without appropriate expertise, the reviewers of these proposals are unlikely to effectively assess the technical and epidemiological merit of the proposed interventions. Because the Global Fund is not itself a technical agency, it must increase its partnerships with those technical agencies able to provide support on gender considerations in order to meet the mandate of the Gender Decision Point. However, important reforms may also be made to the TRP, including those below, as a component of the Global Fund's gender strategy:

- **Expertise in programming for women and girls and for sexual minorities** must be made a key criterion in the selection of new members of the TRP;
- Experience working **in countries with high HIV prevalence** should be a priority consideration in selecting new TRP members;
- The **definition of "gender expertise"** must be concrete and comprehensive. It must reflect understanding of discrimination faced by sexual minorities in accessing all health services and the vulnerability of men who have sex with men to HIV infection, as well as discrimination against and vulnerability of women and girls;
- As vacancies on the TRP are considered this year, at least one should be filled in particular by someone with **expertise on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) integration with the three diseases**;
- **Training and capacity building** on gender issues for existing TRP members should be a priority, with emphasis on trainings from external partners, including civil society, extended briefings, and other innovative capacity-building approaches to complement those ordinarily provided by the Global Fund's technical partners;
- **Country-level success stories** around gendered challenges to addressing the three diseases should be made available to TRP members; and
- Beginning with Round 8, **gender should become a mandatory criterion** by which the TRP evaluates proposals.

Finally, the entire Global Fund system and all affiliated agencies (WHO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, etc.) must urgently work to ensure that the 40% approval ceiling for HIV/AIDS proposals is addressed and lifted for Round 8 and beyond. While some of the solution must come at the country level, more must be done to ensure that the TRP is able to identify promising practices and innovative approaches; since gendered vulnerability is so linked to HIV/AIDS, recognition of important efforts to address this is essential.

### **Country-level Work:**

Increased commitment to addressing gender considerations in responding to AIDS, TB and malaria must not remain isolated in Geneva. For these reforms to have a real impact, they must be meaningfully translated to country-level Global Fund operations. For this to occur, a range of Secretariat and national-level actors must be engaged. Portfolio Managers must have the requisite understanding of the importance of a gendered response. Reforms to requirements for CCMs and Local Fund Agents, and ongoing work to highlight gender as they prepare for the long-term development of proposals through continuation channels are also essential.

#### *Reforms Related to Portfolio Managers' Duties:*

- Portfolio Managers should **urgently conduct a review of the current portfolio** to develop baseline data on gender programming in existing Global Fund-supported work. This review should scope the range of interventions, highlighting promising practices and impact data. It should involve consultation with stakeholders that have thus far been unable to access the Global Fund system as CCM members, Principal Recipients or sub-recipients. This should be utilized to overcome the barriers that exist at the national and global levels to full inclusion of organizations that address the needs of women and girls and of sexual minorities. This assessment, which should include recommendations, **should be published before January 2009**, so that its results may be incorporated into all Board activities taking place next year;

- Portfolio Managers must receive **thorough training in gender**, its dynamics and socio-economic and epidemiological implications, and best or promising practices to address disparities caused by gender norms;
- Portfolio Managers should be required to take into account the **expertise of national-level civil society and affected populations**, including women’s organizations and groups representing sexual minorities;
- Portfolio Managers must **raise gender as an important consideration** in interactions with all countries with which they work; and
- Portfolio Managers should be in a position to **support gender analyses and to assist CCMs** in securing capacity building and technical support needed to ensure this gap is filled.

*Reforms Related to CCM Requirements:*

- CCMs should be **required to demonstrate gender equality**, including sexual minorities as well as women in governance and decision making, in addition to the recommendation that 40% of members come from civil society;
- The Portfolio Committee of the Global Fund Board should make a decision to **require a gender self-assessment for CCMs** to enable them to better ensure that gender concerns are well-represented; and
- **Review criteria of the recommendation for dual-track financing** should include whether organizations representing women and/or sexual minorities have been considered as Principal Recipients; their inclusion as sub-recipients should also be made a priority consideration for the TRP.

*Reforms Related to Local Fund Agents (LFAs)*

- A **gender assessment** should become a requirement linked to disbursement requests and grant negotiations;
- LFAs should be required to have **gender expertise on staff**; and
- The Secretariat should ensure that **gender capacity building** is made available to those LFAs that lack appropriate expertise.

Finally, the Portfolio Committee to the Global Fund Board must continue to **revise the call for proposals and guidelines** to ensure that lessons learned from the country level, including the portfolio review and an assessment of gender in Round 8 submissions, are incorporated. This will allow for increasing integration of gender and to improved attention to the realities of gender in addressing AIDS, TB and malaria.

**Monitoring & Evaluation:**

The current Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Toolkit is to be revised in 2008, through a collaborative process involving the Global Fund and agencies in the United Nations system. The M&E Toolkit is frequently used by CCMs and proposal writers to determine what interventions are acceptable for inclusion in proposals and to develop ideas about how to fill programmatic gaps in their countries. It is essential that the M&E Toolkit be revised to better reflect the importance of addressing gender and the particular vulnerabilities and needs faced by women, girls, and sexual minorities. In addition to working on the M&E Toolkit, the Global Fund’s own reporting process and requirements must be addressed as part of implementation of the gender decision point.

*Revision of the M&E Toolkit:*

- Ensuring that this is an **interagency process**, and playing an active role, particularly in pushing to ensure that the review is bold and not contingent on the internal pace or work of any one agency involved;
- Pushing for **indicators that identify socio-economic drivers and key gender-related considerations** of the relevant epidemic to be added to the Toolkit, such as:
  - ✓ “Young people aged 10-14 and 15-24 who know that condoms may be used both for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and of pregnancy (percentage).” (Outcome indicator),

- ✓ “SRH and/or family planning service delivery points providing dual protection messages on the use of condoms to prevent both STIs, including HIV, and pregnancy (number and percentage).” (Output indicator), and
- ✓ “Information, education, communication (IEC) materials to promote the reduction of sexual coercion and violence against women and girls, and eliminate them as an HIV risk factor (number).” (Output indicator), and
- ✓ “Access of women and girls to comprehensive PMTCT programs (number and percentage).” (Outcome indicator); and
- Supporting **civil society to play a meaningful role** in inputting to this revision process.

*Reforms to the Global Fund’s Reporting Process and Requirements:*

- Countries should be **required to report on a set of gender indicators**, including on procurement and distribution of key reproductive health supplies (not limited to male and female condoms);
- It should be recommended that **all data be disaggregated by sex and age**, and a justification should be provided where such data are not made available;
- These efforts must be **linked** to the Global Implementation Support Team (**GIST**), the Country Implementation Steering Teams (**CIST**) and the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (**RHSC**), among others; and
- They should be linked to **health systems and community systems strengthening** requirements.

**Technical Evaluation Reference Group (TERG):**

With the slower timeline of the TERG, there is increased opportunity to ensure that this important review will consider the Global Fund’s role in and successes at addressing gender. The TERG’s processes must be revised to ensure it is evaluating access of gender-specific organizations to the Global Fund, promising and best practices being supported by the Global Fund, and gaps and challenges to meeting the disproportionate needs of women, girls, and sexual minorities.

**Annex: Key Opportunities in 2008:**

These priority reforms must begin with the April 2008 Board meeting, but many of them depend upon key calendar items to ensure that progress takes place this year. Among these key opportunities to undertake the work listed above, are:

- Current and ongoing technical support being provided by Global Fund stakeholders and UN agencies to CCMs and proposal development teams for Round 8;
- Meeting of the TERG in May and August 2008;
- Recruitment of gender champions, to be operational by June;
- Revision of the Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit in June or July;
- International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, Mexico, in early August;
- Round 8 TRP briefing in late August;
- Global Fund Board committee meetings in September;
- Global Fund Board meeting in November; and
- Partnership Forum 2008 in December.