

COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity

46th Board Meeting

**Pre-Board Session, 3 November 2021:
COVID-19 Secretariat Update**

GF/B46/09

8-10 November 2021, *Virtual*

Board Information

Purpose of the paper: This paper provides the Board with an informal update, as of 20 October 2021, on the Global Fund response to COVID-19 and ensuring business continuity and delivery of the Global Fund's core mission.

Executive Summary (1 Page)

Input sought

Board members will have an opportunity to discuss the Global Fund's response at the 3 November 2021 Pre-Board session with the Executive Director.

Questions this paper addresses

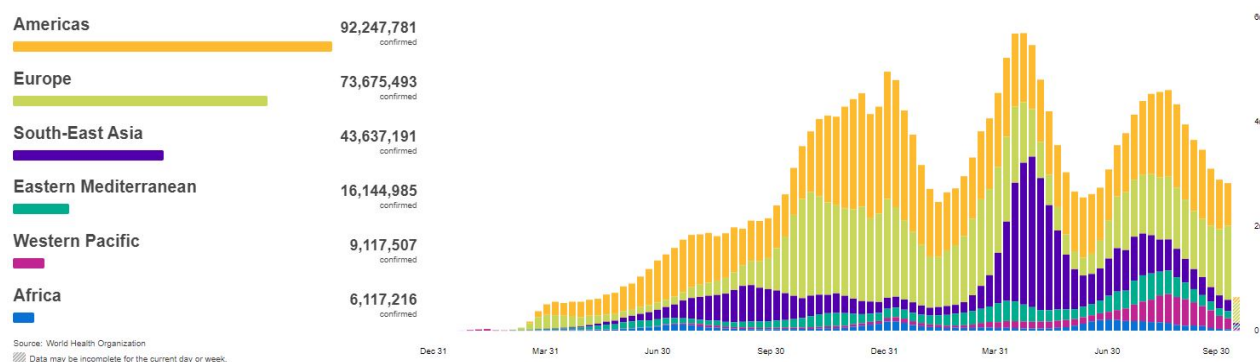
The paper covers the latest update on the Global Fund's response to COVID-19. The paper can be reviewed in tandem with the latest monthly update to the Board which can be found on the [Governance portal](#) and in conjunction with the Executive Director Report (GF/B46/07) It provides a recap of the COVID-19 context, including the continued rapid growth of COVID-19 cases around the world, and the resulting effect on program disruptions in Global Fund-supported countries as well as within Switzerland on Global Fund staff. The Secretariat's four-pronged response includes measures to support staff with virtual work as well as the planned return to the Global Health Campus in November; protecting the progress on the Global Fund's core mission in the current environment through a focus on core operations, robust Business Contingency Planning and extensive risk monitoring; actions taken to mitigate the effects of the pandemic by providing Global Fund-supported countries with emergency resources; and the areas in which the Secretariat is playing a role as part of the global community of international organizations fighting against COVID-19 (such as through the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator).

The paper includes the following sections:

1. Recap of the COVID-19 context (page 3)
2. The Global Fund's response
 - Keeping our people safe (page 4)
 - Protecting our core mission (page 5)
 - Supporting countries to respond to COVID-19 (page 6)
 - Our role in the global COVID-19 response and looking ahead (page 8)

Context

1. Almost two years since COVID-19 was first declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, it continues to present a major public health challenge around the world. As of 15 October 2021, over 241 million confirmed cases and over 4.9 million confirmed deaths (almost 2 million more deaths since the May 2021 Board session) have been recorded globally.¹



2. Following the most recent spike in July 2021, especially in the Americas, Europe and South-East Asia, many regions are beginning to experience a stabilization in the number of cases. Nonetheless, with the emergence of even newer variants delta, mu and gamma, the imminent winter in the northern hemisphere, and the relatively low testing numbers in many low to middle income countries, there is great need for caution and potential to see numbers increasing even more.
3. Ten Global Fund implementing countries are also among the top 25 countries with the highest cumulative cases: India, Russia, Iran, Colombia, Indonesia, South Africa, Ukraine, Philippines, Peru and Iraq, with Bangladesh, Thailand, and Pakistan trailing close behind at 28th, 29th and 31st positions globally.
4. High Impact Africa 1² cases, for example, rose from 193,000 confirmed cases to close to 450,000 in less than two months. While this could be influenced by improved testing, infections are rising in regions the Global Fund supports.
5. Asia case numbers remain the highest at over 43 million, up from 40 million reported last month. Similarly, Southeast Asia and High Impact Africa 2³ case numbers appear to be rising on average.
6. The latest available results of the Global Fund Indicator Monitoring Initiative Survey confirms that despite some exceptions, disruption continues. Preliminary Q2 data

¹ <https://covid19.who.int/>

² **High Impact Africa 1:** Burkina Faso, Congo (DRC), Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria.

³ **High Impact Africa 2:** Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zanzibar, Zimbabwe, Multicountry Southern Africa WHC (TB in Mining), Multicountry E8, Multicountry MOSASWA, Multicountry Africa IGAD, Multicountry Africa ECSA HC, Multicountry ANECCA and Multicountry KANCO.

shows that: for HIV, new ART initiations are lower than 2019 levels in most countries; for TB, the decline in TB/DR-TB notifications is even more severe than Q1 2021 data showed; and for malaria, consistent with Q1 data, the number of suspect cases tested remains lower than in 2019.

7. While Switzerland is preparing for a possible increase in case numbers in autumn, the country has continued to gradually open since May 2021. Masks are no longer required outdoors, if 1.5 meters distance can be respected, and teleworking is now a recommendation, and no longer an obligation.
8. Restaurants can seat as many people as they wish at a single table, and no longer require mask wearing on terraces. Collection of contact details is no longer a priority measure. Leisure facilities can open, including clubs, discos, and water parks. Public events have no capacity restrictions, if limited to participants with a COVID-19 certificate. Events without a certificate are capped at two thirds of the venue size, and 1,000 seats maximum, whether inside or outside.
9. Vaccinations are underway in Switzerland as well. As of 15 October 2021, 61% of the population is fully vaccinated (compared to 9.5% on 28 April 2021).
10. The Secretariat maintains its adoption of a four-pronged response to the crisis which form the basis for the structure of this report: (a) keeping our people safe, (b) protecting our core mission, (c) supporting countries to respond to the pandemic and (d) playing our role in the global COVID-19 response.

Where are we now? Progress to date

Keeping our people safe

11. The Secretariat has been consistently complying with all Swiss government and Geneva cantonal guidance with the current recommendation being to continue to work from home. On 7 June 2021, the Global Health Campus (GHC) was reopened to staff on a voluntary basis with a maximum capacity of 20%. While it is important that we continue to exercise caution to keep our people safe, the vaccination rate and new tools, such as the COVID-19 certificate, allow us to provide additional flexibilities for entry into the building, while incorporating the overall safety requirements set out by the Swiss Authorities. Following a recent GHC wide survey, of the 75% of respondents, 90% confirmed they are vaccinated, well above the national average in Switzerland (~60%). Based on this, as well as a stabilization of the epidemiological situation in Switzerland, the Situation Response Team (SRT) and the GHC Partners have agreed to increase the capacity at the GHC to up to 40% effective 1 November 2021, again on a voluntary basis with the COVID-19 certificate required for entry into the building in line with the Swiss guidance. In the meantime, the Secretariat has continued with remote working, including holding online meetings with our Board and Committees, and has put support mechanisms in place for staff and managers.
12. At the time of writing, 27 members of staff are known to have contracted COVID-19 in 2021, bringing the total to 84 since the phased reopening of the GHC first began in June 2020 (before further lockdowns).

13. The Global Fund's SRT remains active and continues to support the alignment of decisions with our GHC partners (Gavi, StopTB, RBM and Unitaid). All decisions are overseen by the Management Executive Committee (MEC).
14. Additional flexibilities allow each staff member to 'Work from Abroad' up to a maximum of 20 days. This provides further flexibility for staff to travel home and spend a longer period with their families, which staff was unable to do last year, while ensuring business continuity. Following the ongoing revision of existing flexibilities and the outcome of the Future of Work initiative and other assessments, the Secretariat expects to have more updates on the nature of work in 2022. We will continue to focus on supporting staff by rebalancing workload requirements where possible with the objective of ensuring business continuity at this important time in the grant lifecycle.

Protecting our core mission

15. Despite the hurdles, the Global Fund's core business is moving ahead as planned, with 200 funding requests now reviewed by the TRP, representing 98% of core allocation funds. At the time of writing, grants worth US\$ 11.6 billion in core allocation funds have been recommended by the Grant Approvals Committee (GAC), and integrated into Board-approved grants.
16. The Global Fund's Strategy development process is progressing well. The Board approved the Strategy Framework at an extraordinary meeting on 22 July 2021. All constituencies gave their input on a draft of the Strategy Narrative in September and the document was updated accordingly. At their 17th meeting in October 2021, the Strategy Committee agreed final revisions to the Strategy Narrative and recommended it to the Board for approval in November. The approved Strategy Narrative will guide preparations for implementation including the next cycle of grants, associated policy changes, set the stage for the 7th Replenishment and most importantly, guide the pathway for achieving our mission of ending the three diseases as epidemics.
17. Business Contingency Plans (BCPs) first established in 2020 remain in place, allowing flexibilities for countries, Principal Recipients (PRs) and health product processes and systems, while mitigating risks faced by our core programs due to in-country disruptions. Following an internal review process, BCPs by department and processes were amended or integrated into core policy. Several of the initial flexibilities in core grant operations have either been removed and/or adapted, following a due diligence check on risks and tradeoffs and integrated into core processes where needed. Those plans still in place will provisionally remain until 31 March 2022, following the most recent extension memorandum signed by the Executive Director in October 2021.
18. IT has continued to enable the Secretariat to achieve its strategic objectives. The first half of the year has seen the completion of three major projects: our cloud migration to Microsoft Azure, multiple deliveries on our Grant Operating System (Grant Entity Data, C19RM enhancements, and others) and the Oracle Fusion Cloud upgrade of our financial and procurement systems. The Fusion project has successfully upgraded our E-business Suite (GFS) onto Oracle Fusion Cloud. The upgrade has also introduced a data archival solution, a product data hub (PDH) as the organizational master list for Health Products and Oracle guided learning. Throughout each of these projects the

Secretariat has focused and prioritized its fundamentals by ensuring system resilience, stabilizing systems, enhancing analytics, and improving access to data.

19. Alongside our strategic and operational delivery, IT has supported the Secretariat in seeking to collate management information from countries to cover COVID-19 and the three diseases and to better understand how programmatic implementation is progressing as well as being impacted by COVID-19. In line with the objective to streamline organizational reporting, our focus has been on enabling the design, implementation and roll-out of both Pulse Checks and Spot Checks. The work includes 24/7 solution availability and multi-language support for users leveraging an on-line partner portal to collect data from countries. This drive towards digitalization has seen a major impact on organizational insights through a move-away from existing architecture to a more robust, technology orientated and enhanced visibility offering. Internally, we continue to deliver on the transition to a hybrid working environment with enhanced training, GHC improvements, business contingency and continuity planning as well as our ongoing focus on IT security and system resiliency. IT operations have continued to mature and our strive towards operational excellence has been recognized through achievement of International Organization for Standardization/ International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/IEC) 20000-1:2018 Service Management certification as well as re-certification of ISO 27001 IT Security.
20. The Performance and Accountability tracking process has been updated to monitor the impact of COVID-19, providing visibility into processes that face the greatest disruption. Comparing Q1 2021 with Q2 2021 results, the number of processes with high or very high disruption has increased from three to eleven. Most of these increases were due to one-time events linked to challenges related to increased workload, deployment of IT solutions and IT service provider disruptions due to COVID-19
21. Overarching business risks, including monitoring country disruptions, securing IT and communication, and delivering sufficient health product supplies, remain on the Secretariat's radar.
22. The Global Fund continues to make progress in pledge conversion. For Public donors as of end of September 2021, over US\$8.9 billion (58% of total adjusted pledges) have been signed into contribution agreements for the Sixth Replenishment with 43 (of 58) public donors. Contribution agreement negotiations are advancing with the 15 remaining public donors. In terms of payment, cash contributions at the end of September 2021 amounted to US\$6.5 billion. For private sector donors, signed contribution agreements were in place for US\$1 billion (91% of pledges) as of end September 2021. In terms of private sector contributions, cash conversion at the end of September 2021 amounted to US\$404 million. Pledge conversion continues to be monitored carefully by the Secretariat and we are actively mitigating risks related to pledge conversion.⁴

Supporting countries to respond to COVID-19

⁴ For more details, see GF/B45/19 [Update on Resource Mobilization Matters](#)

23. The Global Fund has recently crossed the US\$4 billion mark of investments made to support countries in combating COVID-19 and mitigating its impact on the three diseases. The Secretariat has, following extraordinary support from our donors, relaunched C19RM funding request submissions in 2021, with the first full funding window on 14 May 2021. As of 15 October 2021, about US\$ 3.1 billion has been awarded (including funding recommended for Board approval) to 103 countries and 13 multicounty programs. Cumulatively, this adds up to a total of US\$4 billion awarded (including funding recommended for Board approval) for C19RM since the beginning of the response in 2020.
24. Cumulatively, since the beginning of the Global Fund's response to COVID-19 in early 2020, 97 countries have used the Pooled Procurement Mechanism/wambo.org to access COVID-19 related health commodities. This includes, at the time of writing, orders placed for over 52.2 million SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic tests across 90 countries and US\$180.5M worth of PPE products across 76 countries. This is a significant increase since our last Board meeting in May 2021 where we reported just about 134 million in PPE with no additional investments in diagnostics. Today the Global Fund is the largest funder of diagnostics in Africa and remains a large funder for all non-vaccine related health products for COVID-19 in the regions where we operate.
25. In addition to making greater financial resources available to countries, following consistent and extensive consultations with the Board, Committees, and partners, the Secretariat continues to iterate on the model. At this juncture, the C19RM Secretariat is undergoing an OIG audit and incorporating several changes and recommendations to ensure constant improvement and to prepare to support and secure Global Fund investments already made in 2022.
26. The Secretariat has continued to actively engage with CCMs to provide details on allocation and funding request approval procedures. The C19RM Secretariat has also initiated various process improvements and optimizations, continuing to make centrally managed limited investments that encourage innovations that identify and leverage opportunities amidst the pandemic to improve health systems and solve cross-disease challenges. Our monitoring and evaluation framework continues to mature, with more pulse checks and spot checks launched to strengthen our oversight.
27. The C19RM Secretariat has made use of continuous contact with GAC and the COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group (CTAG) partners through review of C19RM funding requests and update meetings, to discuss lessons learned to refine the Global Fund's response in real-time.

Playing our role in the global COVID-19 response

28. The Global Fund has, along with its partners, actively supported countries to procure diagnostics, PPE, therapeutics, and oxygen. The Secretariat has, while supporting countries, published information notes to scale-up community testing and consideration to establish national policies for task-shifting to allow increased access and coverage to COVID-19 diagnostics tools whilst actively leveraging its partnerships (e.g., Supply Consortium and ACT-Accelerator) across diagnostics, therapeutics, and the Health Systems Connector. Examples include continued collaboration with AU-CDC, WHO AFRO, and African Society for Laboratory Medicine and National Lab

Directors to accelerate country adoption and scale-up of antigen RDTs, working with WHO to develop guidance for implementation of joint COVID-19/TB screening and testing for both SARS-Co and TB and working with the World Bank and other partners on an initiative, “Rethinking PPE”, to strengthen the PPE ecosystem.

29. The Global Fund helped found the ACT-Accelerator partnership and remains actively engaged, as a co-convenor of the Diagnostics and Health Systems Connector pillars and playing a key role in the therapeutics pillar. The ACT-Accelerator has been at the forefront of ensuring countries have equitable access to the necessary tools to fight the pandemic. The Global Fund continues to play a key role in three of the four ACT-Accelerator pillars: including on the diagnostics pillar supply workstream with WHO; encouraging advocacy and community engagement across all ACT-Accelerator workstreams and through the Global Fund Advocates Network; supporting procurement and deployment with WHO on therapeutics; and on the ACT-A Oxygen Taskforce and in a series of workstreams on the Health Systems Connector. The Global Fund is also active in supporting resource mobilization activities for the partnership.
30. In terms of additional resources in 2021, Switzerland pledged CHF 50 million to the Global Fund as part of a broader CHF 300 million commitment to the global COVID-19 response. As part of a wider EUR 1.5 billion commitment to support the ACT-Accelerator, Germany pledged an additional EUR 140 million, taking the total of Germany’s new commitments to EUR 290 million over 2020-21. In September, the Netherlands announced an additional commitment of EUR 95 million to help LMICs combat COVID-19 and EUR 15 million of that funding was committed to the Global Fund. This amount comes over and above their April 2021 pledge of EUR 12 million, which was part of an earlier EUR 52 million ACT-Accelerator commitment. Additionally, with the adoption of the American Rescue Plan Act, the U.S. committed US\$ 3.5 billion in support of the Global Fund. On the private sector side, as other resource mobilization activities are in progress, (RED) is mobilizing partners to support C19RM, including, Apple, Starbucks and Salesforce. Private sector partners have also taken part in key events and calls to action in support of the Global Fund.
31. As of 15 October 2021, an unprecedented mobilization of sovereign funders and private sector, philanthropic and multilateral contributors have galvanized commitments of US\$ 18.7 billion for the ACT-Accelerator. The ACT-Accelerator funding gap now stands at US\$ 16 billion.

Looking ahead

32. As COVID-19 becomes a part of our lives, the Global Fund and its partners have continued to evolve to respond to the crisis in an agile manner that prioritizes saving lives. As depicted in the Global Funds Results report, the pandemic continues to threaten lives and risk our investments in HIV TB and Malaria. However, it has also presented an opportunity for the Global Fund to step up its fight against diseases. We have developed incredible resilience and innovation across the Global Fund that we will continue to use to strengthen our core HIV, TB and Malaria programs. As we navigate the heightened levels of financial and programmatic risks, we are maintaining

our four-pronged approach to mitigate these risks and impact on our core mission. The Executive Director will continue to update the Board on our approach to COVID-19 across the various pillars through regular calls and reports. We continue to thank the Global Fund Board for its unwavering support.

Annexes

The following items can be found in Annex:

- Annex 1: Relevant Past Board and Committee Decisions
- Annex 2: Links to Relevant Past Documents & Reference Materials

Annex 1 – Relevant past Board and Committee Decisions

Relevant past Decision Point	Summary and Impact
<p>GF/AFC15/EDP02: Approval of Available Sources of Funds for the C19RM Mechanism</p> <p>(April 2021)</p>	<p>The Audit and Finance Committee approved the additional amount of US\$ 3,619 million as available sources of funds for allocation to C19RM pursuant to Board decision points GF/B42/EDP11, GF/B43/EDP12 and GF/B44/EDP18; bringing the total available sources of funds for C19RM to US\$ 4,378 million.</p>
<p>GF/B44/EDP24: Second Extension of the Timeline for Including COVID-19 Products in the wambo.org Pilot</p> <p>(April 2021)⁵</p>	<p>The Board approved the change in the end date of the period through which non-Global Fund financed transactions for COVID-19 products may be issued as purchase orders by wambo.org until November 2022 or until the Board approves a future strategy for wambo.org, if earlier, and confirmed that all other conditions and flexibilities set forth in GF/B43/EDP07 shall continue to apply.</p>
<p>GF/B44/EDP18: Second Extension of C19RM Timeline and Operational Flexibility for COVID-19</p> <p>(March 2021)⁶</p>	<p>The Board approved the extension of the timelines for the receipt, award, and use of funds for the Global Fund COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM), and to extend the duration of the Secretariat's delegated authority to grant limited exceptions to the pre-shipment sampling and testing requirements under the Quality Assurance Policies.</p>
<p>GF/AFC14/EDP04: Approval of Available Sources of Funds for the C19RM Mechanism</p> <p>(December 2020)</p>	<p>The Audit and Finance Committee (i) approved an additional amount of USD 41 million as available sources of funds;</p> <p>(ii) acknowledged that the additional amount of USD 41 million would be applied to C19RM pursuant to Board decision points GF/B42/EDP11 and GF/B43/EDP12; and</p> <p>(ii) accepted that the total available sources of funds for C19RM would accordingly be USD 759 million.</p>
<p>GF/AFC14/EDP02: Approval of Available Sources of Funds for the C19RM Mechanism</p>	<p>The Audit and Finance Committee (i) approved an additional amount of USD 53 million as available sources of funds;</p>

⁵ <https://www.theglobalfund.org/board-decisions/b44-edp24/>

⁶ <https://www.theglobalfund.org/board-decisions/b44-edp18/>

Relevant past Decision Point	Summary and Impact
(November 2020)	<p>(ii) acknowledged that the additional amount of USD 53 million would be applied to C19RM pursuant to Board decision points GF/B42/EDP11 and GF/B43/EDP12; and</p> <p>(iii) accepted that the total available sources of funds for C19RM would accordingly be USD 718 million.</p>
<p>GF/B43/EDP12: Extension of C19RM Timeline and Operational Flexibility for COVID-19</p> <p>(September 2020)⁷</p>	<p>The Board:</p> <p>(i) extended the time for the Secretariat to approve requests for C19RM funds through 15 April 2021;</p> <p>(ii) affirmed application of all other previously approved principles under GF/B42/EDP11;</p> <p>(iii) requested the Secretariat to return to the Board should further extensions of C19RM be required or if total additional funding for C19RM exceeds USD 500 million; and</p> <p>(iv) extended through 15 April 2021 the operational flexibility under paragraph 3 of GF/B42/EDP10.</p>
<p>GF/AFC13/EDP01: Available Sources of Funds for the C19RM Mechanism</p> <p>(August 2020)</p>	<p>The Audit and Finance Committee approved USD 165 million as available sources of funds and acknowledged that the amount would be applied to C19RM in accordance with GF/B43/EDP11.</p>
<p>GF/B43/EDP07: Extending the wambo.org pilot to include COVID-19 products</p> <p>(July 2020)⁸</p>	<p>The Board extended the scope of the pilot approved by GF/B42/DP05 to include COVID-19 products available in wambo.org for procurement by Global Fund Principal Recipients, subject to certain conditions and reporting.</p>
<p>GF/B42/EDP11: Additional Support for Country Responses to COVID-19</p> <p>(April 2020)⁹</p>	<p>The Board approved the creation and initial funding up to USD 500 million of a COVID-19 response mechanism to finance interventions consistent with WHO guidance on COVID-19 in the context of</p>

⁷ <https://www.theglobalfund.org/board-decisions/b43-edp12/>

⁸ <https://www.theglobalfund.org/board-decisions/b43-edp07/>

⁹ <https://www.theglobalfund.org/board-decisions/b42-edp11/>

Relevant past Decision Point	Summary and Impact
	national Strategic Preparedness and Response Plans across the 5 th and 6 th replenishment periods.
<p>GF/B42/EDP10: Operational Flexibilities to Ensure Continued Operations during COVID-19</p> <p>(April 2020)¹⁰</p>	<p>The Board approved certain operational flexibilities:</p> <p>(i) for delivery of goods and services under Global Fund programs to be funded from the 2017-2019 allocation period, up to 180 days after the implementation period end date;</p> <p>(ii) Secretariat approval of increase of grant amounts to integrate awards of portfolio optimization funds approved by the Secretariat in line with the Strategy Committee-approved prioritization framework, where such funds have been approved as available by the AFC, with subsequent reporting to the Board; and</p> <p>(iii) Secretariat grant of limited exceptions to the Quality Assurance Policies, to waive the requirement for pre-shipment sampling and testing for Expert Review Panel-approved products, vector control products, and condoms, where such testing may delay the delivery of products to countries.</p>

¹⁰ <https://www.theglobalfund.org/board-decisions/b42-edp10/>

Annex 2 – Relevant Past Documents & Reference Materials

- COVID-19 Monthly Update to the Board: <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/covid-19/monthly-update-to-the-board/>
- GF/AFC17/03 Semi-Annual Risk Management Report
- GF/AFC16/02 Covid-19 Response and Business Continuity (Joint Committee Session)
- GF/AFC16/13 C19RM Risk, Assurance, Monitoring and Oversight
- GF/AFC15/07 Risk Management Report and CRO's Annual Opinion
- GF/B45/04 COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity
- GF/B44/03 Report of the Executive Director
- GF/B44/16 Risk Management Report
- Annex to GF/B44/06 COVID-19 Response and Business Continuity
- GF/B43/Background Document COVID-19 and Business Continuity
- *COVID-19 Situation Reports: <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/covid-19/>*