

Operational Update

Project STELLAR, COVID-19 Self-Testing Survey,
Principal Recipient Reporting, RTS,S Malaria Vaccine,
and Global Health Supply Chain Dialogue

21 March 2022

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Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the first Operational Update of 2022.

In the year of its 20th anniversary, the Global Fund continues to support implementing countries in the fight against the three diseases and COVID-19, in strengthening sustainable systems for health and preparing for future pandemics.

In this issue we would like commemorate World TB Day, and we bring you some news through the [Tuberculosis \(TB\) Quarterly Update](#), also available in [French](#). This year's campaign, "[Invest to End TB. Save Lives](#)" highlights the urgent need to scale up the fight and gain lost ground during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This issue also includes news on COVID-19 self-testing survey, how Project STELLAR will support selected countries with scaling-up COVID-19 testing, and an update on support to implementing countries to introduce the new malaria vaccine.

In addition, we remind Principal Recipient of reporting deadlines and include resources to support timely completion of PU/DRs and Pulse Checks.

Following the Global Fund's Seventh Replenishment's Preparatory Meeting co-hosted by the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa, last February, we launched our replenishment campaign aimed at mobilizing at least US\$18 billion for the 2023-2025 funding cycle. Implementing countries will continue to play a key role in showing how Global Fund investments are having an impact in the lives of those we serve. We will be sharing updates in the coming months on how implementing countries can support Global Fund replenishment efforts.

In the next issue of the Operational Update, we will share information on the new Global Fund strategy [2023-2028](#) "Fighting Pandemics and Building a Healthier and More Equitable World". The new strategy sets us all in the path to accelerate impact towards the 2030 horizon, to end AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, with better, more equitable health for all. The new strategy can be downloaded [here](#).

We thank you for your commitment in the fight against the three diseases and look forward to continuing to work together in 2022.

Best regards,
The Global Fund

Project STELLAR

To support countries achieve WHO and ACT-A (Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator) targets for COVID-19 diagnostics, the Global Fund has introduced Project STELLAR—Scaling-up Testing and Strengthening Lab Systems.

As one of the projects under the COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM), the project has been created to support selected countries maximize the impact of C19RM resources, to rapidly scale up COVID-19 testing and galvanize longer term strengthening of laboratory systems.

Project STELLAR has an initial investment of US\$9.86 million and will be launching soon in 23 countries listed in this briefing note ([EN](#) | [FR](#)).

STELLAR aims to strengthen the architecture of COVID-19 response efforts, by providing technical assistance for key aspects such as:

- governance including planning, resource mobilization, policy/advocacy, coordination, diagnostics strategy and algorithm development;
- scaling up integrated testing for COVID-19, HIV, TB and malaria including training health care and community health workers; and
- data management such as information and surveillance systems.

The project will be implemented from April 2022 to December 2023.

The countries in scope were selected based on quantitative analysis of COVID-19 testing status and C19RM allocation level. A competitive selection process has identified three service providers to lead the implementation of the project: African Society for Laboratory Medicine (ASLM), Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) and Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL). The implementation approach includes three phases:

1. Detailed country assessment and work plan development with CTs, PRs, CCMs, in-country stakeholders and partners;
2. Deployment of technical assistance and work plan implementation; and
3. Continuous monitoring and independent evaluation to track implementation progress.

COVID-19 Self-Testing: Survey

The Global Fund is seeking information on the readiness and use of SARS-CoV-2 antigen-detection rapid diagnostic tests for COVID-19 self-testing in countries implementing Global Fund-supported programs. We kindly request CCMs and PRs to support completion of the online survey ([EN](#) | [ES](#) | [FR](#) | [PT](#)) by 31 March 2022 by forwarding the links to relevant in-country focal points.

On 9 March 2022, WHO released interim guidance on the [use of SARS-CoV-2 antigen-detection rapid diagnostic tests for COVID-19 self-testing](#) recommending SARS-CoV-2 Ag-RDTs self-testing to be offered in addition to professionally administered testing services. The guidance also covers implementation considerations to guide decisions on whether and how to adopt self-testing in different contexts, including the populations being prioritized, the disease prevalence in that population, and the impact on accessibility of testing, health care services and results reporting.

Principal Recipient Reporting Reminder

Principal Recipients (PRs) with reporting periods ending on 31 December 2021 have **60 days to submit the PU/DR through the Partner Portal by 26 April**.

For High Impact and Core PRs, Pulse Checks for Q1 2022 will be shared from 1 April onwards, with deadline for reporting on Friday, 6 May.

While the Global Fund appreciates the added workload of having two reporting deadlines so close to each other, this is an exceptional situation due to the delays in issuance of the PU/DRs in February 2022.

We ask for Principal Recipients understanding in submitting both the PU/DR and Pulse Checks in a timely and quality manner, which will allow the Global Fund to demonstrate to our donors the impact of Global Fund investments in light of the upcoming Seventh Replenishment.

We will support Principal Recipients throughout both processes and look forward to continuing to work together in delivering results.

Additional Questions and Answers Sessions for PRs have been scheduled in English and French. These sessions aim to support PRs to **successfully complete and submit the PU/DR by 26 April**, covering the following topics:

- Process, Timelines, Roles and Responsibilities; and
- Guidance on filling these sections of the form: Financial Information, Programmatic Information, and Health Products.

Language	Date	Time (Geneva, UTC+1)	Link
English	23 March 2022	10:00-11:00	Link to join the meeting
	30 March 2022	10:00-11:00	Link to join the meeting
	13 April 2022	10:00-11:00	Link to join the meeting
French	23 March 2022	14:00-15:00	Link to join the meeting
	30 March 2022	14:00-15:00	Link to join the meeting
	13 April 2022	14:00-15:00	Link to join the meeting

Resources available for PRs and Local Fund Agents (LFAs) can be found on the [Global Fund website](#), as follows:

- [This video](#) details key changes on PR Reporting.
- PU/DR Form Instructions ([EN](#) | [ES](#) | [FR](#)) is a written manual to guide PRs and LFAs in completing each section of the PU/DR form.

- The PU/DR Interactive Guide ([EN](#) | [ES](#) | [FR](#)) is a clickable resource to support PRs and LFAs in completing the PU/DR form.
 - PR Information Session Recordings: EN ([16 February](#), [1 March](#)) | ES ([17 February](#), [1 March](#)) | FR ([16 February](#), [2 March](#))
 - PR Information Session Presentation: [EN](#) | [ES](#) | [FR](#)
 - PR Questions and Answers Session Recordings: EN ([3 March](#)) | ES ([2 March](#)) | FR ([3 March](#))
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Update on the RTS,S Malaria Vaccine

Global Fund's Malaria Strategic Initiative continues to fund the [Malaria Vaccine implementation program](#) to generate further evidence on the vaccine's impact, safety, and feasibility during the next two years, alongside Gavi and Unitaid.

Global Fund Country Teams will continue to support implementing countries efforts to develop evidence-based, costed national malaria plans and determine the best mix of malaria interventions based on national context. RTS,S introduction requires coordination between national immunization programs and malaria control programs, considering several factors such as levels of malaria transmission, pattern of severe malaria, structure and function of the health system, use and coverage of existing malaria control interventions, and in what context the vaccine could best complement other tools as part of a package of interventions, as well as the capacity of the national immunization programs to implement. Positive decisions would also require appropriate national planning, including financial planning.

Different resources are being planned with partners **to guide implementing countries** on these decisions, including from Gavi, WHO and the Global Malaria Programme. WHO recently published a [position paper on malaria vaccine](#) and [updated guidelines for malaria](#). The Global Fund will continue to share resources as they become available. The Global Fund, Gavi, and partners intend to conduct a cross-country cost-effectiveness analysis of malaria interventions to shed light on the optimal mix of malaria interventions.

In addition, WHO and technical partners are developing a **Vaccine Allocation Framework** considering available supply of the malaria vaccine is expected to be insufficient to meet demand in the coming years. The framework will support global decisions on malaria vaccine allocation and inform national decisions about vaccine prioritization while supply is limited. The framework is targeted to malaria-endemic countries, manufacturer(s), Gavi, UNICEF and other partners.

Global Health Supply Chain Dialogue Conference

“Building Resilient Supply Chains for Effective Pandemic Preparedness” is the theme of the Global Health Supply Chain Dialogue event that the Global Fund is organizing on 29-31 March 2022.

The global dialogue aims to foster discussion between countries and partners on NEXTGen market shaping strategies and generate commitment to an action plan to strengthen public health supply chains, which is an essential element in the path to increased health systems resilience.

The conference will gather leadership representatives from ministries of health, central medical stores, supply chain focal points from local and national governments, Principal Recipients and global and regional partners.

The objectives of the conference include:

- Accelerate policy dialogue on the future of market shaping, to promote an ecosystem of quality supply chains to strengthen self-reliance.
- Foster south-south coordination including the promotion of best practices on innovations to support sustainable people-centered supply chains.
- Strengthen approaches to in-country capacity building by identifying priority areas of intervention and related mechanisms to drive further supply chain maturity and health impact.

The draft agenda and more details on the logistics are available on the [Conference Platform](#). To attend the conference, please register [here](#) by 22 March.

Please contact the organizing committee at SupplyChainDialogue@theglobalfund.org if you have questions.

Other News

Web Updates:

- 23 February 2022: [Revised Progress Update and Disbursement Requests \(PU/DR\) and Performance Ratings](#)
- 18 January 2022: [TERG: Thematic Evaluation of Multicountry Catalytic Investment Grants and Strategic Initiatives](#)
- 17 December 2021: [Ethics Resources for Country Coordinating Mechanisms: New e-learning Module](#)