

Sixth Meeting of the Independent Evaluation Panel Summary Notes

14 and 16 February 2024

Virtual meeting

Purpose

This document presents the Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP), held virtually from 14 and 16 February 2024.

Agenda items. The meeting comprised six (6) agenda items and one (1) executive session listed in Annex 1.

Decisions. The Report includes a full record of the two (2) Decision Points adopted by the IEP (Annex 2).

Documents. A document list is attached to this report (Annex 3).

Participants. The participant list is attached to this report (Annex 4).

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Report

Opening Session

The IEP Chair opened the meeting by welcoming IEP members and congratulating the joint work done by the IEP and Evaluation and Learning Office (ELO) to date. The IEP Chair summarized the objectives of the sixth IEP meeting, namely to 1) close the first two evaluations through discussion and decision on the IEP commentary, 2) approve the IEP annual report and 3) discuss the terms of reference (TORs) for the upcoming malaria evaluation.

The Chief Learning and Evaluation Officer (CELO) highlighted the volume and importance of the IEP's work in 2024, building on progress on processes and procedures developed in 2023. The CELO acknowledged IEP member flexibility during the intense working period preceding the sixth IEP meeting.

The CELO presented operational updates, including on the 2023 and 2024 evaluations, as well as the 2024 CELO priorities.

Summary of the main discussion points:

- **Evaluation principles:** The CELO clarified that further work on the evaluation principles cut across multiple elements of the 2024 workplan and will be discussed further at the planned in-person IEP meeting in May 2024.
- **Planned evaluation TORs:** The CELO explained that the TORs for the two community-related evaluations will be completed in quarter one of 2024 and finalized prior to the next IEP meeting in May, during which the IEP would be engaged in the early scoping stage of these evaluations. The IEP Chair requested dedicated calls for soliciting IEP input on the TORs for these two evaluations.

Malaria evaluation

This session included a discussion of the TORs for the upcoming malaria evaluation with the aim of obtaining IEP input into the themes, evaluation questions and methodology. The CELO emphasized that the TORs had been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders including malaria technical partners and the Strategy Committee (SC), with the IEP Vice Chair noting emphasis in the discussions with the SC on data, data quality and case studies showcasing success in sub-national tailoring.

Summary of the main discussion points:

- **Technical partners and prior evaluations:** The IEP commended the level of consultation with technical partners and SC, while calling attention to the already conducted evaluations by partners on data and asking how the proposed evaluation by ELO would contribute to, rather than duplicate, these partner efforts. The ELO flagged that relevant prior evaluations focused on data, data quality and data systems but not specifically for malaria. The ELO pointed out that data was only one of the strategic drivers for malaria-decision making, but a highly important one given the potential for stratified approaches to enhance impact.
- **Political and health system considerations:** The IEP advocated for the relevance of political and health system considerations to the evaluation, emphasizing the importance of the TORs accounting for domestic funding decisions at different health system levels. They emphasized the importance of the evaluator having appropriate expertise on political economy and health systems. The ELO noted that the TORs call for a systems approach and examination of

decision-making at different levels through focus group consultations of stakeholders identified by fellow country-level actors as most relevant.

- **Community, human rights and gender:** The IEP and ELO agreed on the importance of a community, rights and gender lens, acknowledging that the TORs mainly focus on the gender elements of malaria sub-national tailoring.
- **Climate change:** The IEP queried whether the inclusion of climate change in the TORs might overly broaden them. The ELO responded that, while health data alone is already a challenge in some contexts, in other contexts with adequate climate and health data systems, linkages are required..
- **Country context:** The IEP flagged that data and sub-national tailoring are informed by country context, which could be further emphasized in the TORs, noting that different actors may be relevant across these different contexts. The IEP counseled that the TORs consider the feasibility of sub-national tailoring in the broader country contexts. Namely, evaluation has to be grounded in the health system and country governance system to understand not only the decision-making for malaria but also, in general, the decision-making in the country and decision-making spaces and power distribution between central and sub-national levels. The ELO agreed to account for country context and would seek IEP input in further developing the list of potential national and sub-national stakeholders.
- **March 2024 malaria ministerial meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon:** One IEP member flagged the ministerial meeting in Cameroon this year, given the meeting's focus on high burden high impact (HBHI) and strategic information use.

Next steps:

- The ELO would integrate IEP discussion feedback into the TORs as relevant, consulting IEP members where needed, in order to finalize them.

Strategic Review 2023

The objective of this session was for IEP members to discuss the review of the 2017-2023 Global Fund Strategy (known as SR23) following the quality assessment of the final report, with the objective of seeking IEP decision on endorsement of the review. IEP focal points for Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance jointly presented the outcome of the assessment and key points for the IEP Commentary.

Summary of the main IEP discussion points:

- **Evaluation content:** One IEP Focal Point noted that the evaluator's comments about the Global Fund as a proactive influencer, and influence at country level relative to investment size, could have been better explored to identify associated benefits and risks. Another IEP Focal Point pointed to the opportunity for the evaluation to clarify the strength of evidence for each finding. It was also observed that there wasn't sufficient cross-country comparison and analysis from the findings of the 14 country case studies which would have been useful in the main body of the report.
- **Learning process:** The IEP Chair shared that the evaluator final Reflections Meeting yielded a shared acknowledgement on the strength of internal voice to the report, which left room for a stronger external voice throughout this and future reviews. IEP Focal Points discussed the difficulties in balancing their learning process from this evaluation including in the matter of evaluator independence.
- **Best practices:** Considering the length of SR2024, which is over several hundred pages, IEP members suggested providing evaluators with page limits for core report and annexes to better articulate these expectations in the TORs of future evaluations. To ensure better quality of evaluations and alleviate time pressure faced by evaluators, stakeholder groups of the secretariat, ELO and IEP, the IEP Vice Chair suggested adjusting and extending evaluation

timelines on the front end to avoid the challenging timelines in advance of SC meetings at which the evaluations are discussed.

Summary of main ELO observations:

- **Overall approach:** The CELO commented that different approaches could benefit future strategic reviews, and questioned the number of country case studies as well as relative scope of the mid- and end-point reviews. The ELO concurred with the IEP on the potential advantages for IEP, ELO and other Secretariat players of more generous timelines and strict page limits for the evaluations and annexes.
- **Country case studies:** The ELO flagged the extensive amount of work that each country case study required and echoed IEP concerns that cross-country comparisons was a lost opportunity of the report.

Decision:

- The IEP endorses the Strategic Review 2023 as presented in GF/IEP06/03.

Evaluation of the Allocation Methodology

The objective of this session was for IEP members to discuss the review of allocation methodology (AM) following the quality assessment of the final report, with the objective of seeking IEP decision on endorsement of the review. IEP focal points for Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance jointly presented the outcome of the assessment and key points for the IEP Commentary.

Summary of the main IEP discussion points:

- **Lessons learned:** In alignment with feedback on SR23, IEP Focal Points for the AM evaluation pointed out that quality assessment framework was still in the development phase during the inception report stage.
- **IEP commentary:** The IEP pointed to several areas in the report that could be strengthened, while acknowledging that the IEP Quality Assessment Focal Point role does not include providing the evaluator with feedback and recommendations to adjust the evaluation report. Areas for improvement included improving the quality of the executive summary and use of data to support conclusions, particularly related to the discussion on resilient and sustainable systems for health (RSSH). IEP Members discussed the inconsistent application of methodologies in the report, noting that this weakened the analytical rigor underlying the recommendations, while acknowledging this issue can be attributed somewhat to the evolution of the approach from TOR to inception to final report stage. The IEP Focal Points also observed external challenges faced by the evaluators, such as limited data availability to model impact and cost benefit analysis (originally claimed in the bid proposal), and non-responsiveness some of the stakeholders.
- **IEP endorsement:** IEP members acknowledged that even though they endorse the report, their points on quality would be noted in the IEP commentary.

Summary of main ELO observations:

- **AM as an evaluation topic:** The CELO highlighted the difficulties this topic presented as an evaluation and stated that future proposals for evaluations have to be carefully assessed for evaluability and appropriateness to be in the remit of the independent evaluation function.
- **Report quality:** The ELO thanked the IEP Focal Points for their review and agreed with areas where the report requires strengthening, including the executive summary, and would continue to work with the evaluators to improve quality. The ELO emphasized, however, that following

external technical advice, certain limitations related to the feasibility of impact modelling were recognized, and the evaluation approach was therefore modified during the inception phase .

Decision:

- The IEP endorses the evaluation of the Global Fund Allocation Methodology as presented in GF/IEP06/05.

Legal and Governance Department session on Governance

This session was organized as an initial engagement with the IEP on questions regarding governance arrangements for the IEP. The focus was to provide context on modalities for executive sessions.

The SC Vice Chair conveyed the appreciation of the Strategy Committee for the work of the IEP. The SC Vice Chair provide some background about the establishment of this new evaluation function through the Global Fund Board, with the aim of establishing the IEP to assure the Board of evaluation independence and quality. The annual report the IEP was preparing was appreciated to further strengthen the function. The Legal and Governance Department (LGD) highlighted upcoming governance support for the IEP. Given the key principle of transparency at the Global Fund, LGD provided more clarifications regarding the existing governance arrangements for executive session that apply to all governance bodies, including providing rationale for executive session request by IEP, participation and record keeping. It was underlined that it is important to provide a read out of any agreements made in executive session during open session appropriately balancing confidentiality with transparency.

Next steps:

- The Governance team will organize a follow-up conversation with the IEP on governance procedures and arrangements.

IEP Annual Report

This session included a report-back from the IEP on the executive session discussions focused on the IEP annual report, including discussion of the recommendations developed by the IEP Chair.

Summary of the main discussion points:

- **Evaluation reference group (ERG):** The IEP members recommended revision to the wording of the recommendation on use of an ad hoc ERG for some complex evaluations. The IEP requested that report language be updated to clarify the trigger for an ERG and clarity on the structure of an ERG, The IEP members asked that technical expertise be defined to include political and community expertise, which the CELO suggested be phrased as “sectoral expertise”. The merits and drawbacks of separate versus combined ERG and Secretariat User Groups, as well as resource implications for ERG participants, were discussed.
- **Community, human rights and gender:** In response to the IEP request for evaluation guidance for consideration of human rights, gender, poverty, and intersectionality, the CELO reassured the IEP that Community, Human Rights and Gender Department will be advising and providing materials. The IEP Chair asked that these materials be developed into evaluation-specific guidance.
- **IEP Resources:** The IEP requested the report emphasize the need to closely review of the IEP budget in relation to multi-year evaluation workplan and after OIG scheduled audit. Legal noted that concerns regarding budget could be expressed in the IEP's annual report. As it stands, funding for IEP activities is included in the `budget approved for the Evaluation Function as part of the overall yearly planning exercise.

- The ELO echoed IEP concerns about short evaluation timelines, while acknowledging the difficulty of adding time both on the front and/or back ends due to overlapping evaluations and submission within SC and Board due dates. The CELO agreed to discuss possibilities for not being constrained by SC meeting dates further with the SC.
- **Planned audit by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG):** The IEP requested that the audit of the evaluation function be conducted as early as possible in 2025. Legal informed the IEP that the OIG was bound by its Audit and Finance Committee (AFC)-approved annual workplan, and was otherwise independent in its planning, but that request could be discussed with OIG and AFC Leadership.

Next steps:

- The ELO will discuss with LGD and SC Leadership flexibilities around dissemination of final evaluation reports that are not bound by dates of SC meetings...
- The ELO agreed to pull together joint observations on continuous improvement of evaluation processes for discussion.

Closing

The CELO highlighted the Secretariat's appreciation for the IEP's work and learnings through the process of the first two evaluations.

The IEP Chair noted the immense amount of IEP and ELO work leading up to the sixth IEP meeting, noting that future evaluations will benefit from learnings gained through this period.

Annex 1: Agenda

Day 1: Wednesday 14 February 2024	
Agenda Item and Objective	Purpose
Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome remarks, introductions, overview of agenda Declarations of Conflict of Interest Update by IEP Chair Operational update by CELO 	Information
Malaria Evaluation Objective: to input into the objectives and high-level questions before final ToR development.	Input
Strategic Review 2023 Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Quality Assessment focal points to present the outcome of the assessment and Quality Assurance focal points to highlight key points for Commentary and signal any concerns for endorsement. Decision: IEP endorsement of the final report 	Decision
Day 2: Friday 16 February 2024	
Agenda Item and Objective	Purpose
Evaluation of the Allocation Methodology Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Quality Assessment focal points to present the outcome of the assessment and Quality Assurance focal points to highlight key points for Commentary and signal any concerns for endorsement. Decision: IEP endorsement of the final report 	Decision
LGD session on Governance Objective: Clarity on arrangements for executive sessions	Information
Executive Session <i>Including the ex-officio member from the Strategy Committee and Executive Office</i>	
IEP Annual Report Objective: To discuss and provide input on the annual report to inform the decision on approval	Input

Annex 2: Decisions

Decision Point	Decision Point Text	Voting Summary		
		For	Against	Abstain
GF/IEP06/DP01	The Independent Evaluation Panel endorses the Strategic Review 2023 as presented in GF/IEP06/03.	10	0	0
GF/IEP06/DP02	The Independent Evaluation Panel endorses the evaluation of the Global Fund Allocation Methodology as presented in GF/IEP06/05.	9	0	1

Annex 3: Document List

Title
CELO 2024 Operational Update and Priorities
IEP Annual Report: Draft Final 2023 IEP Annual Report
Strategic Review 2023: Final Evaluation Report
Strategic Review 2023: Presentation from focal points on input to commentary
Evaluation of the Allocation Methodology: Final Evaluation Report
Evaluation of the Allocation Methodology: Presentation from focal points on input to commentary
Malaria Evaluation: Draft Terms of Reference

Annex 4: Participant List

Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP)

Mira Johri, Chair
George Gotsadze, Vice Chair
Abdallah Bchir
Caroline Lynch
Dede Watchiba
Elilarasu Renganathan
Evelyn Ansah
Florenca Guerzovich
Fred Carden
Josephine Watera

Strategy Committee

Javier Hourcade Bellocq (IEP ex-officio)

Evaluation & Learning Office (ELO)

John Grove, Chief Evaluation & Learning Officer (IEP Ex-Officio)
John Puvimanasinghe, Senior Specialist, Evaluation & Learning
Jutta Hornig, Team Coordinator
Marc Theuss, Specialist, Evaluation
Michael Schroll, Senior Specialist, Evaluation & Learning
Olga Varetska, Specialist, Evaluation
Rhiannon James, Senior Specialist, Evaluation Partnerships
Rita Benitez, Specialist, Learning & Dissemination
Roy Mutandwa, Evaluation Specialist, C19RM
Yana Daneva, Project Manager Evaluation

Global Fund Secretariat

Katie Kampf, Chief of Staff (IEP Ex-Officio)
Etienne Michaud, Chief Counsel, Legal & Governance Department
Maximilian Mueller, Deputy Head, Governance

For select sessions

Carolyn Gomes, Vice-Chair Strategy Committee
Susie Rhee, General Counsel and Head, Legal and Governance Department
Harley Feldbaum, Head Strategy & Policy Hub
Hannah Grant, Senior Strategy and Policy Advisor, Strategy & Policy Hub
Shantih van Hoog, Consultant Strategy & Policy Hub
Cynthia Urusaro Imhof, Analyst, Ethics Office

External participants:

Julia Bürgi, report writer