

Evaluation Brief

End-Term Strategic Review (2017-2022)

A high-level overview of the evaluation report, Secretariat Management Response and the Independent Evaluation Panel Commentary

22 August 2024

GF/ELO/2024/01/07



Image credit: The Global Fund / Andrew Esiebo

© The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria 2024

Evaluation Briefs are produced by the Global Fund's Evaluation and Learning Office to synthesize the key learnings and takeaways formulated in independent evaluations.



What is the End-Term Strategic Review (2017-2022)?



The End-Term Strategic Review (2017-2022) is a cyclical evaluation requested by the Board under the Multi-Year Evaluation Calendar to assess achievements and challenges that can support the implementation of the 2023-2028 Strategy. This end-term review –referred to as SR2023 throughout this document - was informed by an earlier mid-term review of the same strategy.



For a more complete view of the End-Term Strategic Review (2017-2022), please read the final evaluation documents: the final evaluation report, annexes, Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) Commentary and the Secretariat Management Response, which can be accessed at:
<https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/iel/evaluations/2024-04-01-end-term-strategic-review-2017-2022/>



This independent strategic review was led by Cambridge Economic Policy Associates (CEPA) in association with BroadImpact and Southern Hemisphere, and managed by the Evaluation and Learning Office of the Global Fund.

© The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria 2024

This is a document published by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria's Evaluation and Learning Office, based on the work done by an independent evaluation team.

This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International. To view a copy of this license, please visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> via the website to obtain permission.

When content published by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, such as images, graphics, trademarks or logos, is attributed to a third-party, the user of such content is solely responsible for clearing the rights with the right holder(s).



Translating Findings and Recommendations Into Action

How will findings and recommendations inform the work of the Global Fund partnership?

The Global Fund Secretariat will consider the SR2023 recommendations as part of a holistic assessment of all priorities and levers to ensure an optimized and simplified operational approach to maximizing the impact of Global Fund investments going forward. These include the actions described below.

Actions in response to SR23

Prioritization of Interventions

- Review materials for Grant Cycle 8 (2026-2028) with the aim of giving greater guidance around prioritization while balancing this with the SR2023 recommendation to simplify;
- Review how [catalytic investments](#) can be best leveraged to incentivize specific critical interventions;
- Technical partners are encouraged to provide clear technical guidance on the prioritization or sequencing of interventions, particularly within a resource-constrained environment;
- Continue to encourage countries to adapt implementation to new evidence, updated technical recommendations as well as more rapid uptake and scaling of new, more effective tools, health products and technologies;
- Continue to facilitate greater recognition and engagement of communities most affected by HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria by providing investments to support communities to engage at country level, tracking and reiterating community engagement minimum expectations, and delivering on a dedicated Key Performance Indicator (KPI) and community-led thematic evaluations.

Resilient and sustainable systems for health (RSSH) and pandemic preparedness and response (PPR) strengthening

- Review guidance, tools and processes to ensure clarity on RSSH-PPR aims and strengthened differentiation within funding request documents;
- Engage national RSSH/PPR entities on Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) and as implementers (e.g., as Sub-Recipients);
- Leverage expanded partnerships for longer-term technical assistance to address systemic bottlenecks to RSSH-PPR implementation;



- Discuss the nature of contributory RSSH-PPR investments with the Strategy Committee, including how they can be better tracked and how these disease investments can further strengthen RSSH-PPR.

Gender equality and human rights

- Use lessons from implementation of the Gender Equality Marker and Program Essentials to update funding request documents and guidance for Grant Cycle 8;
- Leverage specific KPIs on health equity, gender equality, human rights and community engagement to inform implementation and adaptation;
- Implement the Gender Equality Fund to strengthen community engagement in national gender equality processes;
- Strengthen community-led and -based organizations' engagement in implementation of Global Fund supported programs including through exploring alternative approaches to contracting below the Principal Recipient (PR) level;
- Continue to build on new measures to strengthen and better evaluate community engagement in Global Fund-related processes, including the community engagement minimum expectations at key stages of the grant life cycle.

Sustainability

In addition to the extensive Board-led efforts underway to strengthen the sustainability of the Global Fund's investments, to protect the gains and continue progress towards ending AIDS, TB and malaria and deliver on Sustainable Development Goal 3, the Secretariat will:

- Update the [Co-financing Operational Policy Note](#) to address the identified challenges in the implementation of the [Sustainability, Transition and Co-Financing Policy](#).
- Sharpen use of programmatic co-financing commitments to better target sustainability opportunities;
- Leverage joint and blended finance to mobilize additional domestic resources and support sustainability.

Simplification and addressing unintended counterproductive incentives

- Review processes and procedures with the view of further simplifying while ensuring differentiation to country context;
- Review and address unintended counterproductive incentives within the Secretariat's sphere of control, including to foster impact over multi-grant cycle time horizons.



Evaluation Findings

- 1** Progress on maximizing impact against HIV, TB and malaria has been good in terms of lives saved and related treatment-cascade indicators for HIV and TB. However, there are gaps in incidence reduction and a big push is needed to reach the ambitious 2030 global targets across the three diseases.
- 2** Key performance indicators (KPIs) for the remaining strategic objectives have several measurement challenges, but a wider assessment indicates slow progress – (i) for resilient and sustainable systems for health (RSSH), (ii) for Human Rights and gender equality, and (iii) for domestic resource mobilization (some increases but overall not sufficient given the challenging funding landscape after COVID-19).
- 3** Critical to the achievement of the results described above is the relevance and significance of Global Fund investments in countries. In general, Global Fund funding well covers current disease priorities and emerging (i.e. new and intensified) disease priorities albeit with some gaps (e.g. HIV and TB prevention, inclusion of wider range of key populations and across the three diseases, drug-resistant TB, private sector engagement, accelerated scale-up of innovations, integrated health systems strengthening, community systems strengthening). This evaluation finds new quantitative evidence that grants performed better in countries where the Global Fund played a greater role within the donor landscape.
- 4** The Global Fund has a strong suite of strategic levers that have well supported strategy achievements, at the center of which lies a mature funding model and its effective implementation.
- 5** The Global Fund’s strategic levers work less optimally for RSSH, Human Rights and Gender Equality investments and their related Strategic Objectives and there is need for further adaptation to support impact in these areas.
- 6** The Global Fund business model (i.e. in terms of the range of policies, processes and requirements) is seen as highly complex and the voluminous guidance challenging to digest, which disserves the needs of countries and specific stakeholder groups like communities and civil society.
- 7** The Secretariat has become a more “proactive influencer” on country prioritization for Global Fund grants, a powerful tool which seems under-recognized as a significant Global Fund strategic lever. While this proactive influencing has definite merits and understandable drivers for its increase, it can also bring certain pitfalls and unintended



consequences, which deserve attention.

8

Some aspects of the operationalization of the funding model, while instituted for good reasons, can create unintended counter-productive incentives (perceived or real) that impede effective design and implementation of Global Fund investments in country.

9

Though the Global Fund has increased focus on sustainability, sustainability considerations need to be further prioritized and operationalized within the Global Fund model. The Global Fund has also underutilized its strategic levers to achieve increased domestic financing for health, although promising measures have been taken since 2021 with the establishment of the Secretariat Health Finance Department.

10

The re-design of the Global Fund's COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM) in 2021 was well done, albeit with some gaps mainly due to the challenging circumstances of the pandemic but also some specificities

of the Global Fund model. The C19RM contribution to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on HIV, TB and malaria has been considerable, but it has come later for RSSH (by design) and been less significant for community systems strengthening.

11

The Technical Evaluation Reference Group (TERG) evaluation findings and recommendations for Strategic Initiatives and multi-country grants have largely been taken forward, with nuance and flexibility in their application. Many Matching Funds have been seen as effective, but this is not straightforward to assess.

12

The Global Fund's strategic lever of "partnerships with technical partners" works reasonably well in the context of the overall partnership dynamic (i.e., organizational relationships, funding, capacity). Key gap areas are less effective partnerships for RSSH, human rights and gender equality as well as for supporting domestic resource mobilization. Donor coordination has improved over the strategy period and the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) has served to strengthen the overall partnership dynamic.



Evaluation Recommendations

Continue to encourage, and find ways to further foster the prioritization of new and intensified disease interventions that reflect the evolving epidemics in countries.

Accepted by the Secretariat

Continue to sharpen the Global Fund's approach to RSSH and take concrete actions to adapt the implementation of the funding model and partnerships to enable improved RSSH results.

Partially accepted by the Secretariat

Continue to support the strategy's gender equality and human rights objective, with a particular emphasis on gender equality given limited progress there; and take concrete actions to adapt the funding model and its operationalization as well as partnerships to improve delivery for gender equality and human rights objectives overall.

Partially accepted by the Secretariat

Strengthen the operationalization of sustainability considerations in the Global Fund model, including making more use of strategic levers like advocacy and innovative financing approaches to support greater domestic financing for health.

Accepted by the Secretariat

Optimize the implementation of the Global Fund's mature, generally well-functioning business model by (1) pushing for its simplification and (2) addressing the major unintended counter-productive incentives within it (whether perceived or real) reported by stakeholders

Accepted by the Secretariat



Secretariat Management Response

The Secretariat partially endorsed the key findings and the high-level conclusions from the report and partially agreed with the recommendations.

The Secretariat welcomed the SR2023 report and appreciated the recognition by the independent evaluators of the overall strong impact of the Global Fund partnership towards the achievement of the 2017-2022 Strategy, as well as the mature funding model supported by a comprehensive policy framework, a well-developed risk management approach, and a strong suite of strategic levers.

The Secretariat was reassured that the SR2023 recommendations are predominantly to continue to strengthen and optimize much of what is already being taken forward under the 2023-2028 Strategy and incorporated in the new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

There are areas in the evaluation that the Secretariat did not agree with. For example, the finding that the Global Fund has had limited impact on building RSSH stands in contrast with other findings, such as the important contributions to the Strategy's seven intended areas of RSSH focus, the broader structural factors that limit the speed with which overall systems can be lifted, as well as impact of COVID-19. Notwithstanding this, the Secretariat agreed that there is room to further deploy all levers at the Global Fund partnership's disposal to strengthen the impact of RSSH investments.

The Secretariat noted that SR2023 raises a number of helpful areas for operational refinement, many of which the Secretariat will take forward.

Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) Commentary

After conducting an independent quality assessment, the IEP concluded that the evaluation demonstrated satisfactory quality and endorsed the strategic review report. The IEP commentary finds the strategic review report as forward-looking. It notes that the strategic review demonstrates a good understanding of the new strategy and offers valuable recommendations that respond well to most questions.

The IEP noted that, as a newly established body still developing standard processes and procedures as this strategic review was underway, that the IEP cannot fairly and objectively comment on the degree of independence of the evaluators.



Evaluation Scope & Objectives

SR2023's objectives included:

- To assess the extent to which the Strategic Objectives of the 2017-2022 Strategy have been achieved;
- To assess the degree to which Global Fund initiatives, policies, systems and processes played a role in ensuring the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the Global Fund Strategy; and
- To make actionable recommendations for the implementation of the 2023-2028 Strategy and planning process for Grant Cycle 8.

The 2017-2022 Strategy was implemented from 2017 to 2022 and had four strategic objectives:

- Maximize impact against HIV, tuberculosis and malaria;
- Build RSSH;
- Promote and protect human rights and gender equality; and
- Mobilize increased resources.

SR2023 was presented to the Global Fund Board on 27 June 2024.

Methodology in Figures

Quantitative Analysis

Data analysis of Global Fund funding, absorption, performance and results data, health financing, business process analysis. Statistical and regression analysis conducted on outcome and impact indicators.

Qualitative Analysis

300+
interviews

Stakeholders consulted in semi-structured interviews & focus groups.

14
country
case studies

Focusing on Bolivia, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Pakistan, the Philippines, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Zambia.

