



Evaluation of the Global Fund Funding Request and Grant- making Stages of the Funding Cycle

Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP)
Commentary

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Executive Summary

This document reports on the Independent Evaluation Panel's assessment of the quality and independence of the Evaluation of the Global Fund Funding Request and Grant-Making Stages of the 2023-2025 Funding Cycle – Grant Cycle 7 (GC7 FR/GM) and provides an analysis of implications of the evaluation results. Independence refers to the independence of the evaluators in the whole evaluation process. The quality considers the appropriateness of the methodology, the breadth of findings, and the rigor of analysis, as well as the alignment of data, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to (a) assess the design, operationalization, and implementation of the GC7 FR/GM process and the degree to which this has led to the finalization of quality grants aligned with the Global Fund Strategy (2023-2028) and (b) capture learning and ensure findings and recommendations contribute to preparations for GC8. The evaluation focuses on two main objectives: effectiveness¹, examining if the FR/GM processes lead to grants aligned with national priorities and support the delivery of the Global Fund Strategy, and efficiency², evaluating if the related procedures and processes are fit for purpose and identify opportunities for improvement, rationalization, and simplification.

Conclusions

The IEP endorses the GC7 FR/GM evaluation. The IEP, being observant of the evaluation process from supplier selection to delivery of the final deliverables, considers that the evaluation was carried out independently. The review has demonstrated a satisfactory quality of the methodology and rigor of its use that is of acceptable quality to conclude on the effectiveness and efficiency of FR/GM processes reflected in the report.

The evaluation generated bold recommendations for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the FR/GM processes. These recommendations were discussed with stakeholders to ensure they were relevant, actionable, and aligned with the needs of process owners and users of the evaluation. To achieve greater efficiency and

¹For the purposes of the evaluation, *effectiveness* was concerned with how well outputs achieve/deliver desired outcomes. The assessment of effectiveness focused on the extent to which the FR/GM process results in high quality and implementation-ready grants. This included assessment of the added value of each step in the FR/GM process.

² For the purposes of the evaluation, *efficiency* was defined as: the relationship between inputs and outputs, usually to maximize outputs for a given level of input. The assessment of efficiency focused on the extent to which the FR/GM process, and the many processes that underpin it, was conducted in an economic and timely way. The term 'economic' refers to resource intensity and the level of effort required to conduct the process(es).

effectiveness of end-to-end FR/GM processes, the evaluation recommends fundamental changes to the current Global Fund *modus operandi*.

The Panel provides specific comments on the GC 7 FR/GM evaluation report, as well as recommendations for improving the quality of evaluations in the future.

Report

Introduction

1. This document reports on the Independent Evaluation Panel's (IEP) assessment of the quality and independence of the Evaluation of the Global Fund Funding Request and Grant-Making Stages of the 2023-2025 Funding Cycle – Grant Cycle 7 (GC7 FR/GM) and provides a brief implications analysis of the results of the evaluation.
2. One member of the IEP served as a Quality Assurance Focal Point. His role was to accompany the evaluation from the supplier selection to the end and contribute comments (through ELO) aimed at the quality improvement of the various reports and inform IEP's judgment on independence through the observation of key activities.
3. Using a standard template for quality assessment (QA)³, two other members of the IEP independently assessed the final evaluation report. The assessment includes both numerical and qualitative assessment of the key elements of the evaluation - executive summary, purpose, objectives, logic model or theory of change, methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The findings presented here consider performance in these areas, comment on the recommendations, and highlight issues that could be considered to improve evaluation quality in the future.
4. The IEP discussed the final evaluation report and IEP commentary at its 8th meeting, led by its three members involved in the evaluation, to reach a consensus on the quality and independence of the evaluation.

Assessment of the quality and independence of the evaluation

5. The IEP endorsed the final evaluation report. The quality of the report is rated as 'good'⁴ with minor weaknesses, noted in comments (ref. paras 14-17), but not materially affecting the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation report.⁵

³ <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/iel/independent-evaluation-panel/quality-assessment-framework/>

⁴ Evaluation quality is assessed on a four-point scale: Unacceptable, Less Than Acceptable, Good, or Very Good.

⁵ With the support and input of the Evaluation and Learning Office, the Independent Evaluation Panel has developed a Quality Assessment Framework to evaluate the final reports of evaluations. Evaluation reports are assessed on a four-point scale on quality: Unacceptable, Less Than Acceptable, Good, or Very Good.

6. The IEP, being observant of the evaluation process from supplier selection to delivery of the final deliverables, considers that the evaluation was carried out independently (ref. paras 18-19).

IEP Assessment of the Evaluation Report

7. The purpose of the evaluation is clearly defined, including why it is needed now. The scope of the evaluation is also well-defined, with a clear indication of the areas that are out of scope.
8. The evaluation outlines the intended use and users of the evaluation. The primary audience for the evaluation includes the Global Fund Secretariat teams responsible for designing the FR/GM processes, as well as governance and review bodies and technical partners.
9. The description of the evaluation questions and sub-questions is clear, complete, and well-structured. The evaluation questions cover the needs of the intended users of the evaluation results.
10. Methodology: The data collection methods have been clearly outlined. The evaluation employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. The analysis carried out was outlined in the report, albeit without essential details. Limitations of the study and relevant mitigation strategies were clearly presented. Ethical considerations and safeguards for participants have been clearly described, and measures were implemented to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The report provides a figure that describes the key steps, subprocesses and deliverables in the funding request and grant-making stages along with "priority levers," which evaluators assessed with regard to the value they add (or not) to the FR/GM processes.
11. The Triangulation and Strength of Evidence rating are reported in the text appropriately and provide grounds to ensure confidence in the findings and most received well documented strong ratings.
12. Evaluation conclusions are formulated clearly and emanate from findings. Recommendations are well aligned with the findings and show that to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness of end-to-end FR/GM processes, fundamental changes to the current Global Fund modus operandi are required. The IEP notes the evaluators desire that they hope the results will contribute to learning processes in conformity with UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.
13. The report describes the process for developing relevant, actionable recommendations aligned with the needs of process owners and users. Recommendations have been categorized as critical, important or considerations to

provide a sense of the level of importance with a clear identification of stakeholder groups responsible for each recommendation and action. The evaluators have engaged with key stakeholders through three interactive meetings to discuss and adjust the suggested recommendations to ensure that recommendations were actionable, relevant and responding to the needs of stakeholders.

IEP Comments on the evaluation report

14. **Comment 1:** While the report is well structured, the main body seems long, and some important annexes, such as the detailed methodology and the terms of reference, are missing.
15. **Comment 2:** The background to the evaluation could have been enhanced by more clearly articulating the fundamental changes that have occurred in GC7 compared to GC6, which was in the scope of the evaluation. A comparative table revealing the differences/changes could have provided valuable clarity.
16. **Comment 3:** In the executive summary at certain places, there is a mix of conclusions and recommendations. Also, considering the importance of a self-contained executive summary, presenting the strength of evidence underlying the findings and conclusions would have been beneficial (currently, they are only provided in the main body of the report).
17. **Comment 4:** In the body of the report, the description of the *Process Tracing Methodological Approach*, which forms the basis of the data collection strategy and analysis, was presented. However, the report lacked a demonstration of how Process Tracing was applied. This deficiency could have been addressed by including the missing methodology (as highlighted in Comment 1). Additionally, this appendix could have offered a clearer explanation of how respondents involved in the evaluation were selected, how data integrity was ensured, the number of focus group discussions conducted, and the average number of participants per group.

Implications of analysis on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation

18. The results are aligned with the evaluation questions, utilizing a combination of text, tables, and graphs that are easy to understand. The conclusions offer valuable insights into the FR/GM processes and analyze the underlying evidence for the findings. Additionally, the recommendations are founded on the findings and are actionable, making them relevant to the primary intended users.

Strengthening future evaluation processes

19. The IEP would like to note significant progress made in the evaluation processes which ELO manage. For the GC7 FR/GM evaluation, for example, contrary to evaluations of 2023, the Standard Operating Procedures were revised, and the IEP observed the end-to-end process from evaluator selection to delivery of final deliverables. The ELO created an inclusive and transparent process for IEP quality assurance focal point engagement, which included observing the Technical Evaluation Committee meeting and meetings with short-listed firms, sharing draft and final documents throughout the process, including all comments provided by ELO, Secretariat and IEP along with comment trackers and responses of evaluators, as well as engaging the IEP focal point as an observer in the consultative and dissemination meetings conducted with the Secretariat and user groups, which was co-chaired with CELO. Such a transparent and inclusive process empowered IEP to render its judgment on the independence of the evaluation.
20. The IEP believes that the management of the GC7 FR/GM evaluation could serve as a minimum performance standard within the Global Fund's evaluation function, and at a minimum, this standard should be sustained (if not improved upon) across future evaluations.