



ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PROCESS OF THE GLOBAL FUND

JANUARY 2006

Evaluation Brief No. 2

SUMMARY:

The assessment found important misconceptions among applicants and the need for a comprehensive communications strategy to clarify the Global Fund principles, policies and proposal requirements. The study recommended that CCMs align proposed activities with national disease control plans and country systems, and include technical assistance in budgets and workplans of proposed activities.

BACKGROUND:

The process through which Global Fund proposals are invited, developed, submitted and subjected to technical review for consideration of funding critically influences the composition and quality of programs supported by the Global Fund.

An independent evaluation assessed strengths and weaknesses of current procedures in order to advise the Global Fund on how to improve and refine the grant proposal process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders, both those working at the global level and those from recipient countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. A desk review analyzed Technical Review Panel (TRP) reports, relevant Global Fund Board committee results, proposal forms and guidelines, submitted proposals, documentation from Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) and reports from stakeholders on issues of participation and transparency.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 1. The Round 5 proposal forms and guidelines are seen to be an improvement on previous rounds; however, partners at the country level had a number of misconceptions around key proposal development issues.**

These include the possibility of a multi-sectoral approach for grants, the possibility of including technical assistance (TA) and operations research in grants, and the importance of alignment and harmonization with national strategic plans and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

- 2. Within the current proposal model, the TRP process is generally viewed as highly professional, but some areas requiring strengthening were identified.**

- A.** In self-assessment, the TRP viewed its composition as adequate, especially following the addition of cross-cutting health experts in Round 3.
- B.** Non-TRP observers suggested an insufficient degree of programmatic, budget and Southern country experience.
- C.** TRP functioning has been enhanced as of Round 5 by information from the Secretariat on country context, capacity and performance in earlier grants. However, these additional resources can also overburden the proposal review process.
- D.** CCMs largely perceived TRP comments as fair and relevant, despite some concerns around variable levels of understanding by the TRP of the country context.
- E.** In re-submissions of initially-unsuccessful proposals, many in-country stakeholders had either never seen TRP comments on previous submissions or else were unaware of their importance.



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3. TA and partnerships can play a critical role in assuring the quality of proposals:

The quality of TA to countries is uneven, in part because of the lack of a coordinated approach to funding TA. The TA provided by technical agencies often does not address grant implementation and budgeting issues. In addition, applicants are not clear on the extent to which they can include TA and operations research in budgets and workplans of the proposed activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Global Fund should develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy to address misconceptions about requirements for proposals. Clarification is needed on Global Fund principles, policies and procedures.
2. Countries should be further encouraged (through the proposal guidelines) to align CCMs with existing national structures and to align proposals with comprehensive national disease control plans and country systems.
3. TRP proposal evaluation could be strengthened and facilitated by:
 - A. Strengthening TRP membership with experts having more experience in program implementation in recipient countries;
 - B. A firm deadline for completion of the Secretariat's clarifications and pre-TRP screening process;
 - C. Availability of standardized contextual country information, including indicators on implementation capacity, context and past utilization of donor funds.
 - D. More comprehensive TRP comments on proposals ranked "Category 3" to guide the learning process among applicants. Guidelines should emphasize the importance of specifically addressing TRP comments, particularly for those countries re-submitting Category 3 proposals.
 - E. A formal internal quality assurance mechanism within the TRP review process should be established.
4. Guidelines should clarify that TA relates to both disease expertise and strategic and program management, and that continuity in TA should be aimed for through inclusion in budgets when negotiating grants or in initial proposals. Applicants with repeat failures for HIV proposals should be referred to the Global Problem-Solving and Implementation Support Team (GIST) for TA when preparing new proposals.

TECHNICAL EVALUATION REFERENCE GROUP (TERG)

The Technical Evaluation Reference Group (TERG) is an advisory body providing independent technical advice to the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The TERG advises the Global Fund on evaluation approaches and practices, independence, reporting procedures and other technical and managerial aspects of monitoring and evaluation at all levels. Membership of the TERG is drawn from a range of stakeholders, including practitioners, research institutions, academics, donor and recipient countries and nongovernmental organizations.

FIVE-YEAR EVALUATION OF THE GLOBAL FUND

The Five-Year Evaluation is being planned and will be implemented under the guidance of the TERG. The first major synthesis report on organizational efficiency and the partner environment will be published in late 2007 and the final evaluation report (including a strong focus on impact on the three diseases) in late 2008. Each element of the evaluation is designed to generate actionable findings. The Global Fund is committed to learning from and making concrete improvements based on evaluation findings.

TO ACCESS THE FULL REPORT:

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ISBN 92-9224-057-9

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