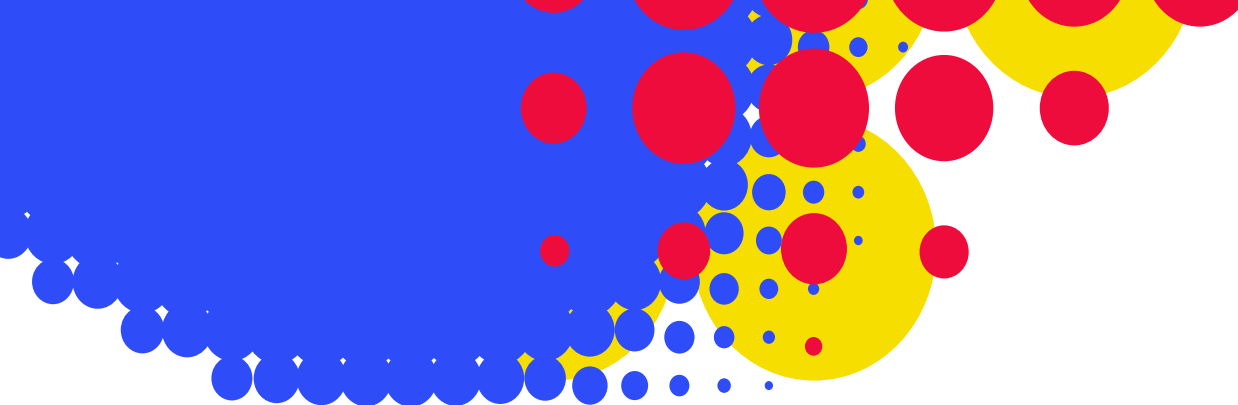




Evaluation of the Integration of Gender Approaches in HIV, TB, and Malaria Programs

Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) Commentary

GF/ELO/2026/03/03

7 October 2026

Geneva, Switzerland

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Executive Summary

This report provides a commentary on the final report of the Evaluation of the integration of gender approaches in HIV, TB and Malaria Programs by the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) of The Global Fund (TGF).

The purpose of this evaluation is to examine how, and the extent to which, gender equality approaches have been integrated into HIV, TB, and malaria programs supported by Global Fund investments in Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) (2023–2025).

This document reports the Independent Evaluation Panel's assessment of the evaluation's quality and independence. "Independence" refers to the evaluators' autonomy throughout the evaluation process (for example, data collection, analysis, and formulation of recommendations). "Quality" considers the appropriateness of the methodology (and whether it was followed or appropriately adapted), the rigor of the analysis, and the alignment of data, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

1.1 Main IEP Conclusions

The IEP endorses the Evaluation of the integration of gender approaches in HIV, TB and Malaria Programs by the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) of The Global Fund (TGF), as its quality is rated as good and it considers it was conducted independently.

2. Introduction

This document reports on the Independent Evaluation Panel's (IEP) assessment of the quality and independence of the Evaluation of the integration of gender approaches in HIV, TB and Malaria Programs by the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) of The Global Fund (TGF) and provides brief analysis of the implication of the results of the evaluation.

Two members of the IEP served as Quality Assurance Focal Points. Their role was to accompany the evaluation from the supplier selection to the end and contribute both to quality improvement through the revision of the various draft reports as well as inform IEP's judgment on quality and independence through the observation of key activities.

Using a standard framework for quality assessment (QA), 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.

In June 2026, the IEP convened to review the final report. They reached a consensus on the quality and independence of the evaluation.

3. Assessment of the quality and independent conduct of the RA

The Independent Evaluation Panel assesses two dimensions of the Global Fund evaluations: the quality of the evaluation as reflected in its final evaluation report, and the independence with which the evaluation was conducted.

3.1 IEP position on the quality of the evaluation

With a robust methodology, a strong evidence base, and triangulation through stakeholder engagement, on a scale of Less than acceptable, Acceptable, Good, Very good, and Excellent, we rate this evaluation as Good. Despite the strong analysis and depth of work, we did not rate it higher because several recommendations—while actionable—do not challenge the organization to strengthen its approach to gender and instead focus on maintaining the current course. Its length and repetitiveness may also discourage potential users.

3.2 IEP position on the independence of the 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 panel therefore **endorses this evaluation**.

4. IEP Assessment of the Evaluation Report

4.1 General comments

1. The evaluators have responded to most comments by IEP, but the Executive Summary and the report are each still far too long (see the Findings section below for details). They seem to have taken on board the need to respond to requests for more evidence, but not the need to synthesize and remove repetition.
2. It is clear this is a formative evaluation; that has been dealt with, though it could be clearer throughout the evaluation that this is the case.

3. There is no Strength of Evidence noted in the Executive Summary, so that should be added.
4. Tables are now all labelled and referenced in the text.
5. The annexes are useful for those who need to use the results.

4.2 Background

1. The Background adequately explains the purpose and scope of the evaluation and situates it within the Global Fund's broader commitment to gender equality across HIV, TB and malaria programmes. It also makes clear that the evaluation is primarily formative and intended to inform future strategic and operational improvements.
2. However, the framing could be strengthened in two respects. First, the distinction between gender-sensitive, gender-responsive and gender-transformative approaches could be made more explicit and applied more consistently across the three diseases. Second, although the theory of change is referenced, it is not used sufficiently as an analytical thread linking the evaluation questions, findings, conclusions and recommendations. A more systematic use of the theory of change would have strengthened the coherence of the report and helped clarify the pathways through which gender-responsive design is expected to translate into implementation and results.
3. The theory of change could have been used more explicitly as an analytical thread. It is mentioned twice — once in the acronyms table and once in the Background section, the latter indicating it will be discussed in the Conclusions. That appears to have been overlooked.

4.3 Methodology

1. The evaluation used an appropriate mixed-methods approach, drawing on multiple data sources and stakeholder perspectives. The evidence base is generally robust, and the use of triangulation strengthens the credibility of the findings.
2. Nevertheless, the report would benefit from greater transparency regarding the application of the Strength of Evidence ratings. It should explain more clearly how the ratings were determined whether the criteria were applied consistently across evaluation questions and findings, and how limitations, gaps or conflicting evidence were taken into account. The absence of Strength of Evidence ratings from the Executive Summary also limits the reader's ability to assess the relative confidence attached to the main findings.
3. The discussion of artificial intelligence should be concise and confined to the methodology section. The report should clarify which tasks AI was initially considered for, why its use was discontinued, and whether this had any implications for the analytical process or the validity of the findings.

4.4 Findings

1. The findings suggest a good score in terms of design, but limited results in terms of budget and therefore implementation. Although this is discussed under enabling features, it is not clear that we can identify what could be done differently to strengthen the implementation score. What are the modifiable weaknesses in the current approach that the Global Fund could address?
2. Relatedly, it is not clear what the evaluators consider a *good* gender assessment — that is, not what the TRP or other bodies indicate, but what the characteristics of a useful assessment are in terms of promoting reflection among key partners on gender issues. Which features increase the chances of translating design into actual implementation? This should feed directly into the recommendations (see point 12 below).
3. The finding that RSSH grants rarely use gender analysis is buried, and surely reflects a lack of priority in the RSSH team to addressing this. It may warrant more profile in the findings themselves.
4. The report is especially repetitive, which may hinder usability. By way of examples:
 4. Enablers and Barriers could be combined into one, more synthesized section.
 5. By Evaluation Question 6, the point about strong intent and weak implementation has been made repeatedly; this could be more synthetic and focus more on *why*.
 6. Better signposting in the report could help reduce repetition.
 7. An Executive Summary should be much shorter than 8 pages; 2–4 pages is more typical.

4.5 Key conclusions and recommendations

1. Some of the conclusions do not clearly follow from the findings. Without disagreeing with them, Conclusion 2 — that integration of gender approaches is strongest when the ecosystem works well, with design, financing, partnerships and data systems mutually reinforcing — reads as a general notion rather than a finding-driven conclusion.
2. The conclusions do not return to the theory of change, despite the Background signalling that they would (see Background above).
3. The recommendations are sufficiently actionable, but read as mostly reaffirming current practice, and therefore do not provide a path to addressing the key challenge: how to increase the chances of actually implementing transformative gender approaches, rather than only including them at design stage. For example, current practice surely already considers explicitly costing and labelling activities, including gender-responsive and -transformative ones; it is not clear that this is a design issue, as seems to be suggested. Nor would it be

easily addressed through generic prescriptions such as invoking the relevance of political will.

4. Several of the critical recommendations are framed as "continue to..." or "strengthen...". It is worth asking whether they are critical mainly because of the topic and the current context, rather than because they point to something genuinely new for the Global Fund to consider. The one recommendation that does appear new — requiring funding requests to be informed by high-quality, recent gender assessments — carries its own uncertainty: it is not clear that conducting a gender assessment would necessarily lead countries to design more gender-informed TB and malaria programmes, and the report does not specify what would make such an assessment high-quality (see point 8 above).
5. The recommendations could be more explicit about what the Global Fund could do that it is not doing which contributes to the implementation gaps, and could push harder on changes to its operating style. How do the evaluators square the call for more guidance with findings from earlier evaluations that partners are overwhelmed by the volume of guidance from the Global Fund?

An issue perhaps not for this evaluation but for ELO consideration: Is "amounts designated to gender activities" the best indicator? It is certainly the easiest. How gender is integrated into the policies and practices of the teams working on these three diseases in-country is perhaps a more important set of indicators, if more challenging to implement.

5. Implications for SC and Board

For the **Strategy Committee**, the evaluation suggests the need to strengthen oversight of implementation rather than focusing solely on policy commitments. Particular attention should be given to ensuring that gender analyses systematically inform funding requests, monitoring systems and RSSH investments.

For the **Board**, the evaluation reinforces the importance of sustaining gender equality as a strategic priority within the next Global Fund Strategy while ensuring that adequate resources, strong accountability mechanisms, measurable indicators and systematic results monitoring are in place to support effective implementation and tangible impact at country level.