The Global Fund
To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

NOVEMBER 2008

COUNTRY COORDINATING MECHANISM
PRINCIPAL RECIPIENT-LOCAL FUND AGENT COMMUNICATIONS
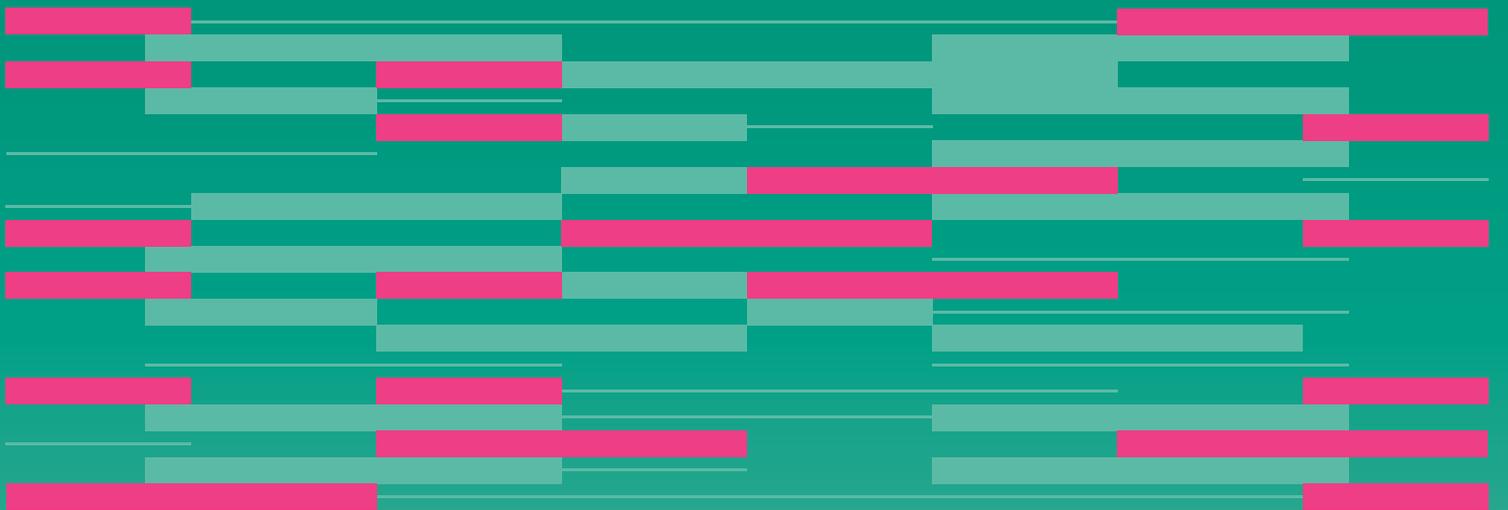
Investing in our future
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List of terms and abbreviations

CBO   community-based organization

CCM   Country Coordinating Mechanism

FBO   faith-based organization

FPM   Fund Portfolio Manager

LFA   Local Fund Agent

NAC   National HIV/AIDS/STD/TB Council (of Zambia)

NGO   nongovernmental organization

PR   Principal Recipient

PUDR   Progress Update and Disbursement Request

RCM   Regional Coordinating Mechanism

TB   tuberculosis

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The Global Fund does not have offices in recipient countries; instead, it engages Local Fund Agents (LFAs) to verify data and report on grant performance. This gives the Global Fund access to local knowledge that is relevant to grant performance.

Effective communication between LFAs, Principal Recipients (PRs) and Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) is central to the accountability and effectiveness of Global Fund grants. To examine how communication between these three actors is working in practice, the Global Fund commissioned case studies in four countries: **Mali**, **Nigeria**, **Peru** and **Zambia**. This report analyzes the factors that affect communication in these countries, identifies best practices and makes recommendations for improvement in communications between CCMs, LFAs and PRs.

Communication Pathways and Mechanisms

An examination of the functioning of communication pathways reveals disconnects between the three partners in all case study countries except **Mali**. CCM-PR communication was, however, relatively good across all case study countries. PR-LFA communication in **Nigeria** was reported to be one-way. The weakest link of all was the CCM-LFA connection, which was characterized as inadequate in **Zambia**, non-existent in **Peru** and dysfunctional in **Zambia**.

The Global Fund does not have firm stipulations concerning communication processes, but has provided some minimal protocols and guidelines for communication. The four countries studied have each evolved their own mechanisms for communication. CCMs use meetings to conduct the business of overseeing grant implementation. Reports are used by PRs to inform the LFA and CCM on progress in the field. In addition, LFAs and CCMs also undertake field visits to observe progress in the field firsthand.

Factors Affecting Communication

The factors affecting communication can be broadly divided into seven categories:
- Role clarity
- Structural factors
- Power imbalances
- Effectiveness in the functioning of communication mechanisms
- Networking and collective learning
- Communication styles
- Technology

Role clarity

Each partner's perception of its role and of the role of other partners was an important determinant of effective communication. This perception is determined by the availability of Global Fund guidelines and whether CCM members have had any orientation on their roles and responsibilities. In **Mali**, the LFA participates in CCM meetings as an observer and is able to clarify its role as required. The CCM has been instrumental in documenting and

adapting Global Fund directives to the local context. This has contributed to the smooth communication links that are evident in **Mali**.

In the absence of clarity regarding their own and others' roles, grant actors may fall short in their obligations. This was the case for the **Nigerian** and **Zambian** LFAs, which fell short of understanding the role that technical aspects played in grant performance. On the other hand, the **Mali** LFA may be extending its role beyond stipulated boundaries by providing technical support to PRs on the drafting of applications for cash disbursement.

In **Nigeria**, there were disconnects in the CCM's and the PR's understanding of the LFA's role, and conversely, the LFA's understanding of the CCM and PR's role. This has had a negative impact on communication between these partners. In **Zambia** there were untenable expectations as some PRs felt that the LFA should play a capacity-building role to help them meet reporting requirements. The reported one-way communication between the LFA and the PR has been questioned in both **Nigeria** and **Peru**. Although the LFA explains it as necessary to ensure its independence, the Global Fund could explore the possibility of finding a way of making communication lines more open without compromising LFA independence.

Structural Factors
Overall, communications in **Mali** and **Peru** have benefited from the existence of a CCM secretariat, which has provided a structure for effective communication processes, protocols and resources. By contrast, the lack of a CCM secretariat in **Zambia** has been a key constraint on internal communications among CCM members.

Finally, changes in staff within the respective organizations can weaken communication flow.

Power Imbalances
Perceived imbalances of power in **Nigeria** and **Peru** affected communication between partners. They can also lead to different levels of scrutiny for government and nongovernmental PRs, as was the case in **Zambia** earlier in the history of Global Fund support.

Effectiveness of Communication Mechanisms
Meetings are effective forums for direct communication when they are held regularly and participation is good. Conversely, they are tedious and dull when poorly planned and executed. In **Zambia**, high-level members participate infrequently, which affects the decision-making process and the overall level of buy-in on the part of CCM members. In **Peru**, the CCM meets only once or twice a year, leaving too many decisions to be made by the executive secretariat. In **Mali** insufficient time allocated for each meeting may be having an impact on the effectiveness of the meetings.

Reports provide a good channel for information exchange, but only when reporting requirements are not excessively demanding. In **Peru**, over-reporting is a burden for the PR, while analysis of the reports for decision-making is a challenge for the CCM.

Language is a barrier in **Mali**, (a Francophone country), when Global Fund documents are sent in English. This is an issue that affects many non-English-speaking countries, so the provision of translated documents is always recommended.

Networking and Collective Learning
Communication can be enriched by bringing diverse views together and by sharing programmatic progress across all stakeholders involved in grant implementation. The networks of civil society organizations that operate in **Mali** and of donors that operate in **Zambia** have facilitated such exchanges.

Communication channels with regional-level stakeholders are not as strong. In **Peru**, there seemed to be little communication between the CCM and the regional coordinating mechanism operating within the country. This also seemed to be the case with communications between the CCM and the regional malaria program.

All countries studied reported instances where policy-level and/or operational-level changes have been made for improved communication,

coordination and grant implementation. In making such changes, the partners indicated their willingness to learn and improve communication and grant implementation.

Other platforms for information exchange can contribute to communication and learning, as for example the ad hoc CCM retreats organized in **Zambia**.

Communication Styles

Proactive engagement with the PRs by the LFA is reported in **Peru**, **Mali** and **Zambia**. Communication styles are also related to organizational culture, which can either facilitate or inhibit communication. In **Zambia**, while communication between the LFA and civil society-based PRs is smooth, government-based PRs report problems in communicating with the LFA. The difference is attributed to traditional business practices and the formal communication style of government PRs, where e-mail or telephone conversations are not deemed actionable communication.

Technology: Technology facilitates communication by enhancing transparency and easing the processing of information. The malaria project in **Peru** has successfully employed the use of advanced technology for communication. Automated reporting systems have been used for the Global Fund HIV/AIDS program. There are limitations, however, in terms of infrastructure and provider capacity on the ground,

which need to be addressed before the new system can be widely employed.

The Global Fund website is a useful source of information for most case study countries. The **Zambia** case study, however, suggests that navigation is difficult and that the site does not maintain up-to-date information.

Role clarity and function, information sharing, collective learning, language (i.e., translations), conflicts of interest and technology are all systemic in nature and can be addressed by developing workable systems and ensuring that they are implemented. Challenges related to government structure, culture and power dynamics require improvements within national political and sociocultural contexts and cannot be addressed within the scope of Global Fund policy.

The CCM is central to the Global Fund's commitment to local ownership and participation in decision-making. The CCM is a country-level partnership that develops and submits grant proposals to the Global Fund based on priorities and needs at the national level. After grant approval, the CCM oversees implementation progress. CCMs include representatives from both the public and private sectors, including governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based and community-based organizations (FBOs and CBOs), academic institutions, private businesses and people living with the diseases.

For each grant, the CCM nominates one or several public or private organizations to serve as PRs. These entities are the organizations responsible for program implementation.

The Global Fund does not have offices in recipient countries; instead, it engages LFAs to assess PR capacities, verify data, and report on grant performance. This gives the Global Fund access to local knowledge that is relevant to grant performance.
Effective communication between LFAs, PRs and CCMs is central to the accountability and effectiveness of Global Fund grants. While the Global Fund does not dictate the communication processes between these three actors, it has provided guidelines through the communications protocol guiding the relationship between the Global Fund and its LFAs[1] and the communications protocol for LFAs.[2]

Study Design and Methodology
Case studies were conducted in **Mali**, **Nigeria**, **Peru** and **Zambia** to examine communications between LFAs, CCMs and PRs, and, to a lesser extent, between other Global Fund stakeholders. The studies focused on the patterns of communication between LFAs, CCMs and PRs, the protocols and processes that have evolved, the challenges faced and the mechanisms employed to facilitate successful communication in the course of grant implementation. At the same time, efforts were made to identify good communication practices and consider ways in which less effective practices could be improved.

This report synthesizes information collected from four case studies, key documents on communication protocols and other information from the Global Fund website.

Country-level case studies were conducted by independent consultants to document experiences in **Mali**, **Nigeria**, **Peru** and **Zambia**. Each case study consisted of a desk review of relevant documents, including but not limited to Global Fund documents and guidelines, as well as documentation from the country when available, followed by a series of interviews with LFAs, PRs and CCM members in country. The case studies were conducted during September and October 2007, each taking a total of ten to twelve days.

Given the size of the sample in this report – four countries – it is not advisable to generalize the issues and reflections contained in this consolidated report across the entire Global Fund portfolio. Rather, this report provides some perspectives from which lessons for improved communication among the partners in grant implementation may be drawn.

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[1] http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/about/structures/lfa/background/GFPolicy/GF-LFA_Communications_Protocol.pdf.

The roles and responsibilities of CCMs, PRs and LFAs in the implementation of Global Fund programs are specified in a number of different documents developed by the Global Fund Secretariat and made available on the Global Fund website.[3] In contrast, communication protocols are not as specific. Since its inception, the Global Fund has emphasized the principle of country ownership in the design and implementation of grants. The Global Fund Secretariat, therefore, maintains a delicate balance of providing clear direction yet not dictating specific processes countries should use to communicate. For the majority of the first five years of operation, the Global Fund has preferred not to require highly organized reporting lines between CCMs, LFAs and PRs. It has instead preferred to remind each partner of its own and others' roles and responsibilities and encourage them to develop communication channels based on these defined roles and responsibilities.

The information needs of each of these three actors differ in accordance with its specified roles. To ensure effective grant oversight, the CCM needs regular information from the PRs on the progress of grant implementation and any issues that arise during implementation.

In order to provide independent verification of program progress and financial accountability,[4] LFAs need information on grant performance, the health sector in general and other country-specific information that would affect the conduct of grant performance. LFAs, therefore, need to communicate on a regular basis with PRs, the CCM and other in-country stakeholders.

Each actor also has certain responsibilities to provide information. As implementers of Global Fund grants, PRs channel their progress reports and disbursement requests (generally referred to as "progress updates and disbursement requests" (PUDRs) to the Global Fund through the LFA. PRs must also keep the CCM informed by providing the CCM with periodic narrative and financial progress reports.[5] PRs also need to communicate with sub-recipients on grant-related issues, collect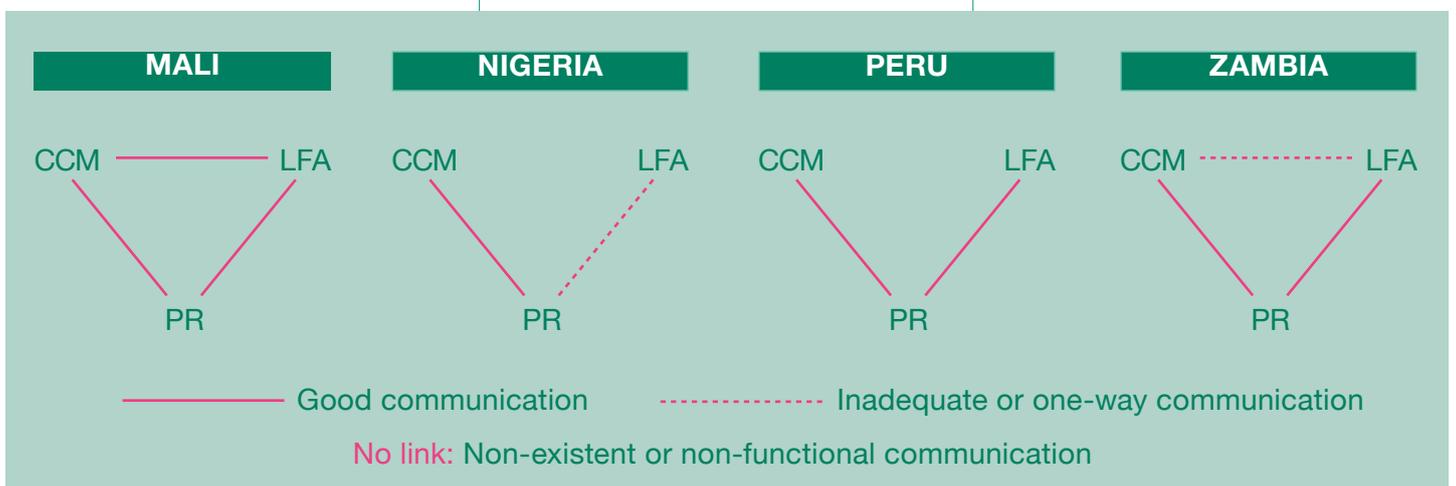 data and information to include in their PUDRs and provide technical support. The LFA should keep the CCM apprised of progress in general and share any significant concerns regarding grant implementation so that the CCM can perform its oversight function and provide technical support for improved implementation. In the interest of transparency and accuracy of information, LFAs should also debrief the PRs on the key findings before they are submitted to the Global Fund.

Figure 1 represents the communication links between the CCM, the LFA and the PRs in each of the four case study countries, showing the effectiveness of each link based on the information yielded by the case studies.

Communication between Country Coordinating Mechanisms and Principal Recipients

As indicated by Figure 1, all four case study countries report effective communication between the CCM and PRs. In all four countries the PRs (or sub-recipients in the case of **Peru**) are members of the CCM. Communication

Figure 1: Operation of communication pathways between CCM, LFA and PRs

MALI	NIGERIA	PERU	ZAMBIA
CCM —— LFA	CCM · · · LFA	CCM —— LFA	CCM - - - - LFA
PR	PR	PR	PR

———— Good communication   - - - - - - - Inadequate or one-way communication

No link: Non-existent or non-functional communication

[3] Descriptions of the key structures and links to further information are available at the Global Fund website on the following pages: http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/apply/mechanisms/ and www.theglobalfund.org/en/structures.
[4] See *Fiduciary Arrangements for Grant Recipients*, Global Fund, available at www.theglobalfund.org/documents/board/05/gfb513.pdf.
[5] See *Guidelines on the Purpose, Structure, Composition and Funding of Country Coordinating Mechanisms and Requirements for Grant Eligibility*, Global Fund, available at www.theglobalfund.org/en/ccm/guidelines.

between the CCM and PRs takes place primarily through CCM meetings, reports and presentations made to the CCM by the PRs, and in some cases, site visits by the CCM.

The communication between the CCM and the PRs in **Nigeria** is described as frequent, open, transparent, supportive and based on mutual trust. The PRs attend the CCM meetings as observers and contribute to discussion and deliberations. They also copy the CCM on their reports to the LFA, thereby keeping the CCM updated on information. Members of the CCM participate in joint oversight visits to sub-recipients.

Peru has a multi-layered CCM with a General Assembly, Executive Secretariat, technical committees and a coordination mechanism at the regional level. The Executive Secretariat conducts regular, bi-weekly meetings in which the PRs are invited to participate.

The **Zambia** CCM performs its oversight function by inviting PRs to submit progress reports. However, the CCM also receives minimal information from the field. As a result, the CCM established two technical committees to provide technical oversight and specific and time-bound recommendations. Random site visits have also been incorporated as part of the oversight role. It is reported that these measures have helped improve the oversight function and communication between these two partners.

In **Mali**, the information flow between the CCM and the PRs is reported to be effective. The CCM holds quarterly meetings at which PRs make presentations of the progress of their program. The CCM seeks information from the PRs based on the information requirements of the Global Fund as well as those of the national program. However, the LFA reportedly perceives that the PRs do not actively provide information to the CCM.

Communication between Principal Recipients and Local Fund Agents

Communication between PRs and LFAs in all case study countries includes PR reports to the LFA, site visits by the LFA and participation by the LFA in CCM or PR meetings. At times, LFAs interact with PRs to clarify certain aspects of the program. The primary method of communication seems to be the progress report.

In three of the case study countries, there is a good communication link between the LFA and PRs. In **Mali**, the LFA and PRs work in close collaboration. In **Zambia** too, this interaction operates well. In **Peru**, effective communication links between the LFA and PR management teams are forged through formal, monthly feedback meetings between the PR and the LFA and through the LFA's participation in the quarterly feedback meetings between the PR and the sub-recipients. This monthly feedback system is regarded as an example of good practice for oversight and communication. It is only in **Nigeria** that there was significant discord between these two partners. In this case, communication was described as a one-way process, with the LFA expecting reports from the PRs.

## Communication between Local Fund Agents and Country Coordinating Mechanisms

Communication between LFAs and CCMs has largely been deficient and antagonistic.

In **Nigeria** the CCM-LFA communication link is described as non-functional. In **Peru**, the CCM-LFA link is said to be nonexistent, but the LFA-regional coordinating mechanism (RCM) communication link reportedly functions well, with the LFA participating in the quarterly assembly meetings.

In **Zambia**, communication between the CCM and the LFA occurs only during proposal development and Phase 2 renewals. The LFA does not attend CCM meetings and feedback on the LFA's report to the Global Fund is not shared with the CCM. Many CCM members perceive that the LFA withholds details of the performance of PRs, and there is concern that this has disempowered the CCM.

Mali is the only country with seemingly effective CCM-LFA communication. In **Mali**, the LFA attends CCM meetings and has defined its duties so that the CCM and PRs understand its priorities. **Mali** has also documented processes and protocols for communication that facilitate dialogue between all three partners.

Respondents in both **Zambia** and **Peru** perceived that the Global Fund Secretariat undermines the CCM by communicating directly with the LFA and PRs, bypassing the CCM itself.
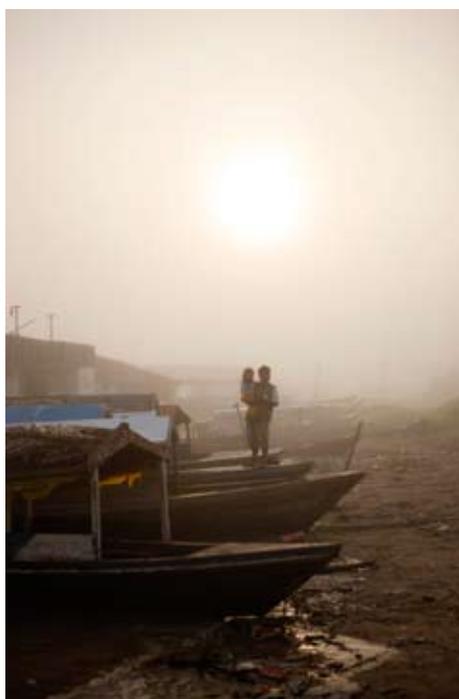
The effective functioning of the triangular communication between CCMs, LFAs and PRs hinges on a number of factors that can either facilitate or inhibit communication between the partners.

The factors affecting communication can be broadly divided into seven categories:
• Role clarity
• Structural factors
• Power imbalances
• Communication mechanisms
• Learning and networking
• Communication styles
• Technology
Each of these is discussed further below.

Role Clarity

This section examines how clarity of each actor's role and the roles of other partners is an important determinant of communication effectiveness.

It is crucial for each of the grant actors to be clear about their role, and the roles of each of the other actors.
• As described in the Global Fund's LFA Communications Protocol,[6] the LFA sends the grant performance review and its recommendations directly to the Global Fund via the Fund Portfolio Manager (FPM). Neither PRs nor the CCM are generally included in this communication, but rather receive feedback directly from the Global Fund Secretariat. However, the protocol also suggests that after completing a PR capacity assessment and/or grant performance review, the LFA should verbally debrief the PR before sending the final report to the FPM. The purpose of this debriefing

is to allow the LFA to share its key findings with the PR and to give the PR an opportunity to comment on any discrepancies or inaccuracies in the LFA's findings.

In all four case study countries, each of the in-country actors reported that it had a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities. The Global Fund and/or CCMs have provided clarity through:
• Provision of clear and adequate guidelines on the roles of each partner.
• Orientation for new CCM members. In **Mali**, the CCM chairman made the CCM directives available to all members and training sessions were organized and facilitated by the chairman or resource persons from the Global Fund. In **Zambia**, the longer-serving CCM members had training and were clear about the principles, protocols and priorities, but newer members were still in need of orientation to enhance their understanding.
• The regular use of documents developed in-country for enhanced communication. In **Mali**, the CCM, PR and LFA adapted Global Fund directives to the local context.

Some observations with respect to the LFA's role, however, raised the question of whether the LFA and the other partners fully understand this role in practice. In addition, issues have been raised on the one-way communication between the LFA and the Global Fund.

The Global Fund's LFA in-country communication protocol specifies that LFAs should explain their roles and responsibilities to PRs, CCMs

and other in-country stakeholders. It is important for all parties to have a clear understanding of the scope and limits of LFA functions and work, since an absence of such understanding can result in a complete breakdown of communication and untenable expectations.

One point of contention has been the LFA's general lack of comprehensive health sector expertise. The Global Fund-LFA communication protocol states that "a clear and realistic understanding of the impact and consequences of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria is an essential component of the work performed by LFAs."[7]

Members of the **Zambia** CCM felt that the LFA lacked the necessary skills to monitor and evaluate technical aspects of the program. The LFA felt that an in-depth knowledge of public health programming was not required to report on the quality of programming and focused instead on quantitative data verification as relevant to reporting formats. The LFA believes that the Global Fund Secretariat should rely on existing, in-country quality assurance systems for qualitative program monitoring. Members of the CCM, on the other hand, feel that it is impossible to conduct adequate performance reviews without scrutinizing the broader context and understanding the technical aspects of the three diseases.

In **Nigeria**, the partners felt that the LFA was interested only in financial issues and not programmatic ones. The LFA conceded that its programmatic

expertise was less than its financial expertise, but contended, too, that it could also address programmatic issues. The communication links between the grant actors were weak to nonexistent. The LFA was not attending CCM meetings, thereby losing opportunities to communicate and educate the CCM and the PR on its role. As a result, the CCM and the PR lacked a clear understanding of the LFA role, and at the same time the LFA's understanding of the CCM and PR roles was also incomplete. This was brought to the attention of the LFA, which subsequently agreed to take up observer status at CCM meetings.

Given the roles laid out within the Global Fund framework, the expectations of some PRs were unfounded. The guidelines clearly state that the LFA should not engage in capacity building of the PRs.[8] Yet in **Zambia**, some PRs felt that the LFA withholds needed guidance and communication, and they would prefer that the LFA build capacity to help partners meet the reporting requirements.

In **Mali**, the LFA and PRs share a good relationship, with the LFA supporting the PRs in developing disbursement requests. This, however, is not protocol, and unless explicitly instructed by the FPM, LFAs should not make recommendations to the PRs on grant-related issues, nor instruct PRs to take certain grant-related actions. Although having two-way communication may be beneficial to both partners, care should be taken to ensure that support is within the stipulated guidelines.

Good Practices in Communication

The LFA in **Zambia** shares feedback with the PRs, as per the guidelines.

In **Nigeria**, protocols are institutionalized through the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the CCM and PRs that details each actor's roles and responsibilities in promoting communication and coordination between them. The case study from **Nigeria** describes an incident where a PR was faulted for not maintaining the agreed-upon communication protocols.

In **Mali**, documentation of communication procedures and clarification of its role by the LFA facilitates the understanding of roles and smooth communication between all grant actors.

These examples illustrate that in some cases the LFA appears to fall short in its obligations, while in other cases the LFA could be overextending its role beyond specified boundaries.

The CCM and PRs in **Nigeria** and **Peru** question the protocol of not being copied on the LFA's assessment reports. They would prefer to be given access to the reports at the time these are sent to the Global Fund. The LFAs state that they do not copy the CCM and PRs on their reports to the Global Fund so as not to compromise their independence in assessment and reporting. They believe that it is the Global Fund's role to give feedback to PRs.

[8] See "The Role of the Local Fund Agent," www.theglobalfund.org/en/lfa.

This situation warrants the examination of the added value of having two-way communication, if it can be achieved without compromising the LFA's independence.

Structural Factors

Institutional structure affects communication. Communication flows can be weakened by, among other things, complex bureaucratic structures, high staff turnover and a lack of resources for communication.

LFAs expect reports from the PRs within certain time frames. However, institutional processes within bureaucratic structures often cause delays in communication, which can then lead to communication breakdowns. Delays in reporting to the LFA have been attributed to various factors, including the limited capacity of the PR and sub-recipient staff to gather and process information, internal conflicts within the PR and frequent changes in staff in both the PR and LFA's office.

For example, in **Nigeria**, the PRs complained that repeated explanations of the same issues were sought from the PR due to changes in staff at the LFA, which held up their reporting to the Global Fund and thereby delayed the release of funds.

Nigeria, **Peru** and **Mali** all have functioning CCM secretariats that have facilitated the information flow between the CCM and the PRs. In **Zambia**, the absence of a permanent secretariat has been a key constraint on both internal communication among CCM members

and the provision of technical oversight to PRs. The CCM has created two technical monitoring committees, which have forged two-way communication between the CCM and PRs.

Power Imbalances

Differences in power (real or perceived) affect the way partners view each other. This influences their interactions and communications. It also affects the degree of scrutiny exercised over PRs from government and non-government sectors.

In **Nigeria**, the CCM and PRs feel that access to money is an important determinant of power relations between the CCM, PRs and the LFA. As such, the LFA plays a key role in the PR's continued access to Global Fund support and, therefore, occupies a position of power relative to the communications and interactions between CCMs and PRs. Such power differentials seem to be a major reason for poor communication between the LFA and the other two actors.

In **Peru**, since the PR communicates with both the LFA and the Global Fund Secretariat, others in the CCM assume that the PR has more information that is critical to decision-making and the management of financial resources, giving it an undue advantage over the CCM.

In the past, civil society PRs in **Zambia** were more closely scrutinized than government PRs. If a government PR was invited to present a progress report to the CCM and failed to show up, no one would seek an explanation from the

PR. Civil society PRs, on the other hand, would have been queried. With the establishment of monitoring committees and improved communications between the PRs and the CCM, it is expected that these subtle but important differences will diminish.

Even though none of the other countries reported differences in the scrutiny of PRs depending on their status as government and non-government, this is a significant area for exploration across the whole Global Fund portfolio, since such differences impact communication and grant implementation.

Effectiveness of Communication Mechanisms

Global Fund stakeholders in each country have evolved communication mechanisms, platforms and protocols in response to their specific contextual needs. Successful communication, however, depends not only on the availability of these mechanisms, but also on their operation. Documentation of processes and protocols is an example of good practice that can enhance the operation of communication mechanisms. Meetings — as forums for direct communication — are most effective when they are held regularly, with a good level of participation and high-quality discussions. Reports are an effective channel for information exchange, but absence of analysis can be detrimental to the decision-making process.

Meetings

Meetings are used by all CCMs for information exchange, program review

and general communication. In some cases, however, there are indications that the level of participation, the intervals between meetings and the duration of meetings affect the quality of information exchange and communication.

Senior-level members of the **Zambia** CCM are often unable to attend CCM meetings, which hampers decision-making and the overall level of "buy-in" by other CCM members. It has been recommended that alternate members be designated and empowered by high-level members to make decisions where possible. This would be more desirable than last-minute substitutions. In-country donor agencies demonstrate the value of this system and it is hoped that high-level government CCM members will soon follow suit.

In **Peru**, the Executive Secretariat is in constant touch with PRs; however, the CCM General Assembly meets only once or twice a year. As a result, decisions and actions are made by the Executive Secretariat when they should be made by the assembly.

In **Mali**, it is reported that meetings are often too short to cover the agenda in a way that allows for adequate sharing of quality inputs. In addition, implementation issues are brought to the attention of the CCM only during quarterly meetings, which affects the response time for addressing critical issues.

Reports
Reports are used by PRs to inform the LFA and CCM on progress. While

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Multiple Grants and Communication Needs

While not reported as an issue by any of the case study countries, it should be noted that the number of grants that a country operates determines oversight requirements. More grants require more time and resources for program oversight. This implies additional or longer meetings, more reports and more field visits. Setting up separate committees to oversee each grant is one possible solution to the problem of increased pressure on CCMs.

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reports are generally a good medium for communication, some issues have been identified that limit their effectiveness.

In **Peru**, the strong oversight role exercised by the Executive Secretariat is commendable; however, the process generates too much documentation that cannot be reasonably absorbed, given the volume and the capacity of existing human resources. PRs report that they are burdened by the required level of documentation. Consequently, the Executive Secretariat has requested that reports should be no longer than eight pages. A PR-CCM agreement on oversight roles and communication mechanisms is pending in the CCM assembly. Once passed, this should help make reporting more useful and efficient.

In **Mali**, PRs are required to submit reports in different formats to the CCM

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and the LFA. This duplication causes delays in reporting.

The complex formats and reporting mechanisms described by respondents in **Zambia** are restrictive in nature and do not allow for the transmission of interesting and relevant information. One PR felt that too much time is spent on proposal development and reporting, leaving less time for implementation.

Language
Effective communication is dependent on the use of a shared language or languages. **Mali** is a Francophone country and the majority of CCM members prefer documentation in French. The CCM finds the Global Fund documents in English difficult to understand and requests that they be sent only after translation.

Networking and Collective Learning
Effectiveness of communication between partners can be enriched through the incorporation of diverse views. Sharing the progress reports across all stakeholders involved in grant implementation also enhances communication effectiveness. Networks formed in **Mali** and **Zambia** have facilitated such exchanges.

Networking and Coordination with Other Stakeholders
Networking is an efficient means of information sharing and communication. The non-government sector is very organized in **Mali** and coordinates internal meetings to exchange information related to its

activities and prepare views to be presented at CCM meetings.

Among **Zambia's** donor community, it is reported that there is effective communication on Global Fund projects. Donor seats on the CCM are periodically rotated, and the elected member reports back to the donor group on CCM and Global Fund issues every month. Key issues and action points are discussed and followed up at the next CCM meeting.

Such networks ensure that broad-based opinions reach the CCM. The operation of networks within **Mali** and **Zambia** are examples of good practices from which other countries can learn.

Unfortunately, information exchange and communication mechanisms at the regional level are not as strong. In **Peru**, there is little communication between the CCM and the regional coordination units, despite many points of programmatic overlap and opportunities for generating efficiencies. Similarly, communication between the CCM and the regional malaria program is also poor.

In **Zambia**, there also seems to be information loss as it flows downward from the PR to sub-recipients and then to sub-sub-recipients. Knowledge and information about the Global Fund also seems to diminish with downward movement. Some sub-sub-recipients do not know where funds come from or the significance of performance-based indicators. This seems to be a critical gap in the communication chain.

Collective Learning

All four countries report making changes that have improved communication, coordination and grant implementation. Some changes were made at the policy or institutional levels, such as the appointment of sub-committees in the **Zambian** CCM to undertake the critical technical support role. The LFA in **Nigeria** is now reportedly attending CCM meetings as an observer. In **Peru**, the CCM is coming to terms with conflicts of interest that need to be resolved. The candor of the respondents points to the willingness of each partner to learn and make changes towards better communication and grant implementation.

There are various communication platforms that can contribute to such collective learning. For example, ad hoc CCM retreats in **Zambia** have provided an opportunity to facilitate information sharing and consensus building on setting priorities, and enable lessons to be learned across the CCM membership. Respondents from **Zambia** also found a regional Global Fund training exchange held in 2006 useful in terms of networking, sharing experiences and ideas and strengthening capacity.

Communication Styles

The communication styles of the partners affect interpersonal relationships and communication. Proactive engagement enhances information flow and operations. Communication styles can also be related to organizational cultures that facilitate or inhibit communication.

Proactive Engagement in Communication

Effective communication between the LFA and the PR in **Peru** is a result of the LFA effectively employing a multiple range of communication forums to get continuous updates on progress. This has enabled the LFA to provide feedback and support as required. In **Mali**, there seems to be proactive engagement by the LFA. In **Zambia**, the LFA provides feedback to PRs, allowing them to preview performance review reports before sending them to the Global Fund.

In **Zambia**, the three different FPMs that the country has worked with have affected communication styles. The first FPM was seen to be open and communicative, fostering close working relations; the second FPM was seen as uncommunicative, resulting in delays. The CCM reports satisfactory communication with the current FPM, who is said to be responsive.

Organizational Culture

In **Zambia**, government and non-government PRs have divergent perceptions of LFA-PR communications. Civil society PRs report that the LFA provides feedback and allows them to preview reports to the Global Fund. Government PRs, meanwhile, maintain that the LFA does not provide them with adequate feedback. This difference in perception is most likely attributable to the traditional business practices and formal communication style of the government PRs, where e-mail or telephone conversations are not considered as actionable communication.

Technology

Technology has the potential to facilitate communication and ensure greater transparency. For example, in **Peru**, CCMs participate in quarterly RCM meetings via videoconference and teleconference. The malaria project is in regular communication with the community agents using voice on internet phone and a data telecommunication network.

For HIV/AIDS and TB grant implementation in **Peru**, automated reporting systems and accounting and finance processes have been established. These systems, however, are constrained by the lack of operational capacity of some sub-recipients. There is also a lack of automated interfaces to process the volume of data being entered electronically and captured on paper formats. If infrastructure and capacity is built up, such systems would create a smooth channel for information flow.

In **Mali**, it has been suggested that the CCM formalize a system of information sharing through a website to ensure that all actors have access to the same information in a timely manner. This suggestion is under consideration.

The PRs in **Zambia** note that, at times, they are repeatedly asked for information that has already been supplied earlier. This is attributed to the lack of personnel capacity to document and store information, and/or to frequent changes in personnel. In either case, this reflects information lost and time wasted. One possible solution would be to ensure that information is stored electronically so that it becomes more institutional and less dependent on people.

The Global Fund website is seen as a good medium for communication. Respondents from **Zambia**, however, point out that the information about their country is inaccurate and should be more regularly updated and reviewed.

All four case study countries report that successful PR-CCM-LFA communication is critical to the efficient implementation of the Global Fund grants in the country.

Communication and information needs in the countries differ, based on the number of Global Fund grants, the structural make-up of the different grant actors, and the sectors under which each actor operates. Communication processes and mechanisms have evolved based on the roles of each actor and the context of program implementation in each country. Meetings have emerged as the dominant communication mechanism between the CCM and PRs, while progress reports serve a similar function for communication between the LFA and PRs. Field visits are used by both the CCM and LFAs to review progress in the field. It is prudent of the Global Fund not to dictate the communication processes between the actors, leaving it instead to them to develop these based on their needs.

Each country has had different experiences with respect to communication. Discord is reported by all the case study countries except for **Mali** where communication between the grant actors is smooth.

Lack of clarity regarding each actor's role and that of the other actors has been a major obstacle to communication. Unless roles are clear, communication pathways and mechanisms cannot be properly organized. This leads to unrealistic expectations along with miscommunication and misinterpretation. The issue of role clarity can be addressed by documenting the procedures for communication and ensuring that the LFAs clarify their role to the other actors. **Mali** is a case in point: here, the Global Fund contributes to role clarity by ensuring that all actors are informed on their roles in that country.

The effectiveness of communication platforms influences grant implementation. Meetings have generally been a good communication platform; however, the quality of meetings is affected by the low participation of key CCM members in **Zambia**, the low frequency of CCM meetings in **Peru** and the insufficient time available for meetings in **Mali**. When CCMs address these concerns, the effectiveness of meetings as a communication mechanism will be enhanced.

Reporting is another mechanism that is used effectively between PRs, CCMs and the LFA. However, in **Peru**, the value of reports is diminished as the volume of reports submitted exceeds the information-processing capacity of the CCM. In addition, this level of reporting places a considerable burden on the PRs. In **Mali**, the dual processes of PR reporting (one for the CCM and one for the LFA) have led to a duplication of effort. In **Zambia**, PRs are faced with the difficulty of

complex reporting formats. In all cases, mutually agreed-upon procedures for streamlining the reporting process could improve the effectiveness of this communication mechanism.

Language has been a barrier to communication in **Mali**, and likely affects communication in many other non-Anglophone countries. This could easily be addressed by ensuring that all relevant documentation is translated.

Networks and workshops have been effective forums for sharing experiences and learning. Networks of civil society in **Mali** and the donor community in **Zambia** have ensured representation of diverse opinions at the CCM. These are examples of best practices from which other countries can learn.

Peru has used technology to enhance communication and information flow. By investing in technological solutions that are made available online, the Global Fund could improve information flow, availability and accessibility of data for all stakeholders and facilitate information sharing. However, not all countries and stakeholders have access to the internet and paper-based systems may also need to operate simultaneously.

Role clarity, information sharing and collective learning, the language of communication, conflicts of interest and technology are systemic in nature and can be easily addressed by developing workable systems and ensuring that they are implemented. There are other obstacles to communication that can be attributed to institutional structure, culture and power dynamics. These require attention in the political and sociocultural context and cannot be addressed under the auspices of the Global Fund in Geneva.

With all of this in perspective, it can be concluded that communication between grant actors can influence the effectiveness of grant implementation. It is essential for the Global Fund Secretariat to be a facilitator in clarifying roles, setting boundaries and developing policy and other systemic solutions that foster communication. Grant actors also have a role to play in systematizing and enhancing their communication mechanisms to improve information flow and support critical and constructive communication for all the parties involved.
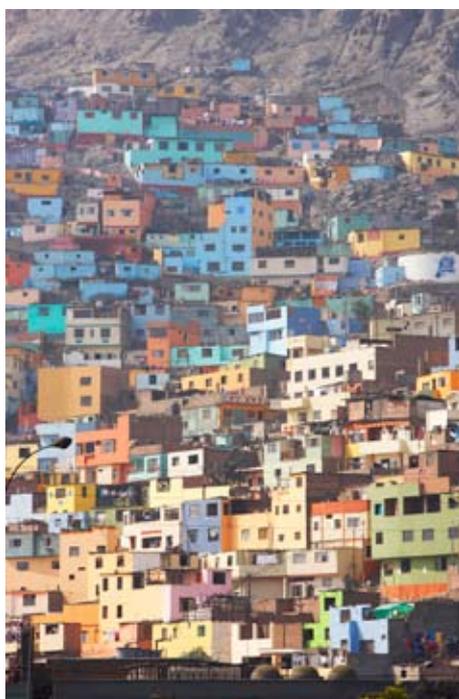
Recommendations have been made based on the findings from the four case studies on communication between the CCM, LFA and PRs.

Recommendations for the Global Fund:

- Orient new and incumbent grant actors on their roles. This would provide an opportunity for any ambiguities or other issues to be resolved.
- Build technology solutions for quick and transparent communication that facilitate information sharing by countries/regions with the Global Fund.
- Develop the Global Fund website as an effective sharing mechanism by ensuring that information is updated and accurate. For countries lagging behind in technology dissemination, periodic newsletters should be published as an additional sharing mechanism.
- Explore the possibility of expanding the role of LFAs to include capacity building for PRs if they request it.
- Develop financial assurance systems as opposed to financial appraisal systems.
- Conduct regular regional workshops as a platform for sharing common lessons learned in the region.
- Orient LFAs on programmatic aspects of the Global Fund grant for improved assessment of grantee performance.
- Provide for the translation of documents into the local official language.
- Further explore how conflicts of interest and differences in CCM scrutiny of government and non-government PRs affect communication.

Recommendations for CCMs:

- Strengthen communication channels with the Global Fund Secretariat by examining the functional adequacy of existing communication channels and providing feedback to the Global Fund if changes are required.
- Develop and implement filing/documenting systems to facilitate oversight.
- Publish newsletters for in-country stakeholders on news related to the three diseases and Global Fund grants.
- Sign CCM-PR agreements that define oversight roles and communication mechanisms.
- Make CCM meetings more effective by ensuring that they are held regularly, key members participate and adequate time is made available for quality discussions.

Recommendations for LFAs:

- Develop transition protocols or manuals to ensure continuity in the LFA's work in the event of a change in staff handling the Global Fund account.
- Attend CCM meetings in an observer role to gain insights into the programmatic aspects of the grants and to clarify the LFA role to other stakeholders when necessary.

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