Questions & Answers

Supporting Countries and Grants during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The Global Fund and COVID-19

How does supporting the response to COVID-19 fit into the Global Fund’s core mission of fighting AIDS, TB and malaria?

As a major investor in resilient and sustainable systems for health, the Global Fund has a vital role to play, together with our partners, in supporting countries response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The threat posed by COVID-19 will increasingly have an impact on the continued fight against HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, which continue to kill three million people each year.
What support is the Global Fund providing to countries affected by COVID-19?

To fight COVID-19 and mitigate the impact the pandemic will have on programs to fight AIDS, TB and malaria in vulnerable contexts, the Global Fund is enabling countries to use up to 5% of approved grant funding to help protect and treat vulnerable communities. Countries that currently have Global Fund grants can access COVID-19 funding through repurposing current equipment and facilities, grant savings (up to 5%) or reprogramming (up to 5%). All requests must be approved by the Global Fund in advance.

For more information see this guidance note.

Will donor commitments made at the Sixth Replenishment be affected by COVID-19 and its impact on the global economy?

Key contributions have been coming in on schedule and are expected to continue. More than 12 have been received so far, including Japan’s 27 March announcement of a $476 million contribution secured for 2020, part of the pledge made at the Sixth Replenishment.

While the 2008 financial crisis demonstrated that governments often maintain their pledges, the Global Fund is monitoring risks closely.

What are the Global Fund’s plans if the COVID-19 crisis continues for 12 to 18 months?

As with current processes and the guidelines, the Global Fund is adapting on a daily basis. We will continue to adapt as the pandemic evolves.

With travel suspended, how is the Global Fund Secretariat maintaining contact with the countries it supports?

The Global Fund will continue to work closely with countries during this period, using virtual meetings and other available technologies, where possible. The Global Fund will inform countries as the situation evolves and when travel resumes.

COVID-19 Support for Existing Grants

What kind of Global Fund support can countries access for their COVID-19 response?

There are three ways in which countries with existing Global Fund grants can obtain support for their COVID-19 response:

1. Repurposing equipment already purchased through a Global Fund grant, such as using existing laboratory equipment for COVID tests;
2. Using grant savings, up to 5% of the grant value;
3. Reprogramming grants, up to 5% of the grant value.

In exceptional circumstances, the Global Fund may approve use of both grant savings and reprogramming, up to 5% total of the grant value.

Advanced, written approval from the Global Fund is required for all of the above options.

Can a country request both grant savings and grant reprogramming for COVID-19 support?

The Global Fund encourages countries to use savings first and, in exceptional circumstances, may consider also reprogramming funds, up to 10% total of the grant value.
How long does it take to get approval from the Global Fund?
Speed is of the essence in responding to the new pandemic. The Global Fund will fast-track COVID-19 related decisions and respond to requests in a maximum of five working days. Within that timeframe, the type of support requested will impact response time, with repurposing equipment being the fastest option.

What are the minimum requirements to access this funding?
Countries must follow WHO guidance on COVID-19 response.
Principal Recipients must:
- Describe which COVID-19 activities will be funded by Global Fund grants;
- Provide a brief costed budget for these activities (Neither a revised detailed budget for the use of savings, nor a grant revision request form are needed);
- Describe how this will fit into the national COVID-19 response;
- Consider the potential negative consequences that diverting grant funds towards COVID-19 could have on HIV, TB, and malaria programming, and suggest ways to mitigate those consequences;

Within two months of the request approval, the Global Fund will issue an Implementation Letter for grant revision to be signed by the PR and the Global Fund.

What steps should be taken to access this funding?
Following the requirements listed above, the Principal Recipient issues a request to use savings and/or reprogramming to the Global Fund’s Fund Portfolio Manager. Preferably, it will be endorsed by the CCM.
Within two months of the request approval, the Global Fund will issue an Implementation Letter for grant revision.

How should PRs issue a request for COVID-19 support?
The Principal Recipient may send an email to the Global Fund’s Fund Portfolio Manager. The request should cover all of the requirements listed above.

What options are available to countries with no grant savings?
Countries with no savings can request to reprogram 5% of their current grant value. Approval from the Global Fund is required.

Who should I contact to request COVID-19 support?
Your country’s Global Fund Fund Portfolio Manager is the point of contact.
Requests must come from the Principal Recipient of the grant for which funds would be used. Preferably, the CCM has been consulted and endorses the request.

Can multicountry grant funds be used for the response in non-eligible countries?
Multicountry grant funds can be used for COVID-19 costs in constituent countries, including countries ineligible for a Global Fund allocation up to a total value of 5% of the grant.
Under the new COVID-19 response guidance, can multicountry grant funds be used to purchase laboratory testing for countries not eligible for a Global Fund allocation?
Yes, it is possible. However, each request will need to be reviewed and approved by the Global Fund.

Can an advanced disbursement for COVID-19 be requested?
Following Global Fund approval of the COVID-19 support, the PR can use in-country cash balance to start implementing COVID-19-related activities. If the in-country cash balance is insufficient, a disbursement will be processed by the Global Fund.

How should results be reported for COVID-19 support?
Support for COVID-19 should be reported in the next PU or PUDR.

Funding Requests
What options are available if my funding request is not ready to be submitted for window 2?
The Global Fund is now offering three submission dates for Window 2 and two submission dates for Window 3, to enable applicants to submit their completed funding request as soon as it is ready. Updated submission dates are published on the Global Fund’s Funding Request Submissions page. The Technical Review Panel (TRP) will review funding requests remotely. The TRP will share feedback through their review form within 8 weeks from the submission date.

Can the Global Fund extend all grants for six months so that funding requests can be developed as usual, but with added time given the current circumstances?
At the moment this is not the recommended approach. The Global Fund’s priority is to ensure high impact, lifesaving programs to end HIV, TB and malaria. Extending all grants by six months would diminish the potential for impact of new, more effective grants in the next cycle by delaying their start. However, grant extensions will be available to individual applicants if new grants are not ready for implementation on time.

When can or should a grant be extended beyond its original end date?
A grant extension is justified when it will not be possible to complete grant-making for a new grant in the remaining time available. In this instance, an extension can be developed.
Extensions require additional work for those involved in developing them and slow down the potential to accelerate impact. Given that extensions require updates to the performance frameworks and budgets and countries must still complete their grants, they increase the overall work for countries in the end. In addition, funding for extensions comes from the 2020-2022 allocations. This is not preferred unless absolutely required.
How can we organize an inclusive, transparent country dialogue in these circumstances?

This engagement and transparency is core to the Global Fund model. During a context where "physical convening" is not possible, we suggest alternatives such as: Zoom, Skype and/or other virtual audio/visual mediums; shared documentation over email; WhatsApp group chats to ensure information sharing and input (particularly for those without computers/consistent wifi); and, other creative ideas.

Should additional funding be necessary to pay for virtual engagement, CCM Secretariats should work with the Country Team and CCM Hub to exercise additional flexibilities for CCM funding.

Is there an opportunity to re-program CCM funding to facilitate remote engagement?

Yes, the Global Fund anticipates realized savings from costs associated with convening. These can be reprogrammed to cover emerging technical or data related costs for virtual engagement. Please reach out to ccmhub@theglobalfund.org with your Country Team in copy to work on next steps.

Can the Global Fund provide in-country partners with technology to support robust, inclusive and meaningful technical consultations and country dialogue in country?

The Global Fund Information Technology Department (IT) is currently assessing which technologies can best support in-country partners. Zoom calls can be used free of charge for 45 minutes.

Can you change the CCM Eligibility Requirements?

CCM Eligibility Requirements remain unchanged for the time being. The Global Fund reiterates its commitment to and the importance of inclusive country dialogue and the engagement of civil society, communities and key and vulnerable populations. Input from those closest to and living with the three diseases is critical to ensuring effective programs designed to help those most impacted.

Can I submit my funding request before it is fully complete?

Applicants are encouraged to submit completed, high quality funding requests. However, a two week 'clarifications' period is available after submission so that countries can send in remaining pieces of information or make further refinements. The Global Fund country team can assist the CCM in assessing submission readiness.

Can we include COVID-19 interventions in new funding requests?

The Global Fund continues to encourage all applicants to invest in building resilient and sustainable systems for health, including building lab capability and information systems to support better health outcomes for all.

COVID-19 specific interventions should not be included in new funding requests.

Are CCM signatures from all constituencies still required?

CCM members are still required to endorse the funding requests but the Global Fund will accept alternative forms of endorsement when physical signatures are not possible (for example, email, photo of signature on funding request sent by text message, endorsement by WhatsApp), as long as we can confirm the intent of the relevant CCM member.

It is possible for this CCM endorsement to be completed during the clarification period, in the two weeks following funding request submission.
Can we postpone completing some of the sections or annexes currently required for the funding request?
The Global Fund is considering whether any funding request requirements could be moved to the end of the grant-making process and will communicate this once decided.

Do funding requests need to now reflect the potential impact of COVID-19 on their proposed activities?
No, at this time funding requests are not required to specifically reflect the potential impact of COVID-19 on their proposed activities, but this may be a risk that the country wants to highlight. In general, health systems analysis and proposed interventions should include pandemic preparedness.

In this exceptional circumstance can Global Fund grant funds be used to pay for consultants to write the funding request?
No. Global Fund grant funds may not be used to fund consultants to write the funding request. We encourage all applicants to continue to access virtual Technical Assistance from partners using remote tools.

Guidance Notes

Has the Global Fund issued guidance for COVID-19?
Yes. Global Fund investments and advice to Principal Recipients and implementers strictly follow WHO guidelines. An aggregated list of partner COVID-19 technical guidance can be found on the Global Fund website. Specific guidance for Global Fund grants will also be posted on this page.

Have workshops and trainings supporting applicants ahead of Window 2 and 3 funding requests submissions been cancelled?
Some have been cancelled. Others will be held virtually. Updates will be sent to relevant participants:

- **WHO-UNAIDS Joint Peer Review** workshop for Window 2 countries in Nairobi: Cancelled
- **Virtual Mock TRP**: WHO and UNAIDS are working on a system and methodology. Dates will be announced shortly. Technical webinars will also be available in English and French.
- **UNAIDS Technical Support** (TSM) and other partners’ support to in-country processes will be adapted using long distance support, pairing international and national consultants, or relying more on local expertise.
- **UNAIDS-WHO remote review mechanism** of draft funding requests for Window 2 countries will continue. Reviews will be completed within three days. Continuous exchange of information between the partners and Global Fund Access to Funding Department on up-to-date submission timelines and support- and review mechanisms is planned to ensure submission of quality funding requests while taking into consideration COVID-19 related challenges.
Can patients get enough medicine for a few months if their country is in lockdown?

In accordance to WHO guidance, the following points are made per disease component:

- **HIV**: Support multi-months dispensing of ARVs to ensure people on treatment have the drugs they need while reducing the frequency of visits to health facilities. Include important consumables for prevention and treatment, such as condoms, ARVs for PrEP, methadone/buprenorphine for Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST), in adapted procurement plans. Support is available from Regional HPM managers; Supply Operations and HIV country focal points.

- **TB**: Those co-infected with Covid-19 will be at higher risk of a negative outcome, therefore home-based TB treatment should be encouraged, and TB clinics should dispense drugs for patients to take at home for longer duration. Countries should minimize the risk of stock outs, staff shortage and increase their focus on patient wellbeing issues.

- **Malaria**: The WHO urges countries to continue malaria services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (link). More detailed guidance covers case management, prevention, distribution, IPTp, Communication, M+E and cross cutting considerations.

Annual Funding Decision and Disbursements

**Will Global Fund annual funding decision and disbursements be affected by COVID-19?**

The Global Fund has put measures in place to ensure that annual funding decisions and disbursements are processed and approved on time based on PR funding needs.

Supply Operations

1. **Health Product Manufacturing**

Many health products and ingredients used in health products originate in China and India. How does this impact the health product supply chain?

While the initial shutdown in China caused some delays in the manufacturing of finished products and raw materials, most manufacturers in China have recently resumed full production and are largely back on track. These interruptions in early Q1 will likely impact the production of finished pharmaceutical products through April 2020. To date, the Global Fund’s Pooled Procurement Mechanism continues to be able to secure all needed products, albeit with delays for some products.

However, the impact to manufacturing has increased to moderate. This is linked to the Indian national response to COVID-19, which will impact the pharmaceutical supply going forward. Workforce reductions of 40-50% in India are expected to increase production lead times for pharmaceuticals and may contribute to longer lead times for insecticide treated bed nets as well. The Global Fund is closely monitoring the national response in India and maintains regular contact with suppliers to inform decision-making.

The Global Fund has a geographically diverse supplier base of key needed products and continuously engages with suppliers to dynamically allocate each order in coordination with partners.
2. Delivery & Availability of Health Products

Are there delays in delivery of health products?

Delivery delays of a few weeks or more are currently expected. The Global Fund is assessing potential delays for every single purchase order processed through its Pooled Procurement Mechanism. Currently, 10% of purchase orders are facing delays greater than 30 days.

National responses to COVID-19 across the globe are impacting all transport modes, with increasing challenges related to freight and logistics, such as delivery schedule disruptions or shipping container shortages. Flight delays and cancellations contribute to air freight routing and capacity constraints. Ocean freight remains the most reliable mode of transport; however, constraints with refrigerated container availability have reduced capacity for pharmaceuticals.

Procurement Services Agents of the Pooled Procurement Mechanism consider specific measures that may mitigate delays where possible, such as re-routing shipments, consolidating airfreight shipments and converting them to ocean freight, or changing transit countries to be able to catch “cargo-only” aircraft. Some of these necessary changes may carry cost implications.

What do Principal Recipients need to do to support timely delivery?

All Principal Recipients are required to submit requisitions and requests forms by 10 April 2020 for all requisitions for deliveries expected in 2020 for all grants. This includes:

- In wambo.org for Principal Recipients participating in the Pooled Procurement Mechanism.
- Via Procurement Request Forms (PRFs) to the Global Drug Facility.

PRs sourcing health products outside of the Pooled Procurement Mechanism are also strongly advised to place orders for deliveries in 2020 by mid-April.

Rapid approval by Principal Recipients of freight estimates may permit securing the best currently available option; approval delays may lead to missed shipping slot opportunities.

How can Principal Recipients minimize freight and logistics disruptions?

Rapid approval by Principal Recipients of freight estimates received by Procurement Services Agents will permit securing the best currently available option; delays in approval of freight estimates may lead to missed shipping slot opportunities, further delays and cost increases.

Extra collaboration is necessary as changes to delivery schedules and freight providers may be necessary. Principal Recipients will be required to produce the associated documentation that may be needed to accommodate late changes to flight routes under expedited timelines. Please discuss exercising flexibilities with the pertinent in-country stakeholders.

How do PRs check on the status of current orders?

Principal Recipients should use available track-and-trace tools to monitor the progress of specific orders, such as:

- i+ Solutions
- IDA Foundation
- Partnership for Supply Chain Management
- Stop TB Partnership Global Drug Facility
- wambo.org
What is the impact on future orders of health products?
It’s important for all PRs to submit their orders for all deliveries expected in 2020 by 10 April and consider adjustments for future procurements.
In case the supply or logistics situation significantly worsen, please discuss accommodating greater flexibilities with relevant in-country stakeholders, including:

- Reducing remaining shelf life requirements.
- Accepting later deliveries for some quantities.
- Consider using alternative WHO-recommended products if there are supply shortages.

Is customized labeling impacted?
Yes. The Global Fund will not accept new requests for customized labeling to ensure that products can be quickly manufactured and efficiently deployed to all countries, and to better enable the ability to address potential stock out situations.
Principal Recipients sourcing health products outside of the Pooled Procurement Mechanism should also waive requirements for customized labelling.

How can Principal Recipients ensure the program has enough medical supplies/health products?
The Global Fund, the Stop TB Partnership and procurement service agents will reach out to implementing partners participating in the Pooled Procurement Mechanism to minimize impact on deliveries where delays of more than 30 days are expected.
If implementing partners not participating in the Pooled Procurement Mechanism incur significant challenges sourcing core life-saving products, the Global Fund Health Product Management Specialist will reach out to the Global Fund’s Supply Operations Department and other partners. Delays are expected due to the current supply situation, and Principal Recipients are asked to consider a 30-day delay threshold for requesting sourcing support from the Global Fund, except in exceptional circumstances.

3. Global Fund Support
What is the Global Fund doing to support Principal Recipients?
The Global Fund has worked over the past several years to diversify the geographical supplier base of core products to the extent possible. The Global Fund continuously engages with suppliers to dynamically allocate each order to the best supply option, in coordination with partners.
The Global Fund is assessing potential delays for every single purchase order. Currently, 10% of purchase orders are facing delays greater than 30 days.
Country Teams are contacting Principal Recipients to review mitigation plans and adapt lead times. The Global Fund is also working to procure diagnostic equipment and is in direct contact with manufacturers and partners to be able to book capacity in advance.

What can Principal Recipients do should the situation significantly worsen?
Principal Recipients will be asked to accommodate greater flexibilities, such as reducing remaining shelf life requirements, accepting later deliveries for some quantities or to consider using alternative WHO-recommended products if there are supply shortages.
Principal Recipients are encouraged to consider these potential adjustments when planning future procurements and discuss alternate options with relevant in-country stakeholders.

Where can I find updated information about the COVID-19 impact to procurement and supply chain?

The Global Fund is actively working with suppliers and partners to ensure mitigation measures are in place for any potential delays.


Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs)

Can CCMs adapt their activities to COVID-19 emergency?

Yes, CCMs can adapt activities funded by CCM Funding Agreement resources to COVID-19 emergency activities. More guidance on this will follow.

CCMs are encouraged to strengthen remote participation and engagement. With the CCM Secretariat’s support, CCMs are invited to opt for remote attendance to meetings and avoid large gatherings. CCMs should reprioritize activities included in the CCM annual work plans and reprogram savings from the reduced travel costs. Additional flexibilities on the use of CCM Funding can be discussed with the CCM Hub Focal Point and Country Team.

Do CCMs still have to comply with the annual reporting requirements?

Yes. CCMs are still expected to report on their expenses and performance at the end of each CCM funding year. Deadline extensions will be granted on a case by case basis, and CCMs will not be penalized if they are unable to fully execute the planned activities in light of COVID-19.

Are CCMs required to submit an Eligibility Performance Assessment before Funding Request submission?

Yes, an Eligibility Performance Assessment (EPA) is mandatory. However, flexibilities are being considered for the submission of the Light Eligibility and Performance Assessments (EPA Light).

Do funding request submissions still require sign off from the full CCM?

Yes. Engagement and transparency are critical to ensure an inclusive response to end the diseases. CCMs should leverage existing websites, virtual and mobile communication channels and other platforms to reinforce CCM members’ engagement, with timely sharing of agendas, meeting minutes and feedback, as well as core decision points.

What is the current status of the CCM Evolution project amidst COVID-19?

The Global Fund’s CCM Hub is currently reviewing its approach to the Evolution project, as well as core business practices, to understand how CCMs can be more agile and responsive to country and partner needs.

Given the critical role CCMs play in convening and ensuring an inclusive and transparent process during funding request development and oversight of the investments, all potential solutions are
being analyzed to maintain engagement across sectors and populations. This may require shifting resources to accommodate virtual solutions.

Will the CCM Evolution project be postponed or timelines shifted?

Yes, the CCM Evolution launch will not begin with in-person facilitated assessments in Q2 2020, as originally envisioned. However, other solutions, including ways to leverage existing assessments (e.g. the Eligibility Performance Assessment, CCM Pilot End line results), are being analyzed including the most appropriate timing.

Grants

What if grant operations cannot continue under a new government directive, such as a local public health declaration banning gatherings of people?

Principal Recipients should follow official government decisions, directives and guidelines for managing the COVID-19 response. They should ensure Global Fund-supported programs are not putting staff, patients and others at risk. To the extent possible, Principal Recipients should undertake business continuity planning to develop alternative ways of working with the aim of keeping people safe while critical work continues.

Should services continue?

Every effort should be made to continue services for delivery of key and essential medicines, ensuring continuity and safety of people living with HIV, TB and malaria.

Principal Recipients should begin or implement contingency plans for how to continue providing services as much as possible, defining potential new ways of reaching to those in need like through virtual meetings or phone consultations.

Should staff salaries, normally paid as part of a grant, continue to be paid?

Yes, salaries should continue to be paid as well as salary top-ups that are linked to total salary payments. The Principal Recipient should determine whether and how the employees can deliver work over the internet, by phone or in some other way.

Can we request a deadline extension? What are the criteria?

Please inform the Fund Portfolio Manager when submission delays are foreseen due to COVID-19. They will make case-by-case decisions.

My performance update (PU) or performance update/disbursement request (PU/DR) will now have incomplete information. What should I do?

If you are a Principal Recipient, the Global Fund recommends documenting what information is missing and proceeding with submission – with the intention of following up once the situation stabilizes. Proceed especially if the work yet to be completed is data verification. In such cases, please consult and agree with your Country Team.

If you are a Local Fund Agent who cannot fully verify information, the Global Fund recommends documenting what information is missing or unverified information and proceeding with the request to ensure submission – with the intention of following up once the situation stabilizes. In such cases, please consult and agree with your Country Team.
We foresee implementation disruptions in Global Fund-supported programs. What documentation do we need to provide to the Global Fund?

Principal Recipient should stay in close contact with their Country Teams and copy the gps@theglobalfund.org general address in case Global Fund staff is unavailable or falls sick. By email, Principal Recipient should detail the extent of program disruptions and suggested mitigating measures.

We foresee incurring additional program costs, such as for staff safety, which weren’t originally envisaged. Do we need to follow a specific process?

No. Such expenditure will generally be considered eligible. Implementers are requested to stay in close contact with their Country Teams to inform them about these additional costs and copy gps@theglobalfund.org.

Health workers and outreach staff are not able to do their jobs. Can they continue to be paid?

Yes. Maintaining them as workforce allows to immediately resume services once movement restrictions are lifted. In the interim, Principal Recipients should encourage creative solutions to continue work while respecting government decisions, when possible.

Audits and Reviews

What happens to reviews, audits and investigations that are already planned for 2020?

Under the current exceptional circumstances, it is appropriate for the OIG to prioritize and reforecast its audit plan. Some audits may not be completed as planned for some portfolios. The standard timelines for the completion of audits will also likely be affected.

How will the Global Fund ensure transparency and accountability in the funded programs for the remainder of the year?

Again, these are exceptional circumstances. Whilst OIG audits and investigations have been impacted by this situation, we are proceeding with some of our work, whilst other reviews must be delayed or cancelled. We are working with the Global Fund Secretariat to provide advice and guidance in real-time on any special arrangements being put in place.

When will the next in-country reviews/audits/investigations take place?

At the moment, we do not know when we will be able to travel to recipient countries. From the perspective of staff safety as well as curbing the spread in recipient countries, it is not advisable for anyone to travel at this time. This will be continually reviewed.

What if a Principal Recipient cannot provide information to support or comply with an ongoing audit by the specified deadlines?

The Global Fund recognizes current audits may not be completed on time. There is flexibility to delay the progress of an audit. Contact your Country Team to discuss possible new timelines.