



Evaluation of Community Engagement in the Global Fund Grant Life Cycle

Secretariat Management Response

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Geneva, Switzerland

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Introduction

Independent evaluation is a critical component of the Global Fund Partnership. It provides the opportunity to learn, further strengthen how the Global Fund works, and inform Board and Secretariat deliberations on important topics. In November 2022, the Board established a new independent evaluation and learning function¹ to ensure that evaluations are relevant, timely and of high quality, providing findings and recommendations that drive the Global Fund closer to achieving our goal of ending AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria as epidemics and achieving our Strategy².

An integral part of these evaluations is the Secretariat Management Response, which affords the Secretariat the opportunity to comment on the Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations as well as outline the steps that will be taken forward in response to the Evaluation. The Global Fund highly values transparency and publishes independent evaluation reports, alongside the commentary of the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) and the Management Response, according to the Evaluation Function Documents Procedure approved by the Strategy Committee.

In 2024 and early 2025, an independent evaluation was commissioned by the ELO to evaluate which processes have led to meaningful community engagement (CE) in the Global Fund grant cycle and which had the primary objectives of : (i) assessing the effectiveness and adequacy of community engagement processes and interventions; and (ii) identifying internal and external factors and the extent to which each category enables and/or hinders meaningful community engagement.

The Secretariat has reviewed the findings and conclusions and, while it is broadly aligned with them, it does not endorse three of the six recommendations. This position is informed by several considerations, including the need to simplify, differentiate, and streamline Global Fund processes, as well as concerns regarding the feasibility of implementation within existing resource constraints. While the Secretariat values the Evaluation's prioritization of recommendations that offer higher returns with lower resource investments, the current funding environment has inevitably influenced its response. As such, the implementation of accepted recommendations remains contingent on the availability of funding. Annex 1 to this document provides the Secretariat's response to those recommendations that have

¹ [GF/B46/DP06](#). This function includes an Evaluation and Learning Office (ELO) situated within the office of the Executive Director, as well as oversight from an Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) which reports to the Global Fund Board through its Strategy Committee.

² Fighting Pandemics and Building a Healthier and More Equitable World: Global Fund Strategy (2023-2028)

been classified as ‘important’ or ‘critical’, including the level of acceptance and actions to be undertaken to address the recommendation.

1. Statement about the findings and conclusions of the evaluation - areas of agreement and/or disagreement

The Secretariat acknowledges the Evaluation and appreciates its timely delivery in the context of both the ongoing implementation of grant-cycle 7 (GC7) and the planning for grant-cycle 8 (GC8). Nonetheless, the Evaluation offers only limited added value in terms of deepening Global Fund learning. The Secretariat has considered the findings, conclusions, recommendations (including those flagged as potential considerations), noting that the 10 country case studies, whilst based on various criteria to capture diversity across the sample, are not entirely representative of the wider Global Fund portfolio. The Global Fund portfolio is vastly differentiated with portfolios ranging from less than US\$ 1 million to more than US\$ 1 billion over three years, as such, recommendations and findings need to be considered within this context.

The Global Fund Strategy³ places communities, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized, “at the centre” of everything we do. There is extensive evidence on the importance of community engagement with analyses consistently showing the link between communities empowered to engage in decisions that impact on their lives, and the ultimate effectiveness of health interventions, programs, and systems that are responsive to their needs^{4 5}.

The Evaluation recognizes the Global Fund’s understanding of community engagement, and its’ role aligns with relevant literature on the topic – namely: pragmatic, health system perspective approaches, and ideological or empowerment approaches⁶.

For the current Strategy period the Global Fund has introduced a new key performance indicator - KPI C1- which seeks to measure the satisfaction of communities with their engagement across the Global Fund grant cycle processes. So far in GC7, community

³ Fighting Pandemics and Building a Healthier and More Equitable World :Global Fund Strategy (2023-2028)

⁴ <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-015-1352-y>

⁵ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0216112>

⁶ O'Mara-Eves A, Brunton G, McDaid G, Oliver S, Kavanagh J, Jamal F, et al. Community engagement to reduce inequalities in health: a systematic review, meta-analysis and economic analysis. *Public Health Research*. 2013;1(4).

Questa K, Das M, King R, Everitt M, Rassi C, Cartwright C, et al. Community engagement interventions for communicable disease control in low-and lower-middle-income countries: evidence from a review of systematic reviews. *International journal for equity in health*. 2020;19:1-20.

satisfaction scores met or exceeded the satisfaction threshold (75% or more) for the Funding Request (FR) stage in 25 of 84 (30%) respondent countries. In nine (11%) countries, the community satisfaction score was unsatisfactory (50% or below). For the Grant-making stage, community satisfaction scores met or exceeded the satisfaction threshold in 17 of 65 (26%) respondent countries, while in 13 (20%) countries, community satisfaction was assessed to be unsatisfactory.

Data⁷ also indicates that among the elements for engagement⁸, the element of 'Voice' has slightly higher scores than the element of 'Understanding' which suggests that communities feel there is a gap between being heard and being understood. This trend is also reflected in the FR Applicant Survey (Windows 1-6) conducted by the Secretariat. Data from community-based, community-led and Key Population organizations show that: their satisfaction with the overall experience of participating in country dialogue was at 92%; their satisfaction with freedom to express views during country dialogue was at 86%; and their opinion on whether the submitted FR reflected the engagement and leadership of the communities was at 79%.

Alongside the introduction of minimum standards for community engagement in GC7, the Global Fund Board has consistently prioritized the engagement of communities most affected by HIV, TB and malaria, including through the approval of a catalytic priority for Community Engagement, and the Secretariat notes the Evaluation's recognition of the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative's importance and effectiveness.

The Secretariat welcomes the evaluators' acknowledgment that meaningful community engagement is embedded throughout the FR development process which is critical to ensuring that communities have voice and agency in the discussions around the prioritization of country allocations. The evaluators correctly highlight that during grant-making there is less direct community engagement overall and this resonates, noting that the main interlocutors during grant-making are the Principal Recipient(s) and the Country Coordinating Mechanism(s) (CCM). Findings and recommendations 4-8, emphasize the need for clear guidance and dissemination not only for funding request (FR) development processes but also for grant-making and implementation and oversight processes.

The Secretariat recognizes that this evaluation was concluded during a period of considerable uncertainty in the global health financing landscape, alongside a growing imperative to streamline and adapt Global Fund grant life cycle processes to enable

⁷ GF/SC27/02B 2023-2028 Strategic Performance Detailed Report Strategy Committee

⁸ Survey questions are structured around the five elements of engagement, namely: **Voice** (communities feel able to share their opinions), **Attention** (communities feel decision makers are listening), **Understanding** (communities feel decision-makers are trying to understand their point of view), **Action** (communities feel their inputs are valued and used for course correction) and **Partnership** (communities and decision makers have built a foundation for furthering their relationship).

countries to focus more effectively on program implementation. The Secretariat remains firmly committed to safeguarding and advancing the core principle of community engagement while also maximizing impact and ensuring value for money across all our investments.

The Evaluation recognizes the dynamic and evolving nature of both intra- and inter-community power relations, as well as the shifting interactions between communities and key national stakeholders, including government institutions, Principal Recipients, Sub-recipients, Sub-sub-recipients, technical and bilateral partners. These power dynamics are shaped by a range of factors, including historical and socio-cultural norms, economic inequalities, the state of civic space, and the broader enabling environment. As such, they significantly influence the conditions for engagement. In some settings, these structures can act as catalysts—promoting inclusive dialogue, shared decision-making, and equitable participation. In others, however, deeply rooted hierarchies and exclusionary practices may restrict access and limit the involvement of marginalized groups or populations. The Secretariat would have appreciated a more in-depth comparative analysis from the country case studies, particularly in the two deep-dive countries, examining the specific factors that facilitated or hindered engagement across the grant life cycle, especially among populations most affected by HIV, TB, and malaria.

Communities exist within countries that are themselves shaped by evolving global geopolitical and climatic trends, which in turn influence—both directly and indirectly—their ability to engage in decision-making spaces across disease areas, geographic contexts, gender, age, and experiences of stigma and vulnerability. Whilst recognizing the clear impact that all these contextual factors have on meaningful community engagement, the Evaluation clearly emphasizes both the value and commitment of the Global Fund model. The evaluation notably underscores that geographic barriers, limited infrastructure, and conflict have impeded meaningful engagement in seven of the ten country case studies. As the Global Fund continues to advance inclusivity, the Secretariat remains deeply committed to ensuring that the voices of those most affected by the three diseases remain central to its work. The current context calls for heightened flexibility, adaptability, and strengthened collaboration across the Global Fund partnership. While the Evaluation identified several country examples of successful adaptation to contextual challenges, it lacked in-depth critical analysis and strategic reflection on how the partnership can systematically design and implement coherent, context-specific approaches to embed and sustain meaningful community engagement, particularly considering increasingly constrained resources.

The Evaluation notes that ‘malaria-affected communities are least likely to be meaningfully engaged, with fewer organized, visible partners.’ However, it provides limited analysis of

how effective or adequate community engagement processes and interventions have been for each disease. Moreover, it is often difficult to discern the sources of support referenced. For instance, it remains unclear whether the 'sustained Global Fund investment in the capacity of a key TB civil society partner in Cambodia' was provided through the grant, the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative (CE SI) or via Stop TB Partnership's Challenge Facility for Civil Society (CFCS). Notably, CFCS is not mentioned in the Evaluation, despite its active presence in 7 of the 10 countries reviewed, including both deep-dive countries.

The Secretariat remains committed to supporting communities affected by malaria and by tuberculosis to achieve more meaningful engagement. However, in the period ahead, the mechanisms for doing so must be further examined as part of a broader review of our approach to community engagement. To date, the Global Fund has primarily focused on engagement in its own processes. Looking forward, and with a growing emphasis on sustainability, there is a need to explore how the Global Fund can also contribute to strengthening community engagement in broader country-level health decision-making, as outlined in the Evaluation's Theory of Change.

Building on this perspective, the Evaluation highlights key elements that contribute to meaningful community engagement - such as strong community representation, access to technical assistance, and support from the CCM and country teams. As the global health landscape continues to evolve, it will be important that the wider partnership supports governments to champion multi-stakeholder platforms and community engagement at national, sub-national and local levels.

The Secretariat acknowledges the evaluators' observation that expectations can, at times, be elevated during country dialogue for funding request development, which may lead to disappointment if certain proposed priorities are not ultimately included in the approved grant. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the Global Fund is committed to ensuring that community knowledge and expertise inform funding decisions. These contributions help guide investments toward the most impactful mix of interventions and delivery approaches—aimed at maximizing results for all affected populations—rather than advancing the interests of any single group over others. In advance of GC8, the Secretariat is reviewing its' guidance on minimum expectations for community engagement and will consider how to best increase transparency and feedback mechanisms to ensure greater visibility and clarity on the outcomes of grant-making for all stakeholders. Recognizing this, and in line with Board direction, the Secretariat has proactively integrated a dedicated opportunity for meaningful community engagement within the GC7 grant revision process—despite compressed timelines for programmatic reprioritization—underscoring its commitment to inclusive and responsive programming.

Of the six recommendations classified as ‘critical’ or ‘important’, the Secretariat has accepted three (see Annex 1). The three ‘potential considerations’ (recommendations 1, 2 and 8) have not been accepted by the Secretariat as articulated by the evaluators.

Recommendation 1 is presented in a complex manner that conflates the roles and responsibilities of various entities and departments. While the Secretariat welcomes the emphasis on national strategic plans (NSPs) and fully supports the Theory of Change, the rationale for prioritizing mid-term NSP reviews remains unclear.

In GC7, the CCM Hub supported the development of detailed community engagement plans in a limited number of countries. Expanding this approach across the entire portfolio would exceed current capacity and available resources noting this approach proved to be costly in terms of both plan development and implementation. The Evaluation’s proposal to revise the Annex on Funding Priorities contradicts feedback received directly from communities, who have expressed appreciation for the current format and level of complexity. Introducing greater technical complexity would likely increase the need for external support, placing additional pressure on already limited resources and potentially hindering meaningful community participation.

Recommendation 2 does not acknowledge the current Secretariat approach to technical assistance (TA). The Secretariat has taken concrete steps to strengthen both the planning and delivery of TA, with a focus on improving coordination, maximizing efficiency, and ensuring timely, sequenced support that avoids duplication. Since 2020, the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative (CE SI) Coordination Mechanism⁹ has been producing a consolidated TA tracker of TA provided to communities and civil society across all stages of the grant life cycle and the CE SI already uses generic terms of reference for the FR stage.

The Secretariat remains fully supportive of efforts to enhance the coordination of technical assistance (TA) across grants, catalytic investments, and set asides. However, Recommendation 2 intersects with ongoing discussions regarding the central role of CCMs in identifying and procuring TA for broader community engagement. The Secretariat is aware that this topic elicits a wide range of views among stakeholders, with some, particularly key population representatives, expressing strong reservations. Moreover, implementing this recommendation would substantially exceed the current capacities and financial resources of CCMs, particularly in the context of an uncertain and evolving global health funding landscape.

⁹ CE SI Coordination members include: the CCM Hub, Communities Delegation to the Global Fund Board, Expertise France L’Initiative, GIZ BACKUP Health, GMD, OGAC, PEPFAR, PCSA, RBM Partnership, Stop TB Partnership, TAP, UNAIDS, USAID and WHO

With regards to Recommendation 8, the Secretariat supports initiatives that strengthen the CCM's oversight function in an effective and efficient manner, while also recognizing the need to maintain an agile and streamlined approach to grant revisions. At this stage, there are no plans to revise existing guidance (i.e. Operational Policy Note) related to grant revisions, updated in January 2025, as doing so would risk adding unnecessary complexity and burden to the process. There are already mechanisms in place for community engagement that could be further reinforced. For example, the Global Fund has introduced additional messaging to CCMs throughout the revisions process, so that the CCM and its community and civil society representatives are informed on important stages and milestones, leading to greater transparency and opportunities for engagement. In addition, CCM endorsement, including that of community and civil society representatives, is required for certain types of grant revisions (e.g. end date revisions, additional funding revisions, programmatic revisions).

Looking ahead, the Secretariat is open to exploring ways to strengthen minimum expectations for community engagement in grant revisions that do not formally require CCM endorsement, such as non-material budget revisions. This could include encouraging Country Teams to ensure that CCMs are kept informed of revision requests and that relevant documents and decisions are shared in a timely and transparent manner with CCMs and civil society representatives.

2. Concluding statement about the utility of the evaluation

The Secretariat welcomes the Evaluation, which builds upon the 2022–2023 Thematic Evaluation on Community Engagement and Community-led Responses, conducted under the Secretariat’s leadership with oversight from the Technical Evaluation Reference Group (TERG). The Evaluation reinforces our shared understanding of the Global Fund’s commitment to meaningful community engagement across the grant life cycle. The Evaluation provides valuable insights into contextual factors, normative mechanisms, and levers available at various stages of the grant cycle, supported by illustrative examples. However, its overall contribution to advancing learning remains limited, particularly in terms of generating actionable insights, including more nuanced, disease-specific and population-specific findings that could meaningfully inform and strengthen community engagement processes and interventions.

The realist evaluation approach was a useful and practical approach for the evaluators to adopt *in understanding that social systems have real effects and people respond differently to interventions in different circumstances* given the breath and complexity of the Global Fund portfolio and the relatively limited time and resources for this evaluation. In addition, the selection of a limited number of pathways for change was important to narrow the areas of focus from intervention to outcome. However, the evaluation’s primary focus on the country level, without sufficient time to explore the full range of processes and interventions available within the Secretariat, represents a missed opportunity to provide a more comprehensive assessment. The Secretariat also believes that the Evaluation would have benefitted from a wider sample of stakeholders being interviewed, as envisioned in the inception report. In particular, the limited inclusion of perspectives from key and vulnerable populations is a notable limitation that affects the depth and inclusivity of the findings.

The findings and conclusions strongly reaffirm those from other data sources, highlighting that community engagement across the full grant life cycle remains uneven, with weaknesses more pronounced during grant making and implementation and oversight. Given prior knowledge, and the early observations from this Evaluation that community engagement during funding request development was already relatively robust, greater time and attention could have been directed toward grant-making and grant implementation and oversight as well as broader in-country health decision-making.

The Evaluation would have benefited from a more explicit examination of the tension between continuously seeking to enhance inclusivity and the imperative to ensure the safe and meaningful engagement of core communities most affected by the three diseases,

including criminalized populations, women and girls, and migrants. Given the anti-gender anti-human rights backlash, the secretariat had also anticipated greater emphasis on safety and security specifically and human rights more broadly.

Considering the need for greater simplification and differentiation, an area highlighted by feedback from previous evaluations and reinforced during this evaluation, the development of the Theory of Change as a valuable and welcome contribution to the partnership's ongoing work on community engagement. However, the limited consultation with community partners and other stakeholders in its development remains a weakness.

The Secretariat notes that all recommendations from the Evaluation were directed solely at the Secretariat. This narrow focus, however, overlooks the essential roles and contributions of other actors across the Global Fund partnership, including those with a presence at the country level.

The TERG Thematic Evaluation on Community Engagement and Community-led Responses underscored the need to more clearly define and communicate responsibilities across the partnership. A shared and coherent approach to community engagement should articulate how each partner contributes to advancing these goals.

Given the Evaluation's findings, especially the conclusion that targeted approaches to engaging communities can be highly effective, the Secretariat encourages future evaluations to adopt a broader lens. This includes assessing the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of all partners, and fostering a collective commitment to inclusive, well-coordinated community engagement both within Global Fund processes and in the broader context of country-level health governance and decision-making.

Annex 1 Detailed Secretariat Response to Critical and Important Recommendations

Recommendations 1,2 and 8 were classified by the evaluators as “potential considerations” and aligned with guidance from the ELO a detailed response to these are not included in the table below. The Secretariat has acknowledged and provided comments on these within the body of the management response. Note: the articulation of the high-level recommendation has been agreed with the ELO, the detailed recommendation is included in its full and original text.

Recommendation 3: Include CS CCM member constituent engagement as an eligibility requirement		Type	Response	Responsible
<p>The CCM hub and CCMs should include as a requirement the proactive engagement of CS CCM members as an eligibility requirement. This would formalize the need for representatives to solicit inputs from and provide feedback to their constituencies. This would, in turn, contribute to sound decisions during the funding request development period. This should include updates on how their priorities detailed in the Funding Priorities of Civil Society and Communities Most Affected by HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria annex have been considered.</p>		Important	Rejected	Not applicable
<p>Justification for “partially accepted” and “rejected”</p>	<p>The Secretariat does not disagree on the principles and desired outcome of the recommendation; however, it would be impractical to monitor this recommendation in all CCMs (and RCMs), across all constituencies, with existing resources and systems. Defining and agreeing on how to measure “proactive engagement” across different contexts would be challenging noting the qualitative nature of “proactivity”. This would also require resources both at the country-level and Secretariat and in the current context this is not feasible. The Secretariat monitors the engagement of community and civil members through the CCM Integrated Performance Framework (IPF) process, and in GC7 introduced Minimum Expectations for Community engagement. The first of these minimum expectations includes the development during the Funding Request (FR) development process of a Funding Priorities of Communities and Civil Society Most Affected by HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria Annex which is intended to capture and document the highest priority interventions identified by communities and civil society during the country dialogue process.¹⁰ The second minimum expectation encourages CCMs to convene a minimum of two meetings during grant making for the PR(s) to brief and receive feedback from the CCM, including community and civil society representatives, on issues including: (i) key changes to the grant, (ii) insights on the funding priorities of civil society and communities submitted as inputs to grant-making, and (iii) plans for community-led and community-based implementation.¹¹ Additionally, the Country Dialogue Narrative Annex requires the CCM to detail how various constituencies were engaged in the country dialogue process during the development of the funding request. There are existing bi-directional feedback mechanisms within existing</p>			

¹⁰ As an Expectation in High Impact and Core portfolios and Best Practice in Focused Portfolios

¹¹ Idem

	oversight during grant implementation. The IPF for CCMs is one of these tools and is aimed at enhancing CCM engagement and performance management into a single, coherent process that aligns with the grant funding cycle. CCMs are required to describe as part of their oversight plan for Global Fund grants how community voices will be integrated into oversight activities and requires representation from people living with or affected by the three diseases and key populations on oversight committees/mechanisms. Through existing mechanisms, including direct country stakeholders (including government, community, civil society and other partners) and larger regional civil society networks, the Secretariat has a solid understanding of where there are challenges with community engagement. There exist internal Secretariat mechanisms to review compliance with CCM eligibility requirements prior to the review of FRs to identify cases of potential non-compliance.	
Description of intended impact	Not applicable	
Activities or initiatives required to achieve the intended impact (including those already planned, under way or completed)	Not applicable	Not applicable

Recommendation 4: Enhance grant-making transparency and accountability		Type	Response	Responsible
The Global Fund should demystify the grant-making stage by developing clear guidance for civil society and communities on when and how to engage during grant-making. CTs and PRs should be required to enhance transparency and accountability in the grant-making process by ensuring that all stakeholders – including community representatives, key civil society, and CCM members – receive clear communication regarding which priorities have been included in the final grant and budget, as well as the rationale for selection or exclusion. The Secretariat should revise its operational guidance on CE during grantmaking to align with the founding principles of GF as espoused in the GF Framework Document (2001), particularly principle H, articles 7 ⁵ and 9 ⁶ .		Critical	Accepted	GMD / SIID
Justification for “partially accepted” and “rejected”	Not applicable			
Description of intended impact	Building on the improvements introduced in GC, continue to enhance transparency and feedback loops to the CCM on the outcomes of grant-making to ensure clarity and understanding on how recommended interventions and activities have been incorporated into grants.			
Activities or initiatives required to achieve the intended impact (including those already planned, under way or completed)	<p>No new activities or initiatives are planned as there are existing mechanisms in place which can be further strengthened to ensure that there is clarity and aligned expectations around stakeholder engagement during grant-making.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Secretariat will continue to implement Minimum Expectations for community engagement (CE), which was introduced in GC7, at three stages across the grant life cycle noting that CE across the full grant life cycle remains variable with weaknesses more pronounced during grant-making and implementation oversight. For grant-making the recommendation is that: “Community and civil society representatives on the CCM have timely access to information on status of grant negotiations and changes to the grant to support their involvement in oversight.” This includes automated notifications to ensure all CCM members (including community, civil society and KP CCM representatives) are copied in on progress on key grant-making milestones and that CCMs convene a minimum of two meetings during grant-making for PR to brief and receive feedback from the CCM. For GC8, the Secretariat will continue to work to improve transparency and feedback to CCMs by expanding automated information provision of key changes to the grant. 2. Key Performance Indicator (KPI) C1 which is a new KPI for this strategy period, measures the satisfaction of communities with their engagement with the Global Fund grant cycle processes. The latest results for KPI C1 show that for GC7, the average satisfaction of communities across the respondent countries is at 67% for 			GMD / SIID

	the Funding Request stage (for Windows 1 to 6), and at 64% for the Grant-making stage (amongst countries that have completed it by November 2024). As more countries go through the GC7 Funding Request and Grant-making stages, and begin grant implementation, the Secretariat will administer additional surveys to ensure that all countries have an opportunity to respond. With more data becoming available, the Secretariat remains committed to analyzing these results together with other data to better understand the drivers for improving engagement.	
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Recommendation 5: Improve guidance and practice of engagement during grant-making		Type	Response	Responsible
The Global Fund should review and improve its guidance relating to CE during grant making to clearly articulate the role of CTs in ensuring greater transparency in the process achieved. The additional provisions should seek to have less focus on outputs (e.g., number of meetings) and more on outcome level (i.e. what the engagement will seek to achieve in terms of CE during the grant-making stage e.g. community responses and CSS interventions supported). They should widen the scope of key stakeholders meeting PRs beyond CCM members to include a limited number of technical representatives of CSOs and communities who played significant roles in the writing and costing of the funding requests.		Important	Rejected	Not applicable
Justification for “partially accepted” and “rejected”	<p>The purpose of grant-making is to translate funding requests into quality, implementation and disbursement ready grants, addressing any recommendations from the Technical Review Panel (TRP) and the Grant Approvals Committee (GAC). Principal Recipients, CCMs (including community and civil society representatives) plan and negotiate the grant with country teams and engage Local Funding Agents (LFAs) to review for effectiveness, areas of concerns and errors. The grant-making process cannot relitigate decisions made during the FR development process. While both recommendations 4 and 5 relate to the grant-making stage, the Secretariat does not accept this recommendation as there are existing processes and mechanisms in place that respond to this recommendation. The recommendation as formulated suggests that community engagement in grant-making should ensure community responses and community systems strengthening are secured as outcomes, whereas community engagement in grant-making is about ensuring that community expertise and knowledge play a central role in shaping investments towards greater allocative efficiency. By drawing on this knowledge to fund the most effective mix of interventions and delivery platforms to maximize impact across diverse populations. Requirements around CCM oversight include the representation of communities as key to oversight throughout the grant life cycle. Community and civil society CCM representatives are elected through transparent processes, by their own constituencies, and are expected to engage and leverage them throughout the grant life cycle, this includes engaging with those organizations and actors with relevant technical expertise. In addition, technical and bilateral</p>			

	partners on CCMs are available to provide technical expertise to the CCM, including to community and civil society representatives.	
Description of intended impact	Not applicable	
Activities or initiatives required to achieve the intended impact (including those already planned, under way or completed)	Not applicable	Not applicable

Recommendation 6: Invest in CLM and CSS to sustain community engagement		Type	Response	Responsible
Through provisions in the modular handbook and other guidance documents for GC8, the Global Fund secretariat CT, CCM Hub, CRG and Partners should mobilize countries to invest holistically in CLM and other reinforcing CSS interventions as an integrated package so that MCE is increased. CLM can be leveraged to build long-term engagement and institutional learning capacity among communities, KPs, CS without requiring significant additional resources.		Important	Accepted	SIID / GMD / Global Fund partnership
Justification for “partially accepted” and “rejected”	Not applicable			
Description of intended impact	Encourage long-term investment support for community systems strengthening in larger portfolios with the highest burden of disease			
Activities or initiatives required to achieve the intended impact (including those already planned, under way or completed)	<p>The Secretariat partially agrees with this recommendation and strongly supports the strategic intent behind it. Community-led monitoring (CLM) and broader community systems strengthening (CSS) interventions are vital for enhancing MCE, improving service quality, promoting accountability, and ensuring programs are responsive to the needs of affected populations. These approaches are already embedded in the Modular Framework for GC7 and will remain central to GC8.</p> <p>In preparation for GC8, the Secretariat is actively working to ensure these investments are better integrated and more impactful. The CSS Module is currently being revised to include a specific intervention on community coordination and engagement in decision-making,</p>			SIID / GMD

	<p>enabling countries to design more coherent, context-responsive packages that connect CLM with broader system-strengthening goals. Additionally, the Secretariat is developing a Community Systems Maturity Framework and an accompanying Theory of Change, both to be released in September 2025. These tools will help countries identify strategic entry points for investing in community-led approaches as part of effective, sustainable service delivery systems.</p> <p>Through the CCM Evolution Strategy Initiative, CCMs benefited from a training and technical assistance package on CLM, which established and strengthened linkages between CCM oversight and community-led initiatives. To further facilitate community engagement within CCM oversight committees, interactive training materials on CLM data use are being developed and are expected to be introduced during the course of this year.</p> <p>However, the ability to mobilize countries to implement these interventions holistically and at scale will ultimately depend on available funding. While the Secretariat will continue to promote the integration of CLM and reinforcing CSS interventions, the scope and depth of future investments must align with resource constraints and prioritization decisions within country allocations.</p>	
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Recommendation 7: Utilize performance reviews to inform approaches to strengthen community engagement		Type	Response	Responsible
The CCM Hub, and CTs should continue building on the outcomes of CCM evolution notably on oversight and engagement through the IPF. Performance reviews should include relevant issues related to CCMs including those on oversight and engagement, and should be followed up, for example, through management letters.		Important	Accepted	GMD
Justification for “partially accepted” and “rejected”	Not applicable			
Description of intended impact	There are clear mechanisms and understanding on how communities are engaged through the grant lifecycle.			
Activities or initiatives required to achieve the intended impact (including	1. Continue to use the results from the CCM Integrated Performance Framework to assess community engagement for specific CCMs, including the monitoring, where applicable, of specific actions to improve community engagement in individual CCMs.			GMD

those already planned, under way or completed)	<p>2. For CCMs with persistent challenges in community engagement, prioritize the provision of targeted technical assistance (TA) to build capacity and ensure meaningful, inclusive engagement throughout the grant lifecycle. In the context of constrained resources, the Secretariat will engage with bi-lateral set-asides and other partners to help identify potential opportunities for TA.</p> <p>3. For Focused Portfolios and portfolios expected to transition in the coming grant cycle(s), encourage CCMs to develop a roadmap for the transition of core CCM/RCM functions (such as inclusive oversight) into post-transition structures during the grant implementation period.</p>	
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Recommendation 9: Undertake context assessments to analyze power dynamics among communities		Type	Response	Responsible
<p>The CCM Hub and CTs should strengthen context assessments in key Global Fund-supported countries to systematically analyze power dynamics among communities, KPs, and CCM representation. A differentiated approach is suggested with, for example, greater focus on this issue for countries with restricted civic space and/or diseases with nascent community representation. This assessment should aim to generate nuanced evidence to help identify which groups face the greatest barriers to engagement and recommend targeted, context-appropriate solutions. To avoid additional costs, the process should be integrated into existing assessments, such as the Integrated Performance Framework Review process and/or national strategic planning (NSP) review processes, rather than be a new stand-alone assessment. This assessment should be refreshed and updated throughout the grant cycle, with specific attention to hard-to-reach KPs and TB- and malaria-affected communities, ensuring inclusive and equitable participation.</p>		Important	Rejected	Not applicable
Justification for “partially accepted” and “rejected”	<p>Embedding the leadership and engagement of communities most affected by the three diseases, including key and vulnerable populations, in Global Fund processes is a core value of the partnership. The Secretariat acknowledges the complex and diverse in-country dynamics that shape community engagement across the portfolio, including socio-cultural, political, and structural factors that often influence representation and voice. The recommendation to “strengthen context assessments,” particularly by integrating this work into existing processes such as the Integrated Performance Framework (IPF) review and national strategic planning (NSP) review processes, presents both strategic opportunities and practical limitations. While we recognize the intent to leverage existing mechanisms for efficiency, these processes are not currently designed to capture the nuanced socio-political dimensions of power dynamics, inclusion, and representation in a systematic or context-sensitive way. Implementing this recommendation as proposed would represent a substantial expansion of scope and would require resources, technical expertise, and sustained engagement beyond the Secretariat’s current mandate and</p>			

	<p>capacity—particularly within the CCM Hub, which lacks the human resources and specialized skills to lead this work across the full portfolio. Nonetheless, we remain committed to supporting marginalized and vulnerable partners most affected by HIV, TB and malaria in navigating these challenges within the limits of our role and resources available. This includes continuing to: conduct CCM composition reviews and support improvements in representation where needed; leverage finding from the annual IPF assessments to monitor engagement and identify gaps in CCMs; draw on intelligence from civil society networks, community-led observatories, and in-country feedback to flag persistent issues; and offer targeted support to CCMs facing structural challenges in inclusive participation.</p> <p>We also welcome continued dialogue with technical partners and civil society to explore how existing assessment tools might, over time, be refined or complemented with additional inputs to more effectively capture community engagement dynamics in a feasible and sustainable manner.</p>	
Description of intended impact	Not applicable	
Activities or initiatives required to achieve the intended impact (including those already planned, under way or completed)	Not applicable	Not applicable