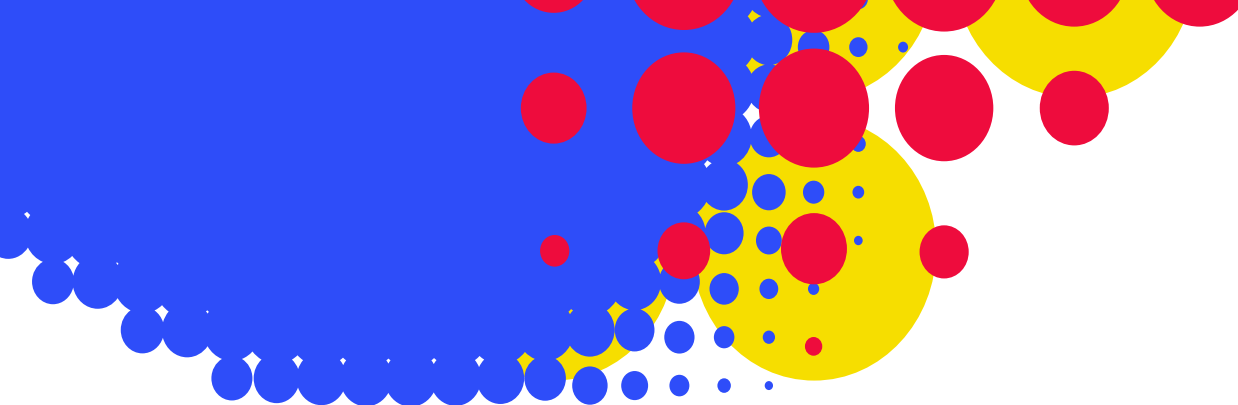




HIV Prevention

Evaluation

Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) Commentary

GF/ELO/2026/02/03

7 October 2026

Geneva, Switzerland

This is an independent evaluation published by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria's Evaluation and Learning Office, based on the work done by an independent evaluation team. This publication does not necessarily reflect the views of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and it accepts no responsibility for errors.

This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International.

The user is allowed to copy and redistribute this publication in any medium or format, as well as adapt and transform this work, without explicit permission, provided that the content is accompanied by an acknowledgement that The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is the source and that it is clearly indicated if changes were made to the original content. You may however not use the work for commercial purposes. To view a copy of this license, please visit:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> .

Adaptation/translation/derivatives should not carry any logo or trademark of the Global Fund, unless explicit permission has been received from the Global Fund. Please contact the Evaluation and Learning Office via the website to obtain permission.

When content published by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, such as images, graphics, trademarks or logos, is attributed to a third-party, the user of such content is solely responsible for clearing the rights with the right holder(s).

Any dispute arising out of or related to this license that cannot be settled amicably shall be referred to arbitration in accordance with Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) in force at the time of the commencement of the arbitration. The user and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria shall be bound by any arbitration award rendered as a result of such arbitration as the final adjudication of such a dispute. The appointment authority of such arbiter shall be the Secretary-General of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. The case shall be administered by the International Bureau of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. The number of arbitrators shall be one. The place of arbitration shall be Geneva, Switzerland. The language used in the arbitral proceedings shall be English.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned, or alternatively that their use is discouraged.

This publication is being distributed without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the user. In no event shall the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria be liable for damages arising from its use.

(a) Executive Summary

This document reports on the Independent Evaluation Panel's (IEP) assessment of the quality and independence of the Evaluation of HIV Prevention and provides an analysis of implications of the evaluation results. Independence refers to the independence of the evaluators in the whole evaluation process. The quality considers the appropriateness of the methodology, the breadth of findings, and the rigor of analysis, as well as the alignment of data, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to examine the extent to which, and the ways in which, the increased Global Fund efforts in HIV prevention (a) have led to Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) grants that are optimally configured and coherent, maximize HIV prevention outcomes and impact, and (b) are implemented in line with the grant design. The findings and recommendations will be used in providing support to countries in grant-related HIV prevention programming. There are three main objectives for this evaluation (a) assess the configuration of grants for optimal allocation of funds for HIV prevention (b) review the initial progress, alignment, and coherence of selected/sampled grants following approximately one year of implementation and (c) assess country monitoring systems of the sampled countries for measuring HIV prevention outcomes and subsequent use of information, with specific attention to the Prevention Outcome Monitoring Toolkit (POMT).

(b) Conclusions

The IEP endorses the Evaluation of HIV Prevention. The IEP, being observant of the evaluation process from supplier selection to delivery of the final deliverables, considers that the evaluation was carried out independently. The review provides sufficient evidence to draw conclusions about the effectiveness and adequacy of GF support for HIV Programs in countries. The IEP, however, noted areas for improvement, particularly regarding a) the recommendations section, where additional input could increase the report's utility and b) the analytical discussion regarding the intercountry differences that is insufficient.

The Panel provides specific comments on the evaluation report, as well as recommendations for improving the quality of evaluations in the future.

(c) Introduction

This document reports on the Independent Evaluation Panel's (IEP) assessment of the quality and independence of the Evaluation of support for HIV Prevention by the Global Fund and provides brief analysis of the implication of the results of the evaluation.

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

Using a standard framework¹ for quality assessment (QA), one other member of the IEP independently assessed the final evaluation report. The assessment includes both numerical and qualitative assessment of the key elements of the evaluation - executive summary, purpose, objectives, logic model or theory of change, methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The findings presented here consider performance in these areas, comment on the recommendations, and highlight issues that could be considered to improve the quality of evaluations in the future.

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

(d) Assessment of the quality and independence of the evaluation

The IEP endorsed the final evaluation report. The quality of the report is rated as 'good'² with minor weaknesses, noted in comments, but not materially affecting the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation report, although limiting the scope of the recommendations.³

The IEP, being observant of the evaluation process from supplier selection to delivery of the final deliverables, considers that the evaluation was carried out independently.

(e) IEP Assessment of the Evaluation Report

(f) Background

Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation:

The Evaluation of the HIV Prevention was commissioned by the Evaluation Learning Office (ELO) under Terms of Reference (ToR) dated October 2024⁴. The overall

¹ <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/iel/independent-evaluation-panel/quality-assessment-framework/>

² Evaluation quality is assessed on a four-point scale: Unacceptable, Less Than Acceptable, Good, or Very Good.

³ With the support and input of the Evaluation and Learning Office, the Independent Evaluation Panel has developed a Quality Assessment Framework to evaluate the final reports of evaluations. Evaluation reports are assessed on a four-point scale on quality: Unacceptable, Less Than Acceptable, Good, or Very Good.

purpose of the evaluation was to examine the extent to which, and the ways in which, increased Global Fund efforts in HIV prevention(a) have led to Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) grants that are optimally configured and coherent and maximize HIV prevention outcomes and impact, and (b) are implemented in line with the grant design. The evaluation's intent, timing, and intended users are outlined.

There are three main objectives for this evaluation (a) assess the configuration of grants for optimal allocation of funds for HIV prevention (b)review the initial progress, alignment, and coherence of selected/sampled grants following approximately one year of implementation (c) assess country monitoring systems of the sampled countries for measuring HIV prevention outcomes and subsequent use of information, with specific attention to the POMT.

During the IEP's endorsement processes, the Panel noted the difficulties related to the new financial environment and country challenges that impacted the conduct of the evaluation.

Utilization-Focused Approach:

The evaluation indicates a utilization-focused approach, building engagement and ownership of the processes and outputs. A variety of key stakeholders were identified in the inception and interim reports.

(g) Methodology

The evaluation used a range of qualitative and quantitative methods and an AI tool to assist in the process of data analysis. The new approach involving the use of an AI tool was well explained in the report. The inputs into the AI tool included a variety of documents such as proposals, and agreements among others. Participatory methods were used in setting up the design to build and train the AI tool.

A framework was used to score the grants and to establish their configuration or design. The framework was comprised of 6 dimensions that were agreed upon with the GF secretariat.

The IEP is of the view that as stated in one of the main objectives, a more detailed explanation should have been provided on how the concept of optimal allocation of Global Fund grants was analyzed and linked to efficiency. Given the focus on optimizing the response, additional content on efficiency should be provided, both in the background and methods sections.

A significant missing element of the evaluation is a systematic use of theory of change of the HIV prevention efforts, which may supports the evaluative approach and helps to clarify what is expected versus what is delivered.

Data Collection

Primary and secondary data sources were used for data collection. Over 80 key informant interviews and two focus group discussions were conducted. The tools employed in the evaluation were clearly indicated.

Triangulation and Strength of Evidence

The evaluation used both qualitative and quantitative data and applied clear criteria to assess evidence strength. The use of triangulation reinforced confidence in the findings. Unfortunately, however, the assessment of the strength of evidence was not added to the findings in the executive summary.

(h) Findings

The findings are quite positive and encouraging overall:

- a. the Global Fund investments are appropriately targeted, epidemiologically informed and data-driven in both high burden geographies and populations, most at risk of HIV infection.
- b. the interventions are largely consistent with the intent, aligned with in-country partners strategies, leveraging the strength of the Global Fund model to drive sustainability
- c. Countries are measuring HIV prevention outcomes, although the extent to which they're able to do that is varied.

The evaluation found, however, that there is room for improvement in relation to limited coverage of some key interventions and persistent structural barriers. There is also some risk for the programmatic impact related to the evolving economic environment.

The findings are well supported by evidence and present both positive and negative results that logically follow from the data. The IEP noted with great satisfaction that 'across all countries, GC7 represented a substantive shift from activity and output-oriented programming under GC6 to more targeted or more focused outcome-oriented programming under GC7'. The IEP also noted the significant degree of coherence between the GF and other actors' interventions in many countries. This finding is not common in many evaluations of global health organizations.

This evaluation investigated the drivers for sustainability and confirmed that country ownership is the major driver.

The IEP's reading of the report finds that it lacks an analytical discussion regarding inter-country differences, only providing heterogeneity at a descriptive level. The optimal mix of interventions appears to be related to country-specific factors that should be analyzed and discussed.

Conversely, some findings are presented with excessive detail, making it challenging to follow the flow of some ideas.

(i) Key conclusions and recommendations

- The IEP's major concern is with regards to the recommendations, which lack precision and specificity, being too generic to lead to actionable items. These recommendations tend to stay within the comfort zone, avoiding challenge to the Secretariat. For example, while insights from the findings suggest that improving efficiency is a key issue, this is not included in the recommendations, nor is the potential for cross-country learning on topics such as pay-for-results approaches.
- These issues are similar to those found in previous evaluations: implementation issues, structural barriers, scale and sustainability. This consistency calls for specific actions from the GF.
 - The report lacked adequate detail on the structural barriers and the enablers.
 - The need to monitor the impact of the withdrawal of some international funding as well as the global funds reprioritization exercise, on countries' abilities to achieve targets was inadequately highlighted.
 - There is a need to put more attention and focus on the possible negative impact of re-prioritization at country level on data quality and availability.

(j) Strengthening future evaluation processes

1. The IEP would like to note the continuous progress made in the evaluation processes which ELO manages. As noted for previous evaluations, the IEP observed the end-to-end process from evaluator selection to delivery of final deliverables. The IEP had access to all comments provided by ELO, secretariat and IEP along with comment trackers and responses of evaluators.

(k) Implications for SC and Board

1. There is a need to generate evidence on how to increase the efficiency of TGF funded activities; although it was not part of the scope of this evaluation –a missing opportunity as mentioned-- the results from the evaluation suggest heterogeneity in the implementation that may result in potential missed opportunities for increasing efficiency
2. Although there is a clear potential in the use of AI tools for evaluation, still human supervision is needed and extremely relevant for the interpretation. Promoting the use of AI tools for evaluations should go with clear guidelines and measures to ensure an adequate interpretation of results.
3. The long-term impact of the financial crisis at country level needs to be assessed.