

Evaluation of Community Responses and Systems Strengthening

17 March 2025

This document contains the original text for the Terms of Reference of this evaluation as approved by the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP). The document has been reformatted so it may be published to the Global Fund website.

Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. Introduction	3
2. Background	3
3. Purpose and Objectives	4
4. Evaluation Scope	5
5. Themes and Questions	5
6. Approaches & Methodological Considerations	7
7. Evaluation Phases	9
8. Expected Deliverables and Approximate Timeline	10
9. Skills and Experience Required from the Evaluation Team	11
10. Annexes	13
Annex 1. Suggested information sources and key informants.	13

1. Introduction

1. These terms of reference (ToR) are for an independent evaluation of the Global Fund's Community Responses and Systems Strengthening (CRSS) activities. The findings and recommendations from this formative evaluation will inform Global Fund's approaches to CRSS in preparations of Grant Cycle 8 (GC8) (2026-2028) with the objective to provide comprehensive people-centered services and maximize the impact on the three diseases.
2. The evaluation is part of the Global Fund Board-approved Multi-Year Evaluation Calendar for the 2023-2028 Strategy Period. It will be managed by the Evaluation and Learning Office (ELO) of the Global Fund under the oversight of the Global Fund Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP). This ToR outlines the background, purpose, audience, and use of the evaluation, objective and key evaluation questions, methodological considerations, timeline and deliverables, and the technical requirements the prospective evaluation team should meet.

2. Background

3. The Global Fund is a worldwide partnership to defeat HIV, TB, and Malaria (HTM) and ensure a healthier, safer, more equitable future for all. The Global Fund raises and invests more than US\$5 billion a year to fight the deadliest infectious diseases, challenge the injustice that fuels them, and strengthen health systems and pandemic preparedness in more than 100 of the hardest-hit countries. As reported in the most recent Global Fund Results Report¹, since 2002, the Global Fund partnership has saved 65 million lives and has reduced the combined death rate from the three diseases by 61 percent in the countries in which it invests.
4. The Global Fund has long recognized the critical role that communities play in the response to HIV, TB, and Malaria (HTM). Global Fund's support to CRSS is an embodiment of this recognition, focusing on empowering communities to lead and participate actively in the fight against these epidemics[1]. CRSS, for this evaluation, includes responses led and based in communities and the systems strengthening interventions for their effectiveness, quality, and impact. Global Fund supports community responses through the three disease components, and community systems strengthening through investments in Resilient and Sustainable Systems for Health (RSSH). Community systems are the structures, mechanisms, processes, and actors that engage and deliver interventions within communities. These systems may be community-led or community-based, both of which are important to deliver programs to communities. Community-led systems and responses are led by the community while community-based systems and responses are delivered in the community. Community-based responses are delivered within government health programs and others by independent non-governmental organizations. Community System Strengthening (CSS) is a set of interventions intended to support the development of informed, capable, and coordinated communities, and community-based and community-led organizations, groups, and structures. These entities are crucial for advancing health and equity, particularly in the efforts against HIV, TB, and malaria. Community Responses are the actions and strategies planned and implemented by communities to address health and development issues.

¹ <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/results/>

5. CRSS aligns with the Global Fund's 2023-2028 Strategy, which emphasizes the importance of community health as a cornerstone of global health and pandemic preparedness . The CRSS approach is informed by lessons learned from previous implementation phases and is continuously evolving to incorporate innovations such as community-led monitoring (CLM), which has shown promise in enhancing program quality and accessibility . In summary, CRSS represents the Global Fund's commitment to a community-centric approach, recognizing that sustainable health outcomes can only be achieved when communities are empowered to lead, monitor, and advocate for their health.
6. The estimated investment to date in Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) signed grants for CSS totals \$104 million. The Global Fund prioritized four key interventions under CSS in its 2023-2028 Strategy and for the allocation period of 2023-2025. These interventions are: (1) community-led monitoring (CLM) to enable communities to oversee and report on the quality and effectiveness of health services; (2) community-led research and advocacy to support communities to conduct research and advocate for their health needs and rights; (3) community capacity building and leadership development to strengthen the abilities of community members to lead and manage health initiatives; and (4) community engagement, linkages, and coordination to promote collaboration between communities, health services, and other stakeholders to enhance the impact of health programs. These interventions could interact given the political economy associated with the diversity of civil society groups that engage with different strands.
7. These interventions are designed to ensure that the Global Fund's investments are responsive to the needs of the communities they serve and that they contribute to the broader goal of ending the epidemics of HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria.
8. The Global Fund Secretariat is the primary user of this evaluation and will take forward the utilization of insights, findings and recommendations of the evaluation. The evaluation will also provide the Board and Committees with independent and credible evidence of collective progress towards the Global Fund Strategy objectives in this area. Secondary users of the evidence and learning that will come from this evaluation relating to program implementation include technical partners and country level stakeholders. Indicate the use of the evaluation.

3. Purpose and Objectives

9. The purpose of the CRSS evaluation is to provide the Global Fund and partners with an assessment of the Global Fund's approach to CRSS and the contribution of community responses to improve access to HTM services, grant implementation and performance. The evaluation will provide learnings on the challenges and gaps, and recommendations as to how the Global Fund can better conceptualize and invest in CRSS. The findings of the evaluation will be used by the Secretariat in preparation of GC 8, namely providing guidance to Global Fund country teams, the Technical Advice and Partnership Department and in-country recipients on CRSS priorities, approaches, and interventions
10. The main objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess Global Fund's approach to CRSS and factors that facilitate and hinder progress towards sustainable community systems.
- To assess the effectiveness of the interventions prioritized by the Global Fund under CSS.
- To assess the complementarity and integration of CRSS with the formal health systems at country level.
- To assess the contribution of community-led and community-based responses supported by the Global Fund to improve access to HTM services, grant implementation and performance.

4. Evaluation Scope

11. The evaluation will include both community responses and community systems strengthening, as reflected in the Global Fund's current Strategy, and referred to as CRSS. Under CSS, the evaluation will cover three out of four key interventions, focusing on: (i) CLM, (ii) community-led advocacy and (iii) community capacity building . The evaluation will also assess integration of CRSS with the formal health sector and contribution of CRSS to grant implementation and access to services. The evaluation will not directly assess specific community needs; outcomes and impact of community responses and systems strengthening; partnerships and social contracting.
12. In terms of the time frame and reporting, the evaluation will cover the Global Fund's Grant Cycle 6 (GC 6) from 2020-2022 and part of the Grant Cycle 7 (GC 7) during the period of 2023. This evaluation will also provide complimentary insights to reporting on the Global Fund's key performance indicator KPI S4 .

5. Themes and Questions

13. Four evaluation themes and linked evaluation questions have been identified through preliminary scoping, document review and consultations with stakeholders. Each of the four themes speaks to the evaluation objectives outlined above. The first theme explores the Global Fund's broad approach to CRSS. The second theme looks at the role of CSS, focusing on CLM, community capacity building and advocacy. The third theme looks at the integration of CRSS with the formal health systems and sustainability, while the fourth theme covers how CRSS contributes to grant implementation, performance, and health responses in countries. The evaluation questions will be further refined during the inception phase and finalized as part of the inception report.

Themes	Evaluation Questions
1) The Global Fund's approach to community responses and systems strengthening (CRSS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How well conceptualized is the Global Fund's approach to CRSS within its supported disease programs and RSSH, and how well aligned is it with national systems? ○ To what extent does the Global Fund prioritize, direct investments, and ensure consistency between funding community responses and supporting community systems to deliver CRSS at the country level?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How has the Global Fund adapted its approach to CRSS in challenging operating environments (COEs) and in the context of anti-LGBTQI+ and rights movements, gender inequality and violence and closing civic space? ○ How effective and efficient are Global Fund grant processes and policies in enabling community-based and community-led organizations (CBOs and CLOs) to access funding for community responses and systems strengthening?
2) Community Systems Strengthening (CSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To what extent is CLM built into HIV, TB, and malaria programs and to what extent does it lead to improved availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of HTM programs? ○ To what extent have Global Fund's investments in community capacity building led to stronger community systems and more effective community responses at the country level? ○ How much have the Global Fund investments in CSS contributed to stronger advocacy for resource mobilization and policy change in relation to rights, equity, and health?
3) Integration of CRSS with formal health systems and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To what extent does the Global Fund's approach to CRSS ensure complementarity and integration of community-based and community-led services with formal health services whilst considering health systems requirements in countries? ○ To what extent do investments in CRSS contribute to sustainability of community systems and responses? ○ To what extent are community responses and systems part of the national strategic plans (NSPs) / community health strategies?
4) Contribution of CRSS to grant implementation and access to HTM services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How and to what extent do CBOs / CLOs contribute to grant implementation and grant performance? ○ How and to what extent does CRSS contribute to improvements in service delivery and access to HTM services?

6. Approaches & Methodological Considerations

14. Service Providers must include in their technical proposal a comprehensive description and justification of the approach and methodology within an appropriate evaluation framework. A theory of change (ToC) should underpin the evaluation and be utilized to guide the methods used; data collection; analysis; and in answering the evaluation questions. The specific methods proposed under each methodological approach should be clearly defined and their value in answering the evaluation question should be explained. Some suggested approaches and methods are listed below. A non-exhaustive list of documentation, data and data sources and key informants are listed in the annex.
15. The Service Providers are encouraged to explore additional methods and data sources beyond the ones listed. The final and detailed methodology and implementation plan for the CRSS evaluation will be finalized during the inception phase.
16. The methodology will describe the specific methods, data collection techniques, data quality assurance mechanisms and data analysis procedures. The ELO envisions that the evaluation will utilize a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. The limitations of the chosen methods should be highlighted, including any limitations due to data availability, access to country stakeholders and representation of specific stakeholder groups. Note that it is critical to ensure a balance of proposed approaches across the proposed evaluation themes and questions.

Methodological considerations to be addressed in the proposal.

1. Conceptual framework and theory of change

17. The evaluation will be underpinned by a conceptual framework and a theory of change (ToC). The evaluation will build on the current Secretariat work on developing a ToC for RSSH, which includes community system strengthening. Bidders in their proposals should justify how they will build on the existing ToC and use the TOC for identifying methods, data collection and analysis; and in systematically interpreting the data.

2. Mixed methods approach and triangulation

18. The evaluation will adopt a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods while actively involving various stakeholder groups. Specific details on the proposed qualitative and quantitative methods should be provided. The bidder should justify and describe appropriate methodological mixes that will be used to answer the specific question. Data will be triangulated to ensure robust and comprehensive evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

3. Community-appropriate evaluation methods.

19. The Service Providers are encouraged to propose specific community-appropriate evaluation methods, for example, community-based participatory methods; culturally sensitive data collection and analysis; and comparison between communities and other

contextual settings. The bidders should provide a detailed description and justification of how local /community stakeholders will be involved in the evaluation process and how their participation will be ensured. These approaches will allow access to unpublished and otherwise unavailable data and will help build trust with the communities.

4. Systems approach

20. The evaluation will comprehensively consider the complex context and interconnected elements within which CRSS operates including cultural, political, and socio-economic factors. It will consider the different system components within which Global Fund-funded CRSS interventions exist: HTM and RSSH grants, national level policies and guidelines, etc. It will utilize analytical methods to identify key stakeholders; obtain insights into the structure and functioning of communities; and map the interconnectedness and interdependence between entities and different system components. A systems approach to evaluation will help identify challenges and gaps, and opportunities for improvement.

21. The systems approach will include:

a) ***A political economy lens.***

The evaluation will be informed by a political economy lens. It will be important to describe and assess the political and economic contexts within which CRSS operates and outline various relationships between communities, community organizations and governments, power structures and dynamics within communities and other systemic challenges which would inform and impact community interventions and responses.

b) ***A human rights and gender lens.***

A human rights and gender lens to the evaluation would help uncover human rights and gender inequalities manifest in a community that would impact community systems and responses. Some of these inequalities include access to services and decision-making ability and power, social norms, cultural practices and the interaction of human rights and gender with other social identities. These factors would impact access to HTM services, grant implementation and progress towards effective and sustainable community systems.

c). **Country insights**

Country insights will provide specific details, contexts and nuances needed to respond to the evaluation objectives, themes, and questions. The bidder should explain how country insights are linked to the objectives of the evaluation and how they will be used to answer the evaluation questions. Appropriate methods will be proposed and detailed by the Service Provider for eliciting information from the national and community level. If country visits are proposed as part of country insights, a strong rationale should be provided.

22. Six countries will be selected for country insights. Countries will be selected based on a pre-defined set of criteria proposed by the bidder and finalized in consultation with ELO and the CRG team during the inception phase. Indicative criteria for selecting countries are listed below. The bidder is requested to consider these indicative criteria and suggest their own criteria and countries relevant to their proposed methods and to respond comprehensively to the evaluation questions.

- Focus on CRSS activities including active CBO and CLO responses, CLM and capacity building.
- Diversity of contexts (geography (including AELAC, WCA), socio-economic status; country risk profile; maturity of civil society organizations and formal health sector; and disease burden.
- High impact and core portfolios, COE status and transitioning countries.
- Scale of funding.
- Opportunities to compare across new versus more mature implementation environments and other factors.

23. For each country, a 3-5-page report is expected. These will be provided as Annexes to the Main Report. Importantly, findings from the country insights reports will inform and should be included in the Main Report, with a comparative analysis of country cases as much as possible, bearing in mind some uniqueness's in some of the countries.

General guidance

24. **Recommendations** - The recommendations arising from the evaluation should be closely linked to the findings and conclusions of the evaluation. They should specify intended stakeholder/s, priority level, required resources, and timeframe.
25. **Budget** - The Global Fund is inviting bidders to propose a budget to deliver the proposed work. As a guide, the indicative evaluation budget is approximately USD \$300 000 to USD350 000, inclusive of all costs including in-country data collection costs and professional fees. The bidder should include the estimated level of effort for each team member and the roles to be performed.
26. **Ethical Principles** - The evaluation will be performed in line with ethical principles of human subject research and be gender sensitive².

7. Evaluation Phases

27. The Evaluation is expected to be conducted over 7-8 months and is divided into 3 broad phases:

Inception Phase/ 4-6 weeks

28. Following the contracting of the Service Provider and appropriate confidentiality undertakings by the Evaluation Team, the Service Provider will submit a workplan within 10 days. Subsequently, the Evaluation Team Lead, and several members of the Evaluation Team will receive a virtual comprehensive onboarding to the Global Fund and its CRSS approach. The ELO will provide the Team with key background documents, some of which are indicated in Annex 1 of this TOR. During this period, the Evaluation Team will consult with key Secretariat staff and a limited number of country stakeholders. The evaluators will also be introduced to members of the IEP.

² <https://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980>

29. Following the orientation, the Evaluation Team will refine and adapt their initial technical proposal to finalize the evaluation design, modify evaluation questions if needed, describe the methodology in an evaluation framework against the evaluation objectives and questions, and define the data and information needs. The Evaluation Team will submit an inception report, guided by an inception report template provided by ELO. ELO will facilitate access to requested Global Fund data and information.

Data Collection and Analysis Phase/ 12-14 weeks

30. Evaluators proceed with the independent collection and analysis of data and information as described in the Inception Report. The country insights will be implemented during this phase. Regular meetings will be held between the Evaluation Team Lead and ELO. The evaluators will submit preliminary findings of the evaluations to the ELO at the end of this phase.

Reporting Phase/ 8-10 weeks

31. A workshop/meeting will be organized by ELO (co-chaired by ELO and IEP) for the evaluators to discuss the findings and evaluation recommendations with key stakeholders. The Evaluation Team Lead, and key team members are expected to travel to the Global Fund Secretariat to participate in this event. Following the workshop, the evaluators will then submit a draft report, including recommendations, for review by the ELO, IEP and other stakeholders.
32. This will be followed up by a Final Report. The final report should be concise, with a maximum length of 60 pages excluding annexes. The service provider is also expected to provide a method (for example, a 'traffic light' description to evaluate the strength of evidence gathered for the evaluation. The final reporting prefaced by an executive summary will also include summative slide deck, learning briefs, and other learning and communication products, including a one pager infographic with high level evaluation findings.

8. Expected Deliverables and Approximate Timeline

33. A tentative time frame for the evaluation is provided below. The entire evaluation process from contract signing to the approval of the very final deliverables is expected to take about 8-9 months (target commencement of the inception phase and onboarding is week of 20th January) The approximate time of expected submission of the evaluation's main deliverables to ELO is outlined below. Exact dates will be confirmed during the inception. Payment will be made against deliverables once approved by ELO

Deliverables	Due Date
Evaluation Workplan (within ten days of contract execution)	Late August 2024
Inception Report	September 2024

Preliminary findings at an early observation workshop (accompanied by the first draft report).	December 2024
Recommendations Workshop	January 2025
Draft Evaluation Report	February/ March 2025
Final Evaluation Report	April 2025
Learning Briefs and other learning and communication products.	May 2025

9. Skills and Experience Required from the Evaluation Team

34. The evaluation will be implemented by a consortium that is led, co-led or includes a community-based / community-led organization or network.
35. The Global Fund is looking for an Evaluation Team comprising of at least one senior expert supported by 3-4 evaluators with extensive knowledge and experience in community systems and community responses. The Team should have a mix of knowledge and experience in CRSS including a deep understanding of the challenges related to CRSS at the national and regional level. In addition to subject matter expertise, the team should have diverse skills sets and expertise in conducting systems approach evaluations. This includes expertise in systems thinking, political economy and gender and human rights analysis. The team should have expertise in conducting mixed methods evaluations; an in-depth understanding of the Global Fund or similar organizations; and work experience in different regions.

Essential:

- The team lead should have at least 15 years' experience in implementing and/or evaluating community systems and community responses, with a deep understanding of the current situation and challenges related to CRSS at the global level.
- Demonstrated track record of working with community-led and community-based organizations.
- Familiarity with approaches to CSS, such as CLM tools and methods, CBO/CLO capacity building orientations and workshops, and development and engagement with CBO/CLO advocacy plans.
- Expertise and experience conducting evaluations with a systems approach, to include political economy, gender and human rights lenses.

- The team should contain at least one evaluator with gender experience, for example, experience in conducting gender-responsive evaluation and gender analysis.
- Good knowledge of evaluation methodologies including experience and expertise in conducting community-based, mixed-methods evaluations.
- Extensive experience with appropriate evaluation design and methods, both quantitative and qualitative, including relevant research analysis skills. Specialist skills with experience in structured synthesis of information from a broad range of source materials and country insights studies.
- Advanced knowledge of and experience working with complex public health organizations and programs.
- Full language proficiency in English.

Desirable:

- Knowledge of and experience working with the Global Fund or a similar public health organization.
- Knowledge of the Global Fund mandate, strategy and model of work, especially on CSS and RSSH.
- French language proficiency in the team.
- The Global Fund will give preference to strong proposals from or that are co-led by individuals and/or firms from community-based / community-led organization based in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), and which include representation of Global Fund populations served. In addition to the core Evaluation Team, non-core experts may be included to add/strengthen specific expertise/experiences to support the work.

40. The description of the Evaluation Team should be provided in the technical proposal and include the level of effort allocated to each team member

10. Annexes

Annex 1. Suggested information sources and key informants.

41. The following are examples of documents, data sources and key informants that can inform the evaluation (note: this list is not exhaustive):

a). Secretariat-level documents, evaluations and technical briefs

- Technical Brief – Community Systems Strengthening. Allocation Period 2023 – 2025. December 2022
- Community-led Monitoring Strategic Initiative (CLM SI) 2021, 2022 - Annual Reviews by Global Fund CRG team.
- Towards a Global Agenda for Community-led Monitoring. Meeting Report. September 2022, Thailand.
- Community Engagement and Community-led Response Evaluation - A Secretariat-led evaluation with TERG oversight. June 2022
- Community Engagement in Global Fund Country Coordinating Mechanisms: Findings from the RISE Study: April 2024.

b). Quantitative and qualitative data sources and datasets

- Funding Requests and grants for GC6 and GC7.
- Funding for CRSS interventions across GC6 and GC7. Data on donor landscape on interventions and programming, if available.
- Outputs and outcomes of CRSS interventions (programmatic data collected as part of Global Fund grants, which includes an analysis of outputs in terms of service utilization rates, coverage indicators and performance against targets).

c). Key Informants

- Global Fund Secretariat (CRG team, CCM team, Country Teams, HTM / RSSH teams).
- Global Fund bodies (e.g. TRP, OIG, relevant SC constituencies).
- technical partners (UNAIDS, Stop TB Partnership, RBM Partnership).
- Regional Civil Society networks.
- In-country stakeholders (CCMs, Principal Recipients (PRs), sub-recipients (SRs), CBOs/CLOs and community representatives).