



Global Network of Sex Work Projects
Promoting Health and Human Rights

CRIB SHEET:

Participating in the Global Fund Partnership Forums

Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Global Fund Partnership Forums will be held virtually in 2021. As a result, the format for participation has changed. This Crib Sheet provides practical guidance on participating in the Partnership Forums and highlights key discussion points which can be used to promote sex workers' advocacy priorities during the Forums.

What to Expect

The Global Fund will try and replicate a face-to-face meeting, but virtually. There will likely be opening presentations, followed by framing presentations about key issues for each session.

During the sessions, it is possible that electronic tools, such as Mentimeter and Whiteboard, will be used. You will be given instructions on how to engage with these tools.

There will be virtual booths on specific topics, and you should be able to move from booth to booth as you choose.

Special Q&A spaces will be set up so that you can post written comments or questions.

Maximising your Participation

- Get familiar with the agenda/programme and meeting procedures.
- Know the programme events that interest you, and how to join those sessions.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions – since this is the first virtual Partnership Forums, everyone will be learning.
- Even if the questions being discussed do not appear to be directly related to key issues for sex workers, there are many ways in which the sex workers' rights agenda can be linked to the Global Fund strategy discussions. These links will be discussed later in this Crib Sheet.
- Don't be shy. In events such as these, it is important not to wait for your chance to speak up. Usually, you will be asked to indicate your request to speak by clicking on a 'hands-up' icon. As many others will also want to contribute, you should request to speak as early as possible. Be confident, and don't be afraid to be 'pushy.' Your contribution is critical, and is much more important than those of people who are not members of key populations or communities.

Key Discussion Points

Below, we have provided suggestions for key points that can be raised to promote sex workers' advocacy priorities during the Partnership Forums.

Addressing Health Inequities

In order to fulfil its commitment to promoting the health and human rights of sex workers and other key populations, the Global Fund must address structural inequities and barriers which exacerbate vulnerability and drive the HIV epidemic. This can be achieved by:

- **Increasing advocacy for decriminalisation.** The criminalisation of sex work, along with other forms of legal oppression, remains one of the greatest barriers to sex workers' health and human rights. Criminalisation also makes it harder for sex workers to participate and take leadership roles in Global Fund processes. In order to address these structural inequities, the

NSWP | The Matrix, 62 Newhaven Road | Edinburgh EH6 5QB | Scotland UK

secretariat@nswp.org | +44 (0)131 553 2555 | www.nswp.org

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Global Fund must play a stronger role in advocating for the decriminalisation of sex work, along with the decriminalisation of drug use and removal of other legal penalties which affect key populations.

- **Addressing stigma and discrimination, gender inequality, and violence among key populations.** Along with criminalisation, stigma and discrimination, violence, and gender inequality are epidemics in themselves. In addition to driving the HIV epidemic, these structural inequities have exacerbated vulnerability throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, exposing sex workers to increased discrimination, harassment, and violence, along with loss of income and exclusion from social protection schemes.

Strengthening Community Engagement and Leadership

By addressing structural inequities and barriers, the Global Fund has an opportunity to create a more inclusive and enabling environment for community members to lead the HIV response. This can be done by:

- **Creating a separate funding stream for key populations.** A separate key population-specific funding stream would allow key populations to control how funds are used for community-led programming while strengthening community leadership and ownership in Global Fund processes. Funds could be facilitated through global key population networks, a consortium, existing smaller funding mechanisms, or other means – as long as key populations are fully involved in the design and implementation of this funding stream.
- **Recognising sex workers and other key population members as experts.** The Global Fund must acknowledge the unique skills and expertise of community members, giving them equal weight and status as other professionals. Recognising sex workers as experts not only promotes the meaningful participation of sex workers within Global Fund processes, but it will also amplify the positive impacts of the Global Fund's work within communities.

Ensuring that Sex Workers are not Left Behind

The Global Fund is currently considering expanding its mandate to become a broader 'fund for health' and to fight a wider range of diseases and emerging pandemics, such as COVID-19. This model is grounded in a biomedical, rather than a human rights-based approach, and poses significant risks to sex workers and other key populations:

- **The expansion of the Global Fund's mandate could divert attention and funding away from key populations.** Without additional funding and resources, broadening the Global Fund's mandate to cover a wider range of diseases and pandemics could result in sex workers and other key populations being left behind. Any expansion of the Global Fund's mandate *must* be accompanied by significant additional funding and resources to ensure that programming for key populations is not impacted.
- **Global HIV targets may be pushed further off-track.** Missed 2020 HIV targets have already resulted in millions of additional HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths. The current target of ending the HIV epidemic by 2030 is also off-track. Worldwide, 62% of all new adult HIV infections occur among key populations and their sexual partners.¹ In order to ensure that 2030 targets are met, the Global Fund must reinvigorate its approach to promoting the health and human rights of key populations.

If you would like to discuss your participation, or any of the key issues, please feel free to contact Mick Matthews, NSWP Senior Programme Officer – mick.matthews@nswp.org.

¹ UNAIDS, 2020, "[Global AIDS Update: Seizing the Moment – Tackling entrenched inequalities to end epidemics](#)".