Introduction

The Global Fund’s 45th Board meeting was held virtually from May 10 -11 2021 with pre-meetings on May 5 and 10. This report will share highlights from the meeting.

Please Note: It is impossible to capture the detailed level of rich, complex, and nuanced discussions that took place and developed throughout the meetings. This summary represents the GFAN Secretariat’s experience and interpretation of the meetings and should not be considered an official or authorized accounting of events and positioning.

Executive Director’s Report:

Peter Sands the Executive Director, in his remarks to the board, did not address in detail COVID-19 or the Global Fund Strategy Development, as there were board conversations scheduled on these topics.

In preparing for the 7th Replenishment – Sands acknowledges that we lost ground in our work against HIV, TB and malaria in 2020 and will do so again in 2021, but the Global Fund’s goals remain focused on reaching the 2030 targets. He also acknowledged that we do not actually know how much further back we were knocked and stressed this will take significantly more money AND more innovation. While he expressed concerns about the challenges for donors to keep up their same level of pledges for the 7th Replenishment, Sands and the Global Fund Secretariat (GFS) remain confident that the large majority of donors are still following through on their 6th Replenishment pledges from 2019. This may not be as true in implementing countries as even more than before, with significant pressures to divert already limited funds to address the challenges of COVID many countries are cash strapped and do not have the funds.
The Global Fund has been deliberately front-loading procurement orders and has made a significant step up in Community Rights and Gender (CRG) grants; by end of 2020, they have increased by about 145%. In relation to adolescent girls and young women, the Global Fund has continued to build on the success of the Her Voice program and have stepped up their work to advocate for services and programs for people who inject drugs. There remains a need to accelerate work on HIV treatment for young people and children, as only 50% have access to ARVs. The Fund hopes to hear more from the youth council, which was formed about a year ago, about their experiences with disruptions because of COVID-19.

Sands highlighted, despite the added pressure of COVID-19, that the Global Fund has raised far more funds on an off-cycle basis for AIDS, TB, and malaria than ever before. Preparatory work for the 7th Replenishment is starting, including work on the Investment Case. With overall financing needs higher and all – donors and implementing countries – experiencing significant health and economic pressures, the potential for a huge gap is very real.

He also shared with the board that there will be a revamp of the Global Fund logo and brand starting in June with a “fresh visual identity” and that the Global Fund will work with Italy and UK, who are hosting the G20 and G7 respectively, on acknowledging the Global Fund’s 20th anniversary.
Finally, Sands stressed that the job is not finished. Far too many people are still being infected and dying. It is the 20th anniversary of the Fund, and it was created to fight the pandemics that threaten the poor and vulnerable, everywhere – a commitment to protect everyone from the deadliest infectious diseases.

Some of the key comments brought up by Delegations:

» The Developed Country NGO Delegation stressed that the critical issue of CRG should be a standing item in the Board meeting agenda going forward and be represented on the senior management team at the GFS. (Note: the delegation has requested this numerous times and the CRG update is usually during a pre-briefing day and not a full meeting of the Board)

» The Developing Country NGO delegation highlighted that the most marginal, key populations, do not have access to essential services and this is exacerbated by COVID-19 and that the Global Fund should have its focus there and fight for change. They also echoed the call for CRG to be at the senior management level.

» The Communities Delegation also echoed the call for CRG being made a standing item on the Board agenda and represented as part of senior management and requested how CRG issues will be embedded in all Global Fund efforts rather than siloed.

» Going into the next replenishment, COVID-19 rolled back TB by 12 years and, according to Lucica Ditiu ED of the Stop TB Partnership “now we don't have a lot of time” and “we have 9 more years to stand together”. The new replenishment investment case will need to use the data to discuss disease split - what is killing all of us and why. She stressed further that the 3 diseases are unfinished business because the world has been distracted from addressing the issues. The “unfinished agenda” was echoed by other Technical Partners and several other delegations.

Resource Mobilization:

Resource Mobilization was not an agenda item at the Board Meeting although it was touched upon in many of the presentations and discussions including the ED Report by Peter Sands. A Board Paper was shared ahead of the meeting and key highlights included:

- Despite significant risks to 6th Replenishment pledge conversion, there have not been any significant delays in payments and commitments are being honored in a timely manner although negotiation timelines for new and returning donors have been slightly longer than in previous replenishments because of the many pressures and difficulties meeting etc.
- There continues to be very active conversations about resource needs with most donors and partners and significant new contributions have been secured as part of the COVID-19 response – to date, close to an additional USD $4 billion has been raised to support the C19RM mechanism which is the main vehicle the Global Fund is using to support additional spending to address the 3 diseases and mitigate the impact of COVID-19.
- Despite this, there remains a large financing gap through 2021 of more than USD $22 billion in the global response to COVID (via the ACT-A mechanism where the Global Fund plays a leading role in Diagnostics, Therapeutics, and the Health System Connector).
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As mentioned during the ED report, the paper mentioned how the Global Fund is positioning itself and preparing the groundwork for the 7th Replenishment which includes some of those items mentioned by the ED (the brand refresh, the 20th anniversary, and early preparations for the Investment Case) but also mentions work underway to increase support for the Global Fund’s advocacy eco-system and strengthen long-term donor engagement strategies.

The still being worked on Strategy will be a key determining factor for the Replenishment as it will define the impact the Global Fund aims to achieve and the framework for how to achieve it. A few other “next steps” and “ongoing work” on resource mobilization were identified including demonstrate the Global Fund role in COVID-19 response including the role it has been playing – procurement & delivery, mitigating the impact on the 3 diseases, shoring up health systems – and the opportunity that engaging in the global COVID-19 response provides including leveraging the global platforms and the high-level political engagement.

Together, these elements alongside engagement with CSO and community partners, private sector mobilization, the Investment Case and a strong Resource Mobilization campaign were identified as the key resource mobilization focus going forward.

### 2021 G7 & G20 PROCESSES
GF advocacy positions set groundwork for the 7th Replenishment

1. The Global Fund was created to fight pandemics. It is a proven & effective vehicle to channel investments to respond to & prepare for infectious disease pandemics in LMICs
2. Push for an integrated approach to pandemic preparedness & response that includes the fight against existing (HTM) & future pandemics
3. Building back better and economic recovery will depend on sustainable investments in global health especially SDG 3 targets on HTM, and PPR
4. Highlight the importance of community engagement and gender and human rights principles in effective global health investment
5. Push for equitable access and scale up of prevention/ detection/ treatment interventions, including new technology and innovation
6. The Global Fund is one of the key actors that are working together in complementarity on global health & PPR
7. Recognition of the results achieved by the Global Fund partnership in the last 20 years & the efficiency of the Global Fund model

Box 4: This slide was shared on the GFAN call held on June 16 2021, following the board meeting. For the full discussion you can access the call recording and slides here. While the slide is specific to current G7/G20 work, it does show some of the narrative being used in these early days working towards the 7th Replenishment.
Strategy Report to the Board

As is the case with many organizations, the Global Fund Board is responsible for the development of the Global Fund's strategy and discussions on this began in earnest almost a year ago.

The Donor Group signed a unanimous letter to the Secretariat and was delivered the morning of the first day of the Board meeting. The letter was additionally supported by at least 70% of the implementer delegations and highlighted that the framework submitted by the Global Fund placed too much emphasis on pandemic preparedness. The board was clear that they wanted to maintain the Global Fund's focus on the three diseases.

Harley Feldbaum, Head of Strategy and Policy at the Global Fund expressed that the Secretariat missed the mark on the framework – especially with their placement of pandemic preparedness and response, as it was placed “too high” as a goal. Additionally, he acknowledged that it should not have appeared above the core levers to achieve the goals to end AIDS, TB, and malaria. This input has long been the position of the Communities and 2 NGO delegations, and it was positive to see this frank acknowledgment at the Board meeting.

Harley shared an updated slide with an adjusted plan. Delegations wanted more information from the Secretariat that this was not just a pictorial shift, but some reassurance of a policy shift and requested more information on how they would address the concerns of the board. Some optimism was shared that this was the right direction, but many delegations stated that additional information and assurances would be needed that the board recommendations were heard. Harley promised a "short narrative" or "explanatory note" to better inform the board.

As was evidenced by the Donor Group statement and the discussions during this session, by and large, the majority of the Board is in alignment that the GF Strategy needs to maintain focus on the 3 diseases and while pandemic preparedness is undoubtedly a significant and important part of the narrative around addressing infectious diseases, strengthening community and formal health systems, ensuring equitable access to key and vulnerable populations. The Communities delegation's statement summed up the comments made by many during the discussions in that pandemic preparedness should be a HOW not a WHAT.
Some delegations suggested that they were not sure that COVID-19 was the biggest setback. It has had a dramatic impact, but the many barriers that we all know have been the main setbacks to ending the 3 pandemics by 2030. It is these barriers that the Global Fund partnership was built to address, i.e. weak and under-financed health systems, stigmatization of Key Populations, insufficient political attention to the rights to healthy lives, insufficient focus on prevention to name only a few.

While it was originally planned for this Board Meeting to be the one where the Board could give final direction on the Strategy, this is not the case because of this core issue in identifying and clarifying the mandate. The next steps in developing the Strategy include extraordinary sessions of both the Strategy Committee and the Board in June and July to provide the final “steer” on the strategy framework. The strategy narrative would then be developed and approved by the Strategy Committee and Board into Q3.

Box 6: This slide was shared on the GFAN call held on June 16 2021, following the board meeting. For the full discussion you can access the call recording and slides here. This slide is an updated version of what was shared by Harley to the Board during his presentation.
The Global Fund was first envisioned as a mechanism to respond to pandemics, specifically the catastrophe of HIV and finally created to additionally encompass the TB and malaria responses as well.

In the past 20 years, we have learned a lot of lessons on how you respond to pandemics effectively - the broader Partnership knows more how to do that than any other ecosystem.

However, we have never really focused on the preparedness aspect of it because when you think about what COVID-19 has done to AIDS, TB, and malaria in the last year and a half, it has been our biggest setback in a much more dramatic way in a short time than any other shortcomings we have on CRG or execution of rollout of new technologies, etc.

While it might be uncomfortable, we should acknowledge as a Board we did not see this as a risk and did not do much to mitigate it. Pandemics like COVID-19 have a dramatic impact on what we are trying to achieve on AIDS, TB, and malaria.

When I look forward the biggest certain uncertainty and the biggest lever in the short term in those next 9 years it is what happens to COVID-19 that will influence how we are able to address the three diseases. But if what we see what is happening in India continue to happen elsewhere the risk continues.

The other big risk we face is that another pandemic arrives and knocks us off-course again and we need to think hard about how we deliver on our mission to end the epidemics of AIDS, TB, and malaria - there is no real disagreement on that – how we address other issues that completely disrupt progress on AIDS, TB and malaria is important to protect the communities we are focused on.

The Global Fund was a gamechanger but the playing field has changed -- most organisations only have one game-changing moment in them. Most have a lot of difficulty changing -- in multilaterals new institutions are created and the others lose momentum or die. Faced with major contextual change organisations risk the mistake of not recognizing the scale of the change around them. My reflections are whether WE recognize the scale of the change around us and whether we are thinking boldly enough about how much and how we adapt.

We are at a terrible moment in our history and the worst moment since our founding – it is okay that it is not easy; we are having difficulty resolving these issues - if it was easy, we would be missing the point. It should be hard to work out what the right thing to do is here and the path forward; because it really matters that we get this right.

Box 7: Peter Sands comments on the Strategy discussion at the Board Meeting. Please note this is a summary and close proximity of what was said and should not be considered a direct quote.
Health Financing Department:

The Global Fund set up a new Health Financing Department that is headed by Kalipso Chalkidou, who joined the secretariat in January 2021. The strategic approach of the new department – given the current and future strategy and the context of COVID-19 is to leverage the Global Fund’s position to:

» Advocate for sufficient domestic financing where most critical to end the epidemics (raise & spend more domestically)
» Foster a sustainable financing environment for efficient Global Fund & Country investment in disease responses (i.e. data, institutional, skills) (Spend better)
» Maximize impact of Global Fund investments as part of the global health financing landscape (leverage partnerships)
» Strengthen effective sustainability of national programs (support successful transitions & transition preparedness)

“Chalkidou’s appointment, along with the creation of a new Health Finance department, represents a step-change in the Global Fund’s focus and capabilities in health finance, enabling an even more active role in unlocking sustainable domestic funding and enhancing its impact, both in fighting HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, and in the development of more resilient systems of health.”

The developed country NGO delegation underscored that the voices of marginalized communities and civil society organizations are often missing from the discussions and decision making in the health financing space. The Global Fund Secretariat and partnership needs to use their leverage to ensure meaningful engagement of communities and civil society on health financing and sustainability of national programmes, community systems and advocacy. The Developed country NGO delegation would like to also see stronger systems and processes to track and report on the core mandate of the new department and ensuring that COVID-19 activities are not diverting funds.

Several delegations highlighted the need for additional information about frameworks for M&E of the work of this new department as it trickles down to country levels.

Highlights from the Committee Reports:

Strategy Committee:
Following the board recommendations made at this meeting there will be an extraordinary meeting of the Strategy Committee on the 15th of June in advance of the extraordinary Board meeting on the 20th of July. Key workstreams and priorities for 2021-22 for the committee include the new Global Fund Strategy Development, monitoring and evaluation (recommendations on independent evaluation function and M&E framework), eligibility and allocation review (including recommendations on disease split and allocation methodology), and the KPI framework (including recommendations on 2017-2022 KPI adjustments, and on the 2023+ draft KPI framework).

Board Leadership:
Board leadership will talk to Secretariat about what criteria will need to be met for going back to in person and/or hybrid meetings. In 2021 the Board leadership recruitment process will get underway.

Key Board Decisions and Milestones for 2021-2022:

Box 9: Slide from presentation of key board decisions and milestones.
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Audit and Finance Committee:
The Audit and Finance Committee shared their work stream and key priorities. The Key work streams for 2021-2022 include: Financial Oversights external audit, risk management and Office of the Inspector General. Key deliverables in the second quarter of 2022 include: C19RM, OPEX budget (costing of the new strategy), and the OIG budget and workplan.

Ethics Committee:
The priorities for the ethics committee include the recruitment and appointment of a new Ethics Officer in 2021, the Board Leadership selection process, and committee leadership and membership selection. The committee will also review guidelines for performance assessments of Board Direct reports and work to strengthen governance through the Action plan 2.0.

Decision Points:
Operating and Expense budget was passed unanimously: “Based on the recommendation of the Audit and Finance Committee, the Board approves the increase of forecasted aggregate operating expenses available for the 2020-2022 allocation period by US$ 30 million, in order to facilitate the implementation of critical activities in 2022; such that the amount made available for operating expenses for the 2020-2022 allocation cycle shall be US$ 930 million.”
GFAN’s Global Fund Board Guide: Includes more detailed information on the process of board meetings and the work of delegations.

Documents for the Global Fund’s 45th Board Meeting

Who Sits on the Global Fund Board of Directors?

Developing Country NGO Delegation Statement

Communities Delegation 45th Board Meeting Constituency Statement

Box 1(repeated): Where to find More Information

Web: www.globalfundadvocatesnetwork.org
Twitter & Facebook: @GFAdvocates
YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/HerelAmCampaign