46th Global Fund Board Meeting
November 2021
Virtual
Introduction

The Global Fund’s 46th Board meeting was held virtually from the 8th to 10th of November 2021 with pre-meetings on November 4th and 5th. This report will share highlights from the meeting.

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.

Acronyms

C19RM  COVID-19 Response Mechanism
GAC  Grant Approval Committee
KPI  Key Performance Indicator
LIC  Low Income Country
MIC  Middle Income Country
M&E  Monitoring and Evaluation
PPR  Pandemic Preparedness and Response
RSSH  Resilient and Sustainable Systems for Health
TRP  Technical Review Panel

Box 1: Where to find board documents

You can find most of the documents submitted to the Board by the Secretariat here (you need to click on the + sign under Board Meeting Documents to see the full list).

In particular, look at the complete list of decision points.
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Report of the Executive Director

Peter Sands, the Global Fund Executive Director, focused in his address on the impact that COVID-19 has had on Global Fund programs worldwide, as documented in the 2021 Results Report, and the response of the Global Fund to these challenges, in particular through the COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM). He then talked about how the current context will affect the 7th Replenishment, and reaffirmed the Secretariat confidence that any challenges could be mitigated. He also gave the Board an update on the progress of the current grants and the priorities of the Secretariat for 2022, in particular the preparation for the implementation of the new strategy.

On COVID-19, he talked about the effect the pandemic still had on the fight against the three diseases, how the Secretariat had mitigated them, and the choices and challenges that lie ahead. He opened with an assessment of the impact of COVID-19, similar to what he wrote in the Report of the Executive Director (see Box 2):

> “Any assessment of 2021 must begin with the dreadful fact that this year, it seems probable that more people have died of infectious disease in the countries in which the Global Fund invests than at any other time in our 20-year history. Driven by the Delta variant, COVID-19 has claimed millions of lives directly, far more than is officially recorded, while its knock-on impact on HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria has reversed many years of hard-won gains. For the poorest and the most marginalized communities in the world, the pandemic has been a catastrophe, and the longer it continues, the more devastating it will be.”

Box 2: Quote from the Report of the Executive Director of the Global Fund, Peter Sands

He stressed the impact on prevention and testing in HIV, case finding and treatment in TB and program implementation in Malaria, and the fact that in countries where the Global Fund invests, COVID-19 is far from over and will be an ongoing threat for years to come.

Peter Sands’ remarks gave a lot of room to the Global Fund mitigation strategy, in particular C19RM. He indicated that the support of the Board to COVID-19 mitigation was essential, and admitted that even if the mechanism was not perfect, it was a big step forward and forged partnerships that could be leveraged in the future by Secretariat.

He updated the Board with the latest figures on C19RM; that US$3.1 billion have been awarded to 103 countries programs and 13 multi-country programs, and that while ensuring impact was crucial, the real challenge that he saw for the mechanism now was that allocating all funds would as it stands leave around US$1 billion in unfunded quality demand. He expressed his support
for the extension of the mechanism by the Board, as the existing approval only allows for pledges up until December 31st 2021. More broadly, he talked of the remaining challenge of figuring out how the Global Fund should be positioned in relation to pandemic preparedness, a new evolving objective of the Strategy approved later during the same Board Meeting.

The COVID-19 pandemic was also front and center of Peter Sands remarks on the 7th Replenishment. He saw two important challenges to overcome: on the one hand, the replenishment timeline overlaps with fundraising efforts by a number of other organizations more involved in pandemic preparedness. On the other hand, the economic turmoil caused by COVID-19 has weakened public finances both in donor and implementing countries, creating the risk of both international and domestic financing contracting at the same time. He did not however believe that an extension of the timeline for pledges to C19RM would be detrimental to the 7th replenishment because the timeline for the disbursement of C19RM pledges (2022) does not overlap with the disbursement period of the replenishment (2023-2025).

Other updates were provided regarding the current implementation cycle. 98% of total country allocation have gone through Technical Review Panel (TRP) review, and 93% of these funds have gone through Grant Approval Committee (GAC) review. He also mentioned the “refreshing” of the Global Fund brand that began in June of this year, ahead of the 7th Replenishment campaign, and some restructuring of the Secretariat, including the creation of a Health Finance Department and the merger of External Relations and Communications Divisions.

Finally, Peter Sands spoke of the importance for the Board to approve the new strategy so that the Secretariat would be able to start preparing its implementation, and that the timeline was tight. He explained that he saw a huge eagerness to switch focus from the strategy itself to the plan and implementation, and that the priority should be to finalize the strategy during this Board Meeting. He highlighted the more central and explicit role given to civil society and communities in the new strategy, and the importance of bringing that vision to life through implementation by identifying concrete actions to put communities at the forefront.

Some of the key comments brought up by Delegations:

» The Communities Delegation spoke of their disappointment at the way the global disease split conversation had been approached by the Board, and the importance in the context of COVID-19 not to forget the too many that died and continue dying from TB.

» The Developing Country NGO Delegation insisted on the role decriminalization had to play in the fight against the three diseases, and could be not left behind because the pandemic took centre stage.

» The Canada-Switzerland-Australia Delegation praised the efforts of the Global Fund to bring a gender lens to its HIV programs, but highlighted that more work was needed on this front in TB and Malaria.
The Strategy Narrative

The Board was presented with a decision point on the strategy narrative that had been slightly adjusted at the request of the UK Delegation and the Developed Country NGO Delegation to ensure that the Board would remain apprised of on-going discussions about the narrative. The amended decision point, and therefore the Strategy Narrative, was approved and the relevant documentation can be found here.

The Strategy Narrative development process was at the center of many discussions convened by GFAN since 2020, both in the Partnership Forums and the Communities and Developing Country Delegations to the Global Fund Board more recently. The Strategy Framework was approved in an exceptional Board meeting in July, after which the narrative was developed in consultation with the Board.

The Secretariat shared its support of the adjusted decision point and presented the narrative as keeping a clear focus on HIV, TB and Malaria, and accounting well for mutually reinforcing objectives. Overarching objectives, including RSSH, equity, community leadership and ownership, gender and human rights are all explicitly defined as preconditions to meaningful progress on health and HIV, TB and Malaria. The strategy narrative also introduces other priorities, including a focus on sustainability, resource mobilization and data management that were lacking in the last strategy. The Secretariat highlighted the importance of a strategy narrative that leaves room for nimbleness and flexibility, and stressed that both major threats of today’s world, climate change and COVID-19, are addressed in the document.

The Global Fund 2023-2028 Strategy Framework

Box 3: The Strategy Framework as approved by the Board in July
The global disease split currently used by the Global Fund (50% for HIV/AIDS, 18% for TB and 32% for Malaria) has been controversial. TB advocates in particular have been arguing for a rebalancing in favor of TB for a long time, and their arguments were strengthened in the last two years by the impact COVID-19 has had on TB. 1.5 million people are estimated to have died of TB in 2020 (figure from Stop TB). Only COVID-19 caused more death that year. As a result, the Africa Coalition on Tuberculosis launched the 33% campaign, demanding that the share of funds going to TB from Global Fund programs be significantly raised. Though there has been a growing consensus that more funding needs to go to TB, how that should be achieved has remained highly disputed, including within the Board. A key issue is the priority given by some to the protection of investment in Low Income Countries (LICs) and in Africa. Because countries with a high TB burden tend to be Middle Income Countries (MICs) and in Asia, a rise in the disease split in favor of TB would mechanically lead to a change in the split of funds between low and middle income countries and between regions, which some see as problematic.

The Communities Delegation, and some of the Technical Partners present at the Board Meeting, stressed that no distinction should be made between lives lost, and that funding should go where the burden is.

The Strategy Committee discussed at length whether the global disease split should be changed, but could not come to a consensus on whether it should be changed and by how much. In the end, the Board was offered to vote the following decision point: For the 2023-25 allocation period, the disease split would remain 50/18/32 for the first $12 billion raised, and any funds raised beyond that would be split 45/25/30 – or 45% for HIV/AIDS, 25% for TB and 30% for malaria. The detailed methodology approved by the Board can be found here.

The Board discussions prior to the vote showed that the decision point was struggling to create consensus. A number of delegations, while stressing their concern at the situation of TB, considered a revision of the disease split not to be an appropriate lever of action, preferring to mobilize catalytic investment and domestic resource mobilization. They stressed the importance of concentrating investment in low income countries, where they could have the most impact, and the complex factors playing into the high TB mortality rate, which...
could not all be address with increased funding. Other delegations expressed their frustration at the size of the proposed revision, judging it not enough to meaningfully increase the funds allocated to TB.

A decision on the disease split was essential to allow the Secretariat to move forward with the preparation of the Investment Case and ultimately the 7th Replenishment. The challenge of creating consensus around the decision point led to a final amendment that included a critical commitment to review this again and more fully prior to the 8th Replenishment. The amended decision point was approved by the Board.

M&E and KPI 2023+ Framework Development

As a first step towards implementing the new Strategy, the Secretariat has been developing in parallel its Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2023 onward. These tools will be essential to the successful realisation of the new strategy. The Board will be reviewing progress on the matter regularly, but is not directly tasked with the development of the M&E and KPIs. The KPIs will be ready by the end 2022. The slides of the update that was provided to the Board can be found here.

The process for the development of the M&E and KPIs Framework as presented to the Board consisted first of the definition of 10 thematic areas based on the new Strategy. Expert panels made of internal and external stakeholders, the latter selected on the basis of recommendations made by the Board, will meet in a series of 3 workshop to develop the KPIs under each thematic area. The workshop aim in sequence to assess existing performance indicators for each thematic area. Experts are asked to identify what dimension of performance is satisfyingly captured by existing indicators, which will require modification modified indicators and which new ones. Then the panels reconvene to define the whole set of indicators, and finally establish targets.

The overall vision given by the Secretariat is that of an opportunity to define a comprehensive approach to measuring progress, guiding by the following principles:

• Clear view of progress through an integrated performance framework
• Common language and accountability for performance (the framework aims to be aligned with global strategies and milestones)
• Mechanism to support decision-making
• Supporting learning and program improvement
• Rigorous and consistent assessment of performance

The names of the internal and external reviewers in the expert panels were not shared with the Board. Delegations had a number of questions regarding the representation of specific regions, areas of expertise and more broadly the profile of the experts, including how many community and civil society representatives were found in each workshops. The Secretariat agreed to share a more detailed list with the Board. A lot of the discussion by the Delegations centered on the need to emphasize certain indicators, such as partnership, community engagement and climate change. The question of how the overlap between
RSSH and PPR would be addressed in the framework was also brought up. In their responses, the Secretariat stressed that they wanted to trust the experts with regard to the integration of specific metrics and how specific dimensions of the work would be measured; that their fear was that a multiplication of priorities would lead to a framework without a clear hierarchy of indicators and targets.

Katy Kydd Wright, Director of GFAN, is one of the external experts involved in the resource mobilization and health financing consultations. GFAN will be working to identify other community and civil society leads involved in the measurement consultations working towards suggesting new KPIs to hopefully find ways to consult more broadly in the first months of 2022.

Resource Mobilization

The Secretariat shared their 7th Replenishment Action plan and timelines with the Board; the key slides are found on the following page.

A concern addressed during the Secretariat’s presentation was the potential for competition between C19RM and the 7th Replenishment if the former was extended by the Board. Peter Sands shared that he did not believe that it would present insurmountable issues; that the 7th Replenishment was the Secretariat top priority, and that the fact that funds committed through either mechanism would not be spent at the same time would help donors see that there was no competition. He added that he saw opportunities for synergies as well, that C19RM gave the Secretariat further access to the G7 and the G20 and led to more frequent and meaningful contacts with donors, which could facilitate a successful replenishment. A number of delegations, including Developed Country NGO, France and the UK, nevertheless raised concerns.

The report provided by the Secretariat to the Board (that can be found here) gave more space than usual to the role and importance of CSO and Community engagement, and had a robust and well developed action plan, covering the need for the Global Fund to develop a compelling narrative, to leverage trusted voices, be timely with information sharing and engage MPs. It appears that the creation of the Health Financing Department within the Secretariat has allowed for more time and energy to be dedicated to this type of planning and strategic reflection. Finally the report includes an analysis of risk section that was not present in previous resource mobilization updates and appears useful. However the section does not discuss the risk of stagnating or reductions in domestic resource mobilization, and this was pointed out by the Developed Country NGOs delegation as an oversight, as it should have serious implications for the Investment Case.

The need to approach new donors was also addressed by the Secretariat, which committed to look for them. Finally, the need to look beyond ODA was mentioned, and the Secretariat spoke in particular of their ongoing discussions with the World Bank on innovative financing tools.
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Box 4: Slide shared by the Secretariat on their 7th Replenishment Action plan.

Box 5: Slide shared by the Secretariat on their 7th Replenishment Action plan.
Other issues discussed by the Board

The full agenda of the Board Meeting can be found here. Among the issues discussed was an update on the Secretariat Risk Appetite, to allow the Global Fund to be more flexible and responsive in the context of the pandemic, an update to the Secretariat Operational Expenditures (OpEx), which were aligned with expectations, and an update by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) that discussed in particular the increased operational risks associated with the rapid scaling up of programs in 2020-21, especially with regard to C19RM. Finally, the development of an Independent Evaluation Function, to be integrated in the structure of the Secretariat, was discussed. The plans and objectives for the new function can be found here, and the overall objective was enthusiastically supported by many of the Delegations as fostering greater transparency.

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Box 1 (repeated): Where to find board documents

Web: www.globalfundadvocatenetwork.org
Twitter & Facebook: @GFAdvocates
YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/HereIAmCampaign