After the Concept Note: Opportunities for Civil Society Communities to Engage in the Global Fund Grant Making Process

Introduction

The new funding model (NFM) announced by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) in 2014 introduced a number of changes to improve the way that grants are developed and approved. One of the core principles is that civil society and in particular, vulnerable and key populations, need to be meaningfully involved throughout the process. [1] In most cases the result of this new, inclusive engagement process has been that countries develop a consensus on the comprehensive set of interventions needed to address the three epidemics.

Following the submission of a concept note to the Global Fund, communities and civil society continue to play a critical role. This alert, prepared by ICASO, highlights the opportunities community and civil society have to ensure that the good ideas included in concept notes make it into programming. The alert documents the steps involved in getting from concept note development to grant implementation, and recommends entry points, resources, and other technical support available to community and civil society. This alert will be of interest to community and civil society representatives on Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCM), as well as disease-specific NGOs, vulnerable and key population networks, gender and human right activists, and any other group that participated in the concept note development process.

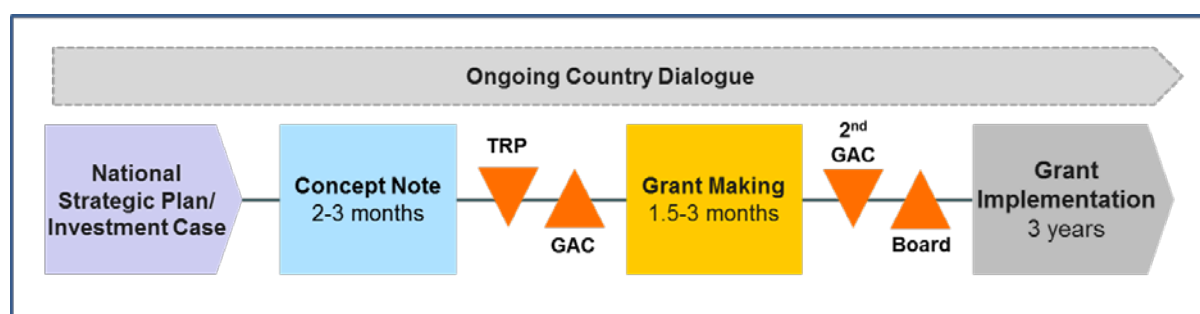## Technical Review Panel (TRP) and Grant Approvals Committee (GAC) reviews

Figure 1 Ongoing country dialogue process

The NFM calls for an iterative process to improve the quality of the grants and ensure that programming focuses on the most relevant and impactful interventions. Once submitted,

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[1] Key affected and vulnerable populations are often context-specific. For the Global Fund they will have the following characteristics: the population experiences increased risk or burden of disease due to a combination of biological, socio-economic, and structural factors; access to health services that prevent, diagnose, treat, or care for these diseases is lower than for the general population; and the population experiences human rights violations, systematic disenfranchisement, social and economic marginalisation, and/or criminalisation. See Community Systems Strengthening Information Note p11.
(http://www.theglobalfund.org/documents/core/infonotes/Core_CSS_InfoNote_en/)

the concept notes are reviewed by the Global Fund secretariat to determine if the country meets the CCM eligibility requirements, and that the concept note is complete.[2] If the country has not met CCM eligibility requirements, the proposal will be returned to the country with advice about what steps need to be taken to meet these criteria.

When the secretariat has confirmed that the concept note is complete and the country has met the CCM eligibility requirements, it is submitted to the Technical Review Panel (TRP), which is made up of independent experts.[3] The TRP assesses the concept note for soundness of approach, feasibility, potential for sustainable outcomes, and value for money. The TRP may ask for clarifications or minor adjustments to the proposal, or it may reject the concept note and request that the country revise the proposal and submit it at the next TRP review window.

When the TRP is satisfied with a proposal, they will recommend to the Grant Approvals Committee (GAC) that it be funded.[4] This committee may seek additional clarifications and set certain conditions to be addressed before the grant is signed. The GAC will also specify the maximum funding level that will be made available to the grant. [5]

Grant making: The Devil is in the Details

Once a proposal is conditionally approved by the GAC, the secretariat spends the next several months to complete the exhaustive steps to produce a grant agreement. The optimal time for grant making is 1.5-3 months, but in most cases the process takes longer. This is not always a bad thing, as long as the work results in better programming. The CCM continues to have oversight of this process but the detailed discussions are often held between the Global Fund secretariat[6] and the Principal Recipient (PR)(s) to develop and negotiate the key grant documents, leading to a grant agreement. To support this process, the Global Fund has developed a number of templates and forms that the PR will need to complete. The tools used to develop the work plan, budget and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework are described in Annex A. Technical partners and the local fund agent (LFA) are often involved in supporting this work.

> **What can community and civil society do to have good outcomes during grant-making:**
> ✓ Convene a meeting of participants in the concept note development and set up a taskforce to manage grant-making oversight
> ✓ Review TRP recommendations and develop appropriate project activities based on normative guidance (see Annex D for links to WHO, UNAIDS program planning tools)
> ✓ Meet FPMs when they are in country to get an update, offer support
> ✓ Review work plan and budget; if important activities planned in the concept note do not appear in the budget and work plan they will not happen
> ✓ Monitor SR selection
> ✓ Request technical assistance and support in grant-making from the CRG

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[2] For more information see: CCM Eligibility Requirements, Minimum Standards & Updated Guidelines. (http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/ccm/guidelines/)

[3] For more details on the terms of reference of the TRP, see Technical Review Panel Overview http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/trp, accessed November 10, 2015)

[4] The GAC is made up of senior Global Fund staff with non voting input from technical partners such as UNAIDS, WHO, and civil society.

[5] Funding levels are determined based on a board-approved allocation formula and communicated to countries during the concept note development phase. For more information see: Funding Model Allocations. (http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/fundingmodel/process/allocations/)

[6] The secretariat is represented by either a country team which is made up of a lead fund portfolio manager (FPM) with support from representatives from finance, legal, and M&E departments; or, in the case of smaller grants, by an FPM supported by program officers.

The grant making phase can be viewed as a window of opportunity to get the right interventions into the grant. Community and civil society have a very important role to play in monitoring the process and ensuring that the final contract between the PR(s) and the Global Fund reflects the strategies, approaches, and priorities specified in the concept note. The starting place is to review the *Concept Note Review and Recommendation Form*, which summarizes the TRP and GAC comments that need to be addressed by the CCM before the grant agreement can be signed. The secretariat sends this document confidentially to the CCM, so civil society members on the CCM will be able to access it. The form asks questions and makes recommendations to improve the grant, often calling for changes in community, rights, and gender programming. Examples of issues identified could include: increased community participation in TB clinics and case detection; reassess population estimates and refocus programming targets for key populations; or develop a community strengthening component focusing on people who use drugs. These recommendations are a great entry point for community and civil society to push for changes and adjustments to improve programming. CCMs and PRs are motivated to fix problems identified by the TRP or GAC and will welcome your advice.

One area that will be discussed during grant making that is extremely relevant to the success of the project is the selection of sub recipients (SRs).[7] It is helpful if community and civil society can monitor the process to ensure that the criteria, timing and selection of SRs are transparent, well publicised, and that self-promotion or lobbying by interested parties is kept in check.

It is important to note that by the time the concept note has come back from the TRP and GAC, it is too late to make any major changes to the original programming focus. It is important to pick your battles and work strategically by providing advice that will shape the grant to make sure the most important and impactful interventions are funded and implemented.

Much of the work during the grant making stage will be quite detailed and not everyone will have the time or inclination to be involved in the detailed work. However, as with the work to develop the concept note, civil society is well served by coming together to decide on an approach and divide the grant making oversight tasks among willing participants. Those closest to the negotiations will be the community and civil society representatives on the CCM and civil society PRs and SRs. These representatives should reach out to their colleagues, particularly those who took part in the concept note development to seek their input. In some countries a grant making status update has been instituted as a standing item of CCM meeting. This allows community and civil society representatives to question the PR(s) on progress and any other specific issues that might emerge. Civil society organizations that are not members of the CCM can request observer status for these meetings to gain an understanding of the process and provide input as needed through their representatives on the CCM.

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[7] More details on best practices concerning SR selection can be found in the following Global Fund produced documents: Country Coordinating Mechanisms Principal Recipient and Sub-Recipient Selection Processes: 2008, p10 and Guidelines on Implementers of Global Fund Grants: July 2015, p10

In addition to working with the civil society representatives on the CCM, interested organizations can contact the Global Fund secretariat directly to provide input into the grant making process. You may wish to make yourself available to meet Fund Portfolio Managers (FPMs) when they are in-country, or write them to make them aware of your willingness to be involved. Finding solutions to problems is in their interest. If issues raised have not been adequately addressed, the proposal will be returned to the CCM and the project start date will be delayed. (The country teams and FPM names are available on the Global Fund web site.[8]) The Community, Rights and Gender (CRG) Department at the Global Fund will also be able to provide support and technical assistance during the grant-making phase.[9]

Once the implementation plan, performance framework, capacity assessment, budget, and grant agreement have been finalized, the PR and the CCM will have to sign off on the arrangements. The request will then be resubmitted to the GAC for review. The second GAC review will either recommend the proposed grant for board approval, refer it to the TRP if they think the changes made during the grant making process have significantly changed the program originally recommended by the TRP, or they may send the proposal back to the country for revision. The GAC will also decide whether any of the unfunded elements from the concept note should be added to the register of Unfunded Quality Demand.[10]

> Short-term technical assistance from the CRG Department can include:
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> - Situational analyses and/or needs assessments (e.g. on gender, barriers to access, the local legal policy environment, community validation of key population size estimations);
> - Engagement in country dialogue (e.g. strengthening knowledge of the funding model, facilitation of grant-making review, evaluation of CRG focused TRP comments); and
> - Support for program design (e.g. to plan and budget for programs and interventions focusing on community, human rights, gender and key population programming).
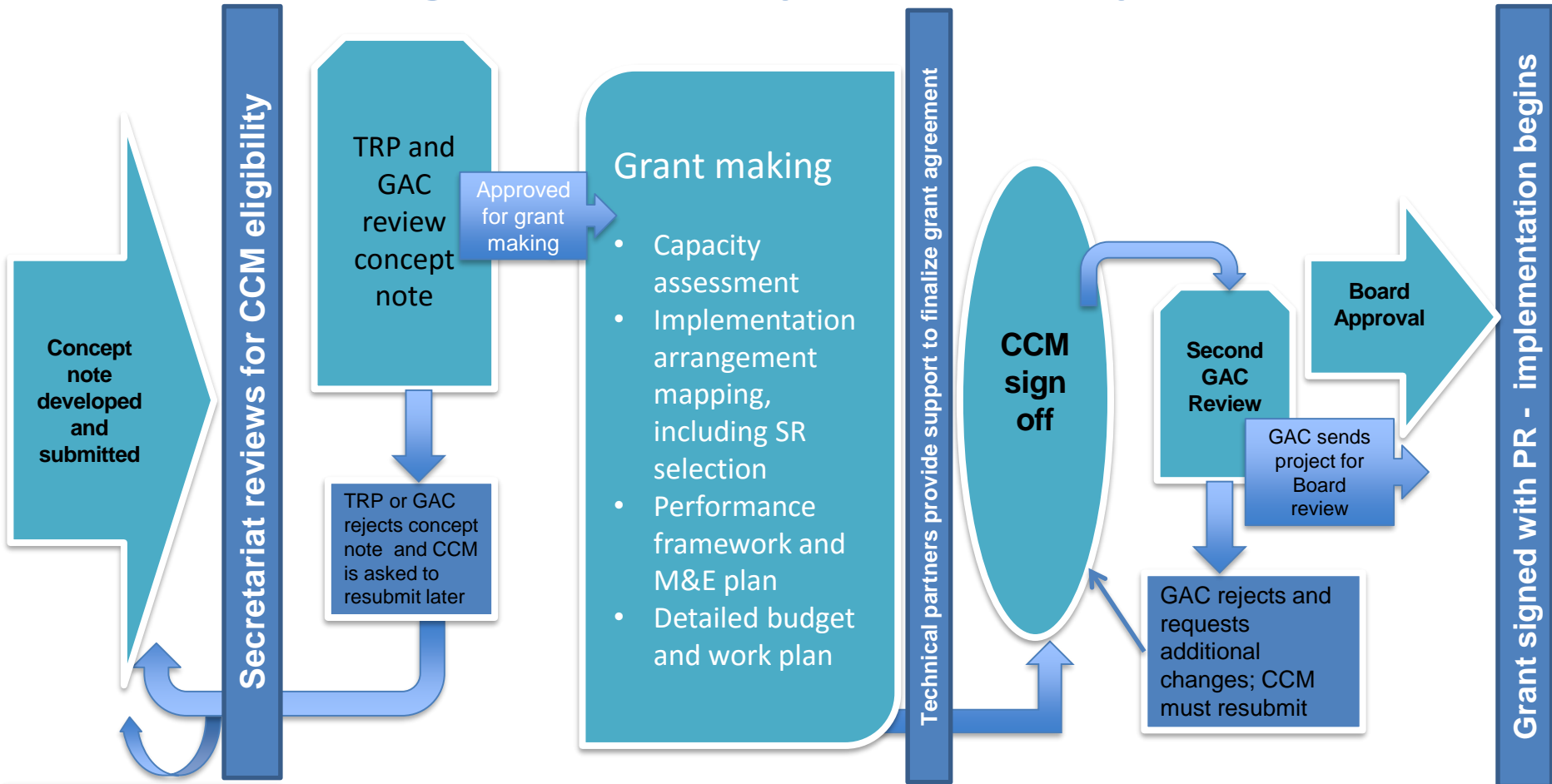
The key questions that communities and civil society will want to focus on during the grant making phase are summarized in the checklist shown as Annex B. A list of agencies and technical assistance providers willing to support community and civil society during the grant making stage is shown as Annex C. Additional documentation on the NFM and helpful resource material is available as Annex D.

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[8] To find contact details for the FPM in your country go to http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/portfolio/ click the *Where we Invest* tab and chose your country. Names and contact details for the FPM will be shown on the right hand column
[9] For more details on the types of technical assistance available for CRG, visit http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/fundingmodel/technicalcooperation/communityrightsgender To request technical support from the community rights and gender team at the Global Fund, contact: crgta@theglobalfund.org.
[10] Countries are given funding ceilings but are also encouraged to develop concept notes that show the full expression of what is needed to address the three diseases. Quality, unfunded programming that is endorsed by the TRP and GAC is included in a Register of Unfunded Quality Demand for possible funding by other donors or if additional money becomes available. You can view the list here http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/uqd/

Grant Making: From concept note to implemenation

Grant making activities	Links to tools and guidance	Community and Civil Society role
Map **implementation arrangements** wherein all of the participants in the grant are identified (PRs, SRs, and SSRs) and their roles, responsibilities, and funding levels are specified.	Implementation arrangement mapping guidelines	It is important that community and civil society review the implementation arrangements in detail to ensure that the programming arrangements match the plans articulated in the concept note. Monitor any changes in the choice of PR and the SR selection process.
Carry out **capacity assessment** to determine if the nominated PR meets the minimum standards to manage the proposed grant including: monitoring and evaluation, procurement and supply chain management, financial management, and program management including SR management.	Capacity assessment tool guidelines	The results of the capacity assessment tool (CAT) can be reviewed to ensure that the assessment is accurate and reflects the intention of the concept note. Note: when a PR is found lacking in a specific area, the Global Fund can request technical support or recommend subcontracting grant implementation such as procurement activities to a third party.
Finalize the detailed **budget and work plan** and associated list of health products. The **work plan** containing grant implementation milestones and specific actions to address capacity gaps and to tackle any risks identified. The budget provides a costing for all project inputs and activities.	Budget template guidelines	Probably the most urgent documents to be reviewed are the detailed work plan and budget. The work plan is developed by the PR, often with input from technical partners. Review the work plan to ensure activities planned in the concept note are included and review the budget to confirm whether sufficient money is allocated to these activities.
Agree on a **Performance Framework** that includes the M&E plan, baseline, performance targets, indicators, and measurement methodologies.	Performance framework template	By and large, the performance framework will follow the work plan and budget; however, if, on review, the targets specified in the concept note are not included in the performance template,

		there will be reason to raise this concern with the CCM.
Finalize the **Applicant Response Form**, in which the applicant describes how they have addressed any comments or issues raised by the TRP/GAC in the *Concept Note Review and Recommendation Form.*	N/A	The Applicant Response Form reports on how all the comments from the TRP and GAC have been addressed in the grant-making process. The form should be reviewed to make sure all concerns relevant to community, rights, and gender have been adequately addressed.

Annex B: Grant making checklist

✓	Questions to verify during the grant-making process	Information source	What to do
✓	Are the focus areas specified in the concept note still included in the work plan?	Review work plan and performance framework	If the focus areas have changed from those specified in the concept note, find out why. As the CCM or inquiry to the Global Fund secretariat. Some changes may be relevant and based on input from the TRP or GAC, but it's important to find out why the changes have been made and determine if they are acceptable.
✓	Does the budget include all the interventions suggested in the concept note?	Review the budget and work plan to ensure that interventions are fully costed and included in the grant	If activities are omitted, this should be raised with civil society on the CCM. If funding levels are too low, technical support should be sought to provide more accurate costing (see technical support providers, Annex C).
✓	Was the PR recommended in the concept note maintained? Are there any capacity development needs identified? Are the right SRs and SSRs identified?	Review the capacity assessment tool and the implementation mapping report	If the PR and SR arrangements defined in the implementation mapping report or are not in line with the intention of the concept note, this should be raised with the CCM.
✓	Are all the comments and recommendations by the TRP and GAC addressed?	Review the Applicant Response Form, which summarizes how the grant has addressed recommendations and comments from TRP and GAC	The TRP and GAC reports often make specific reference to community and civil society concerns. If these have not been adequately addressed in the grant making process, this should be raised with the CCM, FPM, or country team.

Annex C: Agencies and technical assistance providers willing to support civil society during the grant-making stage[11]

Type of technical cooperation	Request channel	Quick links
Bilateral technical cooperation providers	US Government Central Resource HIV and HSS TB support through central TBTEAM mechanism Malaria support through Roll Back Malaria Harmonized Working Group (HWG)	http://www.pepfar.gov/partnerships/coop/global fund/ta/index.htm http://www.stoptb.org/countries/tbteam/ http://www.rbm.who.int/mechanisms/hwgWorks tream7.html
French 5% Initiative (FEI) Channel 1 (short-term support) Channel 2 (long-term support) German BACKUP Initiative	See proposal guidelines and focus countries outlined for French 5% Initiative and German BACKUP Initiative	http://www.initiative5pour100.fr/en/types-of-action/channel-1-short-term-expertise http://www.initiative5pour100.fr/en/types-of-action/channel-2-projects-funding/ http://www.giz.de/expertise/html/7192.html
WHO, STOP TB, and Roll Back Malaria	Request should be put through the respective WHO country office. FPM to be copied on the request	Request for technical cooperation form is available through WHO country office
UNAIDS and Regional Technical Support Facilities	Request should be put through the respective UNAIDS country office. FPM to be copied on the request	Request for technical cooperation should be channeled through UNAIDS country director
Multilateral partners: Grant-making and implementation activities	Requests should be put through the respective partner's office. FPM to be copied on the request	Depends on technical cooperation partner
Community, rights, and gender	Requests should be put directly to the Global Fund through the FPM or CRG team. Civil society representatives on CCMs should also be informed in writing about the request.	Contact FPM or crgta@theglobalfund.org

Annex D: Additional documentation on the new funding model and the grant making process

Material developed by the Global Fund

Links to policies, templates and tools
- Budget Template Guidelines [download](#)
- Capacity assessment tool guidelines [download](#)
- Community, Rights and Gender Technical Assistance Request Form [download](#)
- Community, Rights and Gender Technical Assistance Guidance Sheet [download](#)
- Concept Note Development and Principal Recipient Selection Processes Form [download](#)
- Implementation arrangement mapping guidelines [download](#)
- Performance framework template [download](#)
- The Global Fund Operations Policy Manual (24 July 2015) [download](#)
- The Resource Book For Applicant February 2015 [download](#)

E-learning courses
- e-learning course on grant-making are available at http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/elearning/
- Achieving Inclusive Country Dialogue [download](#)
- Engage! Practical tips to ensure the new funding model delivers the impact communities need [download](#) Engage! Brochure [download](#)
- Understanding the Concept Note Review Process [download](#)

Global Fund Thematic Guidance and Information Notes:
- Addressing Sex Workers, Men Who have Sex with Men, and Transgender People in the Context of the HIV Epidemic [download](#)
- Addressing Gender Inequalities and Strengthening Responses for Women and Girls [download](#)
- Community Systems Strengthening [download](#)
- Dual-track Financing [download](#)
- Engage! Practical tips to ensure the new funding model delivers the impact communities need [download](#)
- Gender Equality Strategy [download](#)
- Gender Equality Action Plan [download](#)
- Harm Reduction for People who Use Drugs   [download](#)
- Human Rights for HIV, TB, Malaria and Health Systems Strengthening Grants [download](#)
- Human Rights Complaints Procedure [download](#)
- Human Rights Workshop Report [download](#)
- Kkey Populations Action Plan 2014-2017 [download](#)
- Maximizing the Impact on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health [download](#)
- Maximizing the Impact of Global Fund investments by Improving the Health of Women and Children [download](#)
- Scaling Up Antiretroviral Therapy in Global Fund Concept Notes

- Scaling Up Effective Management of Drug-resistant TB download
- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Strategy download
- Use of a Private Sector Co-payment Mechanism to Improve Access to ACTs download

Links to WHO and UNAIDS normative guidance relevant to vulnerable and key population in grant-making

- Consolidated guidelines on HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for key populations
- HIV and young transgender people
- Implementing comprehensive HIV/STI programmes with sex workers: practical approaches from collaborative interventions (SWIT)
- Implementing Comprehensive HIV and STI Programmes with Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSMIT)
- Men who have sex with men
- People in prisons and other closed settings
- People who inject drugs
- Policy brief: Transgender people and HIV
- Sex workers

Other resource material

Assessing Civil Society Priorities in Global Fund Country Concept Notes. Arusha: EANNASO; 2015 (http://www.icaso.org/files/assessing-civil-society-priorities-in-global-fund-country-concept-notes)

Checklist for Integrating Gender into the New Funding Model of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. New York: UNDP; 2014

Understanding the New Funding Model – An Aidspan Guide. Nairobi: Aidspan; 2014

HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for Adolescents and Youth Guidance Note. Geneva: UNAIDS; 2014

Making the money work for young people: a participation tool for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. Geneva: UNAIDS, The PACT and The Global Fund; 2014

Technical Support Delivery and KAP Engagement in the Cameroonian Global Fund Process. Oakland: MSMGF; 2015. (http://www.msmgf.org/)

WHO support to countries in accessing and utilizing resources from the Global Fund – A HANDBOOK. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014

Acronyms

CCM	Country Coordinating Mechanism
CRG	Community Rights and Gender
FPM	Fund Portfolio Manager
GAC	Grant Approvals Committee
LFA	Local Fund Agent
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NFM	New Funding Model
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PR	Principal Recipient
TB	Tuberculosis
TRP	Technical Review Panel
SR	Sub Recipient
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
WHO	World Health Organization