

**CASE
STUDY**

Experiences in the Delivery of Technical Assistance Services of the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative in Latin American and the Caribbean Countries

Experiences in the Delivery of Technical Assistance Services of the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative in Latin American and the Caribbean Countries , It is a document prepared jointly by the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Platform (Platform LAC). Community Engagement Strategic Initiative (CE SI) of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

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The Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Platform for Support, Coordination and Communication of Civil Society and Communities (LAC Platform), is an initiative implemented by Vía Libre, with financial support of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund).

It is part of several interventions of the Global Fund to support and strengthen community and civil society participation at all levels within their processes. It is a component of the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative (CE SI)

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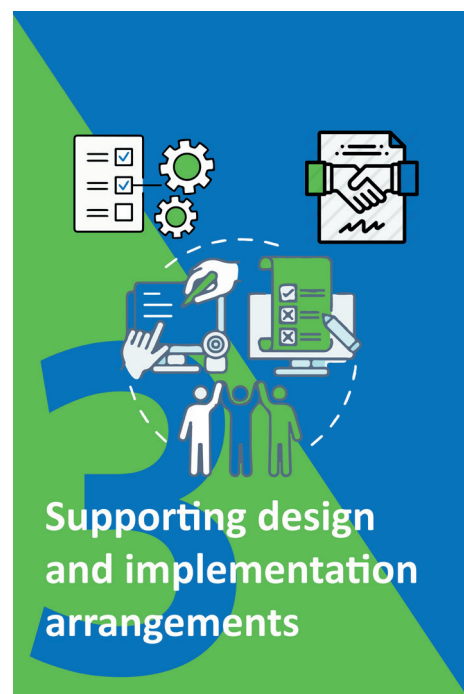
Acrónimos

TA	Technical Assistance
ALEP	Alianza Liderazgo en Positivo y Poblaciones Clave (ALEP) multi-country project
GF	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
IE PC	Community Engagement Strategic Initiative
LANPUD	Latin American Network of People Who Use Drugs
CCM	Country Coordinating Mechanism
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
KP	Key Populations
TRP	Technical Review Panel
PLHIV	People Living with HIV

1. Introduction

The Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) Platform aims to improve the meaningful engagement and inclusion of communities and key populations (KPs) in the Global Fund (GF) processes. Since 2016, it has been hosted by the Peruvian organization Vía Libre and is part of the Global Fund's Community Engagement Strategic Initiative (CE SI). This document has been prepared to improve community access to technical assistance (TA) through information exchange, linkages between providers, TA request development support, capacities strengthening, and coordination between TA providers.

The **Short-Term Technical Assistance Program** for communities and civil society groups within the CE SI aims to enhance their engagement in the GF and related national processes. It has three main areas of work:



In 2021, eleven countries (Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela) and one network (Latin American Network of People Who Use Drugs [LANPUD]) were accompanied in the request development for the CE SI Technical Assistance program. Six of these requests (Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Suriname, and LANPUD's) were approved and four countries will submit applications in 2022: Belize, Bolivia, Peru, and Venezuela. Guatemala rescheduled its request for Community-Led Monitoring. This analysis will focus on the six applications that were submitted and approved.

The **LAC Platform** and the **CE SI** are interested in documenting accompaniment experiences related to the CE SI Short-Term TA Program request development and submission processes to learn about the processes, identify what was effective and what could be improved (both in the accompaniment during the TA request development and in their implementation), and make recommendations for future processes. The analysis is performed in two parts: the first focuses on the support that the LAC Platform provided to communities during the development and submission of their requests to the CE SI and the second focuses on the TA implementation processes from the perspective of the organizations that developed and implemented such requests.

Ten TA experiences were analyzed: those from nine countries in the region and one from the LANPUD network, a multi-country project. Of the applications analyzed, eight were related to HIV, one to TB (Peru), and one to TB/HIV (Haiti).

Among the **main findings**, we can mention:

1.- The most frequent themes in TA requests

- Relate to a greater engagement of CSOs and KPs in the GF processes,
- Social contracting (public funding) for CSO and community HIV response,
- Community-led monitoring, and the human rights of affected populations and KPs.

2.- TA needs were related to the lack of effective community engagement in the GF processes, the communities' lack of knowledge of said processes, the weakening of the HIV response caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the TRP's recommendations to funding requests, and the need to renew civil society and KP representatives in the CCM. TA needs were related to the lack of effective community engagement in the GF processes, the communities' lack of knowledge of said processes, the weakening of the HIV response caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the TRP's recommendations to funding requests, and the need to renew civil society and KP representatives in the CCM.

3.- TA needs identification methodologies included the creation of a committee to analyze the TA needs and the request draft, assistance from other partners, active KP engagement in a survey to identify needs, and the follow-up of previous TA processes.

4.- Members of the CCM supported the preparation of the TA requests, providing information, facilitating calls for consultations, making direct contributions to the request, defining the lines of work of the request and selecting the organization that would request the TA.

5.- The challenges in the development of the TA requests were related to the limited awareness of the KPs about the processes, a lack of experience in developing technical assistance requests, a lack of resources to organize face-to-face meetings, and the confinement produced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.- The support provided by the LAC Platform in the development of TA request received positive review. Suppliers and consultants in charge were also evaluated positively, especially the consultants' skills in the execution of the different processes, the methodologies implemented, and the quality of the products delivered.

7.- Some of the challenges were the limited time for implementation, restrictions imposed by COVID-19, period of the year in which the process was implemented, lack of support from the CCM, delay in the disbursement of funds. When faced with these difficulties, the stakeholders involved in the process made suggestions and reoriented strategies, thus achieving the TA objectives.

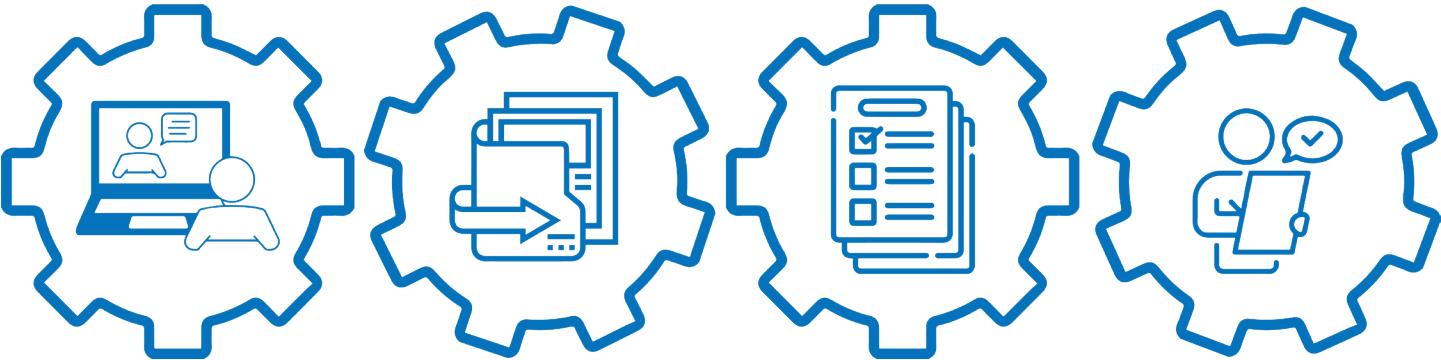
8.- Among the best practices that were identified, participants welcomed the broad and active community engagement, consultants performance, solving identified problems, dissemination and communication strategies, reinforcement of networking, creation of spaces where the voices of the communities could be heard, strengthening of engagement processes, and the support of CCM members.



2. Objectives

This analysis aims to document the request development and implementation processes related to the Global Fund’s CE SI short-term TA program from the applicants’ perspective in six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The specific objectives of the study are:



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To describe the TA issues and needs that communities intend to address through the Global Fund's CE SI Short-Term Technical Assistance Program.	To collect the applicants' experiences regarding the support provided by the LAC Platform during the request development for the CE SI Short-Term Technical Assistance Program.	To document the technical assistance implementation process from the perspective of the recipients.	To make recommendations to improve the TA request development and implementation processes.

3. Methodology

- Document review focused on technical assistance requests.
- Design of a survey for gathering information ([Annex 1](#)).
- Creation of an information analysis matrix focused on categories related to the objectives.
- CE SI Short-Term Technical Assistance Program applicant identification and gathering of information.
- Analysis of data from different sources and development of a results report.



4. Outcomes

4.1 Support during the technical assistance request development

The support provided by the LAC Platform during the TA requests made it possible to identify a number of TA needs and issues:

a. Enhanced engagement of CSOs and KPs in Global Fund processes

Community engagement in the GF processes is the theme that CSOs and communities from the region's countries request most frequently in the Short-Term TA Program (this category was included in six TA requests). The most common track is **Engagement in country dialogue**, which intends to provide civil society and communities with opportunities to effectively and meaningfully engage in country dialogue processes and to advocate for the inclusion of community, rights and gender-based responses¹. The following charts describe the requests supported by the LAC Platform on the theme of CSO and KP engagement in the GF process.

Country	Organization	Objective
Multi country: Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay y Peru	LANPUD	To ensure the involvement and engagement of people who use drugs (PWUD) in the processes related to the Global Fund funding cycle in the eleven countries that conform the Alianza Liderazgo en Positivo y Poblaciones Clave (ALEP) multi-country project.

The Latin American Network of People who Use Drugs (LANPUD) is part of the Alianza Liderazgo en Positivo y Poblaciones Clave (ALEP) multi-country project. This project aims to promote better living conditions and human rights for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and other KPs through comprehensive and differentiated services and to increase resources to support the sustainability of the regional HIV response.



¹ The Global Fund (2017). An Overview Technical Assistance Program on Community, Rights and Gender.

Country	Organization	Objective
Ecuador	Fundación Matices	To support KPs and PLHIV to engage meaningfully in developing the HIV proposal submitted to the GF in January 2022 (with an implementation period running from January 2023 to December 2025).

Country	Organization	Objective
El Salvador	Colectivo Alejandría	It aimed to strengthen of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and KPs engagement and align the country's Funding Request to the Technical Review Panel's (TRP) recommendations regarding HIV.

Technical Review Panel's (TRP) recommendations regarding HIV in [El Salvador](#), revolved around three themes: addressing outreach actions to KPs, strengthening strategies for the defense and promotion of human rights, and social contracting. All these recommendations are of crucial interest to the CSOs and communities.

Country	Organization	Objective
Colombia	Liga Colombiana de Lucha Contra el Sida	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To provide community representatives and CSOs with general information on the GF mechanisms. - To support CSO and KPs representatives during the election process.

The CSOs and KPs that conform the **Liga colombiana de lucha contra el sida**, submitted a joint TA request. The information needs were related to the principles of community engagement in the FM processes, policies of the CCM in Colombia, the CCM eligibility guidelines for community representatives in Colombia, and their support throughout the election process.

b. Social Contracting (public funding) for CSO and community HIV response

Social contracting or public funding for CSO and community work was another theme of interest for TA submissions. It seeks to provide sustainability to the HIV, TB, and malaria response through government funding of programs implemented by CSOs². This theme is included in the: **Engagement in Sustainability, Transition and Co-financing Policy**.

Since 2020, there have been advances in strengthening CSOs' capacities in the framework of the GF's sustainability, transition, and co-financing policy in **Ecuador**. The TA application submitted in 2019 to the CE SI included, among other actions, a capacity assessment to enhance their engagement in the HIV response and improve their knowledge of the GF processes. In 2021, Fundación Matices submitted a new TA request, which included two objectives related to social contracting:

Country	Organization	Objective
Ecuador	Fundación Matices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To develop a training program with packages of community HIV services based on the results of the needs analysis from the previous TA.- To strengthen advocacy with national and local governments to promote public funding for HIV response.

² Open Society Foundations, Global Fund, UNDP (2017). A global consultation on social contracting, working toward sustainable responses to HIV, TB, and malaria through government financing of programs implemented by civil society



c. Human Rights of Affected and Key Populations

Stigma and discrimination, which can be considered the embodiment of rights violations of populations affected mainly by HIV and TB, continue to be a recurrent problem and a barrier to responses in the region's countries. This cross-cutting issue is included in all categories that form the technical assistance funded by the CE SI. The Comité de Plaidoyer des Populations-clé (Key Populations Advocacy Committee) in [Haiti](#) focused their TA request on stigma and discrimination.

Country	Organization	Objective
Haiti	Comité de Plaidoyer des Populations-clé	To develop a civil society advocacy strategy to address stigma and discrimination, including sensitization of state authorities.



d. Health financing and co-financing of Global Fund investments

Health financing is a prerequisite for guaranteeing universal health coverage and is one of the requirements of the GF financing. It is related to the **Engagement in Sustainability, Transition and Co-financing Policy** of the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative. In the case of **Haiti**, one of the specific objectives of the TA request was.

Country	Organization	Objective
Haiti	Comité de Plaidoyer des Populations-clé	To advocate with state authorities to respect co-financing commitments and allocate a higher percentage of the national budget to health.

e. Response focused on gender

This point is another cross-cutting issue in the categories of the TA topics supported by the CE SI, as evidenced by its inclusion Haiti's request.

Country	Organization	Objective
Haiti	Comité de Plaidoyer des Populations-clé	To influence and sensitize those responsible for the HIV/AIDS Program on the need to strengthen the gender approach in the response.



4.2 Identifying the need for technical assistance

TA recipients described a variety of strategies to identify when they needed support.

a. Falta de participación efectiva de las comunidades en los procesos del FM y repuestas nacionales

LANPUD explained that their participation in a multi-country project allowed them to note the invisibility and absence of PWUD in decision-making spaces in different countries (including GF spaces and national responses), derived from a lack of recognition of PWUD as KPs.

In **Ecuador** applicants understand the importance of effective community engagement in the response to the HIV epidemic and have realized that, due to multiple internal and external factors, such engagement has been weakened and has become uncoordinated. In this regard, they also noted limited engagement of KPs and PLHIV in the different activities of the GF grant, for example, in community testing activities and in accompanying people diagnosed with HIV in their linkage to health services.

b. Recommendations from the GF technical review panel regarding funding requests

In two of the countries analyzed, TA needs were related to the TRP's recommendations concerning the country's funding requests. In **Suriname**, the TRP recommended including a gender perspective in actions intended to reduce gender-based barriers in access to services. In **El Salvador** the TRP made three observations on the funding request, which were later transformed into TA needs: the first was to support the collaborative and focused development of a detailed operational plan on KP interventions; the second focused on actions to strengthen human rights; the third was related to social contracting for community HIV response.

These types of TA requests based on TRP recommendations are rare and represent exceptional cases.

c. Creation of a committee for needs assessment and request development

In [Surinam](#), following the TRP's request, a committee was created to identify and discuss TA needs. The committee aimed to facilitate the process in which representatives of the CCM, the Ministry of Health, and the CNFA (CSO Network for Advocacy) participated and reached a consensus on the approaches to meet the TA needs that the TRP identified. Technical partners such as UNAIDS and PAHO, whose representatives participated in the discussions to identify TA needs, also supported the committee.

d. Communities and key populations engagement in the identification of needs

TA recipients in [Haiti](#) mentioned that the Comité de Plaidoyer des Populations-clé (Key Populations Advocacy Committee) developed and sent a questionnaire to all its members to identify needs to be addressed to be more effective in contributing to the HIV response.

e. Strengthening the HIV response after the COVID-19 pandemic

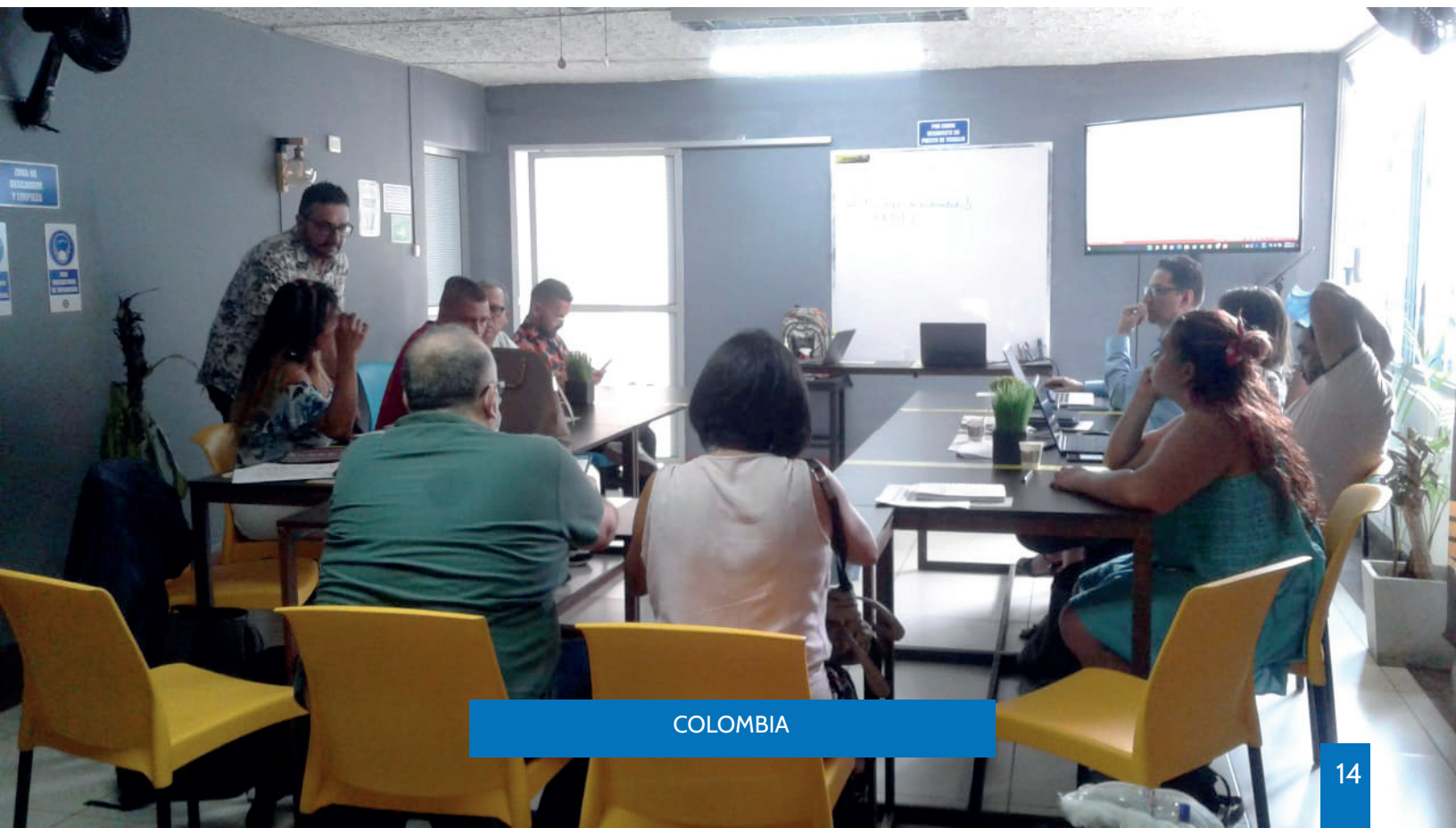
In [Ecuador](#), there was a need to strengthen the HIV response, which the COVID-19 pandemic had weakened. As a result, there was an increase in the barriers to sustainability and compliance with the country's commitments.

f. Following up on previous technical assistance processes

Participants in **Ecuador** also identified the need to follow up on a previous TA process implemented at the beginning of 2021 related to public financing of CSO and community contributions. In the initial stage, an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of this sector was carried out; and the development of a strengthening plan was proposed based on those results.

g. Need for renewal of CCM representatives

In **Colombia**, the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) participated in the pilot phase of the CCM Evolution Strategic Initiative. Guidelines were prepared to improve governance, and a document was drafted: Guidelines for the introduction and accreditation of CS members to participate in the CCM. On the other hand, the CCM representation periods expired in 2021, which generated the need to renew such representations. Civil society representatives perceived that this was a complex process that required external accompaniment to ensure transparency and the broad engagement of those who would represent CBOs and KPs on the CCM for the new period. During the national dialogues for the C19-RM 2.0 funding requests in **Colombia**, leaders working on HIV and TB in the different regions of the country were unaware of the GF.



4.3 Roles of the CCM and the PR in the development of technical assistance requests

In most cases, CCM members provided direct support in developing the TA requests. In the case of the multi-country project **LANPUD** almost all the CCMs in the countries where the ALEP project is implemented, supported the project by filling out a survey.

In **Suriname**, the CCM facilitated convening and implementing meetings with a broader group of stakeholders to provide input to the TA request. The CCM also played a role in reviewing the wording of the objectives, scope of work, and key deliverables of the TA request.

In the case of **Haiti** the CCM supported the community representatives throughout the process, from drafting to submission, and facilitated the accompaniment of the LAC Platform.

In **Colombia** the Oversight Committee, the Technical Secretariat, the Ethics and Governance Committee, and civil society representatives supported the request development and drafting.

In **Ecuador** representatives of the CCM's KPs and PLHIV participated and were involved in the entire process, from the request development to its execution. Such active community engagement is due to the fact that several representatives of the past and the current CCM Assembly, as well as trans women, sex workers, gay men, and people living with HIV, participated in previous technical assistance activities.

LANPUD and **Suriname** report the participation of the Principal Recipient (PR) in the development of the TA request. In the case of **Suriname**, the Ministry of Health (the PR) provided the country context to support the TA request, contributed with strategic information, and ensured that the proposed activities were aligned with existing national processes and that the intended results were achievable. In **El Salvador** both the CCM and the PR (International Plan) had a partial involvement, with activities such as defining the lines of work in the request and choosing the organization that would request technical assistance.

4.4 Difficulties in the development of technical assistance requests

In the case of **LANPUD**, participants identified that people who use drugs lack recognition in the region, specifically in the CCMs of the countries that conform ALEP project, where such populations are not a priority for GF funding.

CSOs' lack of experience in developing TA requests was a challenge mentioned in **El Salvador** and **Suriname**. The latter also noted a lack of experience in budget preparation. **Haiti** pointed out the lack of resources to implement broad and participatory face-to-face meetings to develop the TA request.

The confinement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was an inconvenience that participants from **Ecuador** had to face when drafting the TA application. However, they overcame that obstacle by using virtual platforms.



4.5 Technical accompaniment by the LAC platform in the development of the technical assistance request

All participants evaluated the support provided by the LAC Platform as positive, using adjectives such as satisfactory, essential, positive, engaging, motivating, educational, timely, and crucial. **LANPUD** highlighted the support in developing the TA objectives and the assistance in filling out the form; in **Suriname** examples of previously approved TA requests were shared, and support was provided in the budget preparation. In the case of **Ecuador** there was continual feedback and a clear roadmap explaining the step-by-step process for preparing the application; in **El Salvador** aid was provided to define the expected outputs, budget, and schedule of activities. Among the aspects where the LAC Platform support could improve, **LANPUD** mentioned the importance of having a better understanding of the regional network processes; participants in **Haiti** and **Ecuador** noted the need for accompaniment anticipation and feedback improvement.



4.6 Technical Assistance Implementation

a. Experiences with suppliers and technical assistance consultants

Some TA processes were under implementation when the survey questionnaires were sent out, so they did not provide much information related to the TA consultant or provider. Among the responses received, the TA recipients highlighted the skills of the consultant/consulting team in the process. **LANPUD** noted that the assigned consultants were skilled, understanding, executive, and collaborative. Among the skills of the consulting team (four consultants, two national and two international) listed in **Ecuador** they mentioned proactivity, horizontal communication, capacity for teamwork, solving problems through dialogue, and joint coordination, both within the team and with the different stakeholders involved.

Concerning the products, **LANPUD** welcomed the design, the data collection methodologies, and the quality of the outcome reports and recommendations generated from the process. They also stressed that the TA provider offered greater participation of specialists and other network members. **Colombia** mentioned *“a history of successful work with ICASO and unconditional and continuous support.”*

As areas of opportunity for the TA providers, the recipients in **El Salvador** suggested that providers should take into account that processes may be more complex for those organizations that have never received TA before and that the disbursement of resources should be made in a more timely manner to avoid delays in implementation.

b. Roles of the Country Coordinating Mechanism and the Principal Recipient in the technical assistance implementation

In general, the CCM and (less frequently) the PR participated in the TA processes that had already been implemented. In the case of **El Salvador**, the CCM encouraged the CSOs to engage in the activities. At the same time, they attended the work meetings and participated in reviewing and approving the TA products.

CCM engagement was very proactive in **Colombia** where members were involved in different activities, including inviting communities to information sessions (both face-to-face and virtual) through the technical secretariat and opening spaces in two CCM Assembly meetings for the TA. In the first meeting, the work plan was socialized, and in the second, they shared the progress of the process. In both cases, CCM members offered important recommendations, especially to overcome bottlenecks in the CCM election process. Participants in **Colombia** also highlighted the engagement of CCM members in the production of informative clips on the GF and the importance of civil society and KPs engagement, offering their views and making observations on the contents of the clips.

The Ethics and Governance Committee of the CCM in **Colombia**, closely followed the process, reviewing and making suggestions on the critical path of elections to ensure a democratic, transparent and participatory process. It accompanied some informative sessions and provided support by verifying the requirements of the nominated candidates; it is expected to participate in counting votes and preparing the election minutes.

Ecuador's, TA recipients highlighted the engagement of civil society representatives and CCM KPs during the TA process.

In the case of **LANPUD** the PR participated by facilitating interviews. In **Ecuador**, some actions were coordinated with the PR (Ministry of Health) and the Sub-Recipients (Care and Kimirina). Finally, in **Colombia**, the PR (Enterritorio) helped by providing lists of KPs and socializing the information generated in the face-to-face meetings to include it in future activities.

c. Community engagement in technical assistance implementation

As mentioned, the objective of the CE SI TA program is the effective engagement of civil society and communities in the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs financed by the GF. In the case of **LANPUD** it seeks the active engagement of people who use drugs in the elaboration, implementation, and presentation of results, information gathering processes, and validation workshops – instances of a greater engagement in processes related to the GF in the various countries where ALEP project is implemented.

In **Ecuador**, there has also been significant community engagement in creating a space for civil society cooperation and dialogue and the reactivation of the commitment to contribute in a coordinated manner to the HIV response at the national level. In this context, the leaders contributed to the consolidation of a political advocacy plan and a capacity-building program aimed at public financing their sector's response. They also actively lobbied for these two products to be included in the funding request submitted to the GF.

In **El Salvador**, KPs and communities made significant contributions in the workshops that were held for developing strategies to address these populations and include a human rights perspective (aspects requested by the PRT for the new grant).

Colombia reported that 130 leaders participated in the information sessions on the GF, and 84 community-based organizations were registered on the electoral roll at the national level. The leaders supported the production of the communication campaign and validated the critical path for the elections of civil society and KP representatives in the CCM.



d. Challenges in the technical assistance process

According to **LANPUD**, there was a delay in the approval of the application, which reduced the execution time. Overcoming this situation required a lot of hard work by the consulting organization and the people involved in the process.

In **Ecuador** three challenges were observed. The first was related to the restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited face-to-face and extended meetings, the inconveniences involved in working through virtual platforms, the access to connectivity, and the management of these technologies by community members. The second difficulty was the period of the year in which the process was implemented, (during the last three months of the year, when there are many public holidays). Thirdly, there was limited support from the CCM Executive Secretariat, who, despite the TA team's attempts to coordinate social dialogues, could not work in a coordinated manner.

One of the challenges identified by the participants from **El Salvador** was the delay in the disbursement of funds for the process, which required the organization to use its own resources to meet the TA deadlines.

In Colombia, the main challenge was that, despite carrying out a comprehensive process, it was impossible to meet the number of nominees for the elections of civil society and PC representatives on the CCM. After an analysis, the reasons identified were: many leaders are implementing GF actions in the cities, a situation which would generate a conflict of interest; non-remuneration of the representations; nominations with incomplete requirements; lack of visibility of the CCM in different regions of the country; lack of awareness about the benefits of engaging in the CCM. Considering that this was a pilot process, the CCM Assembly proposed restructuring the strategy with field visits and face-to-face meetings in the cities where the current GF grant is implemented, emphasizing the importance of participation in the CCM and supporting on-site applications. They also suggested an extension of the TA time.

5. Best practices in the technical assistance process

Concerning the good practices identified, LANPUD mentions active engagement of the communities in the process, production of high-quality documents, clear policies, and the support provided by the LAC Platform team during the process.

Meanwhile, the TA recipients in **Ecuador** and **El Salvador**, considered as good practices the coordination between the members of the consulting team and their communication with representatives of civil society and KPs.

In **Ecuador**, the consultant team's ability to solve the challenges encountered in the process and the community engagement in creating a national consensus-building space, (25 organizations represented by 60 leaders) were also identified as best practices. It should be noted that the plan for community strengthening and advocacy was included in the country's request for financing from the GF.



En el caso de **Colombia** se mencionan las estrategias de comunicación como buenas prácticas, las cuales incluyeron la elaboración de ocho cápsulas informativas sobre el funcionamiento del FM en el país, las que consistían en audios cortos con información clave sobre los procesos del FM en el país, en cuya producción participaron de los miembros del MCP, el formato de cápsula facilitó su divulgación a través de WhatsApp, correo electrónico y redes sociales. Las estrategias de comunicación también incluyeron convocatorias a través de redes sociales a sesiones informativas virtuales y presenciales; contaron con una importante participación (210 representantes de OSC y PC de diferentes regiones del país), las cuales permitieron escuchar las opiniones de la comunidad sobre el MCP y recoger sugerencias para el proceso de elecciones.

In the case of **Colombia**, communication strategies or register of CBOs working with different KPs on HIV and TB; the active engagement of CCM members and KP representatives in the election process, mainly in an ad hoc election Committee; having representation guidelines for the civil society and KP members on the CCM, (subject to validation), an outcome of the CCM Evolution strategic initiative; and finally the fact that for the first time the country carried out a broad, democratic and participatory process to elect the representatives of KPs on the CCM.



6. Conclusions

There is a diversity of CSO and community needs to be addressed in Latin America and the Caribbean, which vary depending on country contexts and are reflected in the variety of issues in TA requests to the GF's CE SI. The most frequent themes in TA requests relate to a greater engagement of CSOs and KPs in the GF processes, social contracting (public funding) for CSO and community HIV response, community-led monitoring, and the human rights of KPs.

The TA requests were based on two categories: identified needs and identification methodologies. Among the mentioned needs were the lack of effective community engagement in the GF processes and national responses and, linked to this, the communities' lack of knowledge of the GF processes in their own countries. The weakening of the HIV response caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the TRP's recommendations to funding requests, and the need to renew civil society and KP representatives in the CCM were also stressed. Methodologies included the creation of a committee to analyze needs and draft the request, assistance from other partners in identifying needs, engagement of the KPs in a survey to identify needs, and the follow-up of previous TA processes.

During the development of TA requests, some key actors from the CCM or PRs were involved in providing feedback or making suggestions. Although their contributions were welcomed, it was also pointed out that support should be impartial and allow for the KPs and the organizations requesting TA independence. It is crucial to analyze the potential impact of other stakeholders' engagement in the process of TA request formulation because they may invisibilize the real needs of the communities.

Most of the cases analyzed had direct support and accompaniment from different members of the CCM in the preparation of the TA requests, which included providing information, facilitating calls for consultations, making direct contributions to the request, defining the lines of work of the request and selecting the organization that would request the TA.

The challenges identified by the communities in developing the TA requests were related to the limited awareness about KPs in the region, the lack of experience in developing technical assistance requests, and the lack of resources to organize face-to-face meetings for the development of the requests. Most requests were supported and developed virtually due to the confinement produced by the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation also made it difficult to carry out face-to-face meetings during the implementation period.

Participants had a positive experience from the support provided by the LAC Platform. They welcomed that the platform helped in the formulation of objectives and guidance in filling out the form, shared examples of approved TA requests, and provided support in the preparation of the budget. The roadmap and regular feedback for drafting the request, the assistance in defining the expected products, and the activity chronogram were other outstanding contributions.

The implementation of TA processes and the related interactions with suppliers and consultants in charge were also evaluated positively. Recipients pointed out the consultants' skills in the execution of the different processes, the methodologies implemented, and the quality of the products delivered. Among the aspects to be improved in this interaction, participants recommended taking into account that there are organizations that have not received TA and are unfamiliar with the processes; they also recommended greater expediency in the disbursement of resources.

Regarding communities and KPs, recipients reported a critical engagement in the implemented processes, gathering information, participating in different virtual and face-to-face activities, working with other leaders and organizations, strengthening their capacities, contributing to the development and implementation of political advocacy strategies, citizen oversight, and lobbying, as well as in the development of more democratic and effective engagement processes.

Some of the challenges of the process were: limited time for implementation, restrictions imposed by COVID-19, period of the year in which the process was implemented, lack of support from the CCM, delay in the disbursement of funds, and failure to meet the number of applicants for the elections of civil society and KPs representatives on the CCM in Colombia. When faced with these difficulties, the stakeholders involved in the process made suggestions and reoriented strategies, thus achieving the TA objectives.

A number of best practices were identified, reflecting the issues, needs, and contexts in which the TA processes were implemented. Of particular note were the broad and active community engagement, consultants performance, solving identified problems, dissemination and communication strategies, reinforcement of networking, significant spaces where the voices of the communities could be heard, strengthening of engagement processes and the support of CCM members.

7. Recommendations

These recommendations are primarily aimed at the CE SI, LAC Platform and CCM teams, in order to improve the formulation and implementation of the technical assistance processes.

- TA processes should be centered on the needs and priorities identified by the communities, so their engagement in the process and the formulation of solution alternatives should be a priority. In addition, it is essential to ensure the autonomy of the communities and their broad involvement in the phases of identification of needs, development of requests, and implementation of TA processes.
- Promote greater engagement and collaboration of CCM members as facilitators in the different phases of technical assistance, needs assessment, request development, process implementation, and respect the autonomy of the communities.
- Generate spaces through the LAC Platform to socialize the results of the TA processes, their difficulties, lessons learned, and best practices.
- Generate virtual, individual, or group support strategies through the LAC Platform to provide methodological support, not only for request development but for assessment preparation. These strategies would allow for a more systematic identification of TA needs and recognition of existing capacities.
- Implement a differentiated approach according to the experience and capacity level of the organization requesting the TA, in the support provided during the application development, implementation, and assessment of the TA.
- Review the feasibility of following up on TA processes that did not achieve all their objectives or were supported only for a stage or a product that was part of a broader process.
- Have access to reports, TA processes products, and assessment outcomes to conduct analysis with better evidence.
- Review the feasibility of assessing the sustainability of the changes generated by the TA processes in CSOs and communities and their engagement in the GF processes.

Annex No. 1 – Survey to learn about the applicants’ experiences and opinions on technical assistance from the Global Fund’s CE SI

Vía Libre/LAC Platform and the CE SI are interested in documenting both the development and implementation processes of Technical Assistance requests in the different countries of the region from the perspective of the receptor. For this purpose, we have developed a brief questionnaire divided into two parts: the first is related to the support provided by the LAC Platform in the development of the TA request, and the second is focused on the implementation of the TA process.

Technical Assistance Request - Development Phase

- 1 How did you identify the need for support on which the request for technical assistance was based?
- 2 What role (if any) did the CCM / PR play in the development and review of the Technical Assistance Request?
- 3 What challenges did you experience in developing the Technical Assistance Request?
- 4 What technical support did the LAC Platform provide during the drafting of the Technical Assistance Request?
- 5 How could the LAC Platform improve its support during the drafting of the Technical Assistance Request?

Technical Assistance - Implementation Phase

(if approved and assigned to a technical assistance provider)

- 6 How was the implementation experience with the technical assistance provider/consultant(s)?
- 7 What role (if any) did the CCM / PR play in implementing the technical assistance?
- 8 What engagement did the KPs/communities have in implementing the technical support?
- 9 What challenges were encountered during the technical assistance implementation process?
How were they overcome?
- 10 What worked best during the implementation of the technical assistance?
- 11 What could be improved in future technical assistance implementations?
- 12 Any additional remarks?