



Elections of community representatives in Colombia's CCM

of a technical assistance process of the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative of the Global Fund

Elections of community representatives in Colombia's CCM, case study of a technical assistance process of the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative of the Global Fund

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The Latin America and Caribbean Regional Platform of the Strategic Community Engagement Initiative (LAC Platform) is an initiative promoted by Via Libre with financial support from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund).

It is part of the Global Fund's interventions to support and strengthen community and civil society participation at all levels of its processes. It is a component of the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative

Acronyms

C19RM	Covid19 Response Mechanism of the Global Fund
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CCM	Country Coordinating Mechanism
CCM Evolution	Global Fund's Strategic Initiative of the CCM
CE SI	Community Engagement Stretegic Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
FSW	Female Sex Workers
GF	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HP	Homeless People
ICASO	International Council of Aids Service Organizations
PWUD	People who use Drugs
MSM	Men who have sex with men
PAIC	President's Agency for International Cooperation
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
PR	Principal Recipient
TA	Technical Asistance
TB	Tuberculosis
TP	Trans people

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1. Introduction

During January and June 2022, a technical assistance (TA) was conducted to contribute in the strengthening of the civil society and key populations engagement in Colombia's Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM); the process was funded by the Technical Assistance Program of the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative (CE SI) of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF), through ICASO as TA provider of the CE SI. This technical assistance was looking to strengthen the engagement of civil society organizations (CSO), community-based organizations (CBO), key and vulnerable populations in the CCM, and in general all of the GF's processes in Colombia.

It is of interest to the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative and Vía Libre-LAC Platform, as well as to the representatives of the key populations that participate in the GF processes in Latin American and the Caribbean, to know the experience in this process, with emphasis on results, products obtained, lessons learned and recommendations.



2. *Background*

The Global Fund's Strategic Initiative of the CCM (CCM Evolution) started a pilot phase in 2018, in which Colombia's CCM participated as a country in a transition process in the context of the GF's grant. This initiative aims to improve the central responsibilities of inclusive oversight, meaningful commitment, aligned positioning with the national structures and sustainable governance operations of CCM's in the countries prioritized by the GF.

The CCM Evolution started with a preliminary evaluation to know the state of the CCM around its components: linking, strategic oversight, governance and functionality; with the purpose of structuring a sustainable CCM through time. The process allowed to identify the need to modify its structure to improve its relationship with the national processes, as well as the engagement of citizens and key populations prioritized by the grants of the GF. It was also expected a new composing of the CCM in relation to its members and a better positioning with all other stakeholders that are part of the national response.

As products of the process, Colombia's CCM had its guidelines updated: internal bylaw, guidelines for the functioning of the Ethics and Governance Committees, a code of ethics and conflict of interest prevention, a members directory, a communications guide, a proposal for the updating process of the 1543 Decree (Aids Law) that will allow the articulation of the CCM with the AIDS National Council, a protocol to guide new members, and guidelines for the presentation and accreditation of the key populations representatives in the CCM.

The progress observed due to these processes, allowed to have a more structured CCM with a more strategic focus, and to advance in the renewal of interested stakeholders different from the CSO, CBO and key populations. However, there was a lack of a wider, participatory and democratic electoral process to elect people that would represent the CSO, CBO and key populations in the CCM. To the GF, community engagement is a core component in its funding model, which is reflected in their minimum requirements and the population diversity inclusiveness; for Colombia specifically, its large geographic extension was also considered a key element. Based on that, the civil society representatives, whose leadership is finished in 2022, considered appropriate to ask for technical support to reach this objective.

According to the updated bylaw of the CCM¹, the engagement of the following sub-sectors of the CS and key populations was established, both for titular and substitutes, with 8 seats in total:

Key populations of HIV (3 seats)

- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Trans Persons (TP)
- Female sex workers (FSW), Homeless people (HP) and People who use Drug (PWUD) (1 shared seat)

People living with HIV (2 seats)

- Women living with HIV
- Men living with HIV

HIV Community-based organizations (1 seat)

People affected or representing people with TB or TB-HIV (2 seats)

To the above mentioned needs it should also be noted that in the social dialogues developed within the C19RM in 2020, a knowledge gap about the functioning of the GF in the country was identified among the leaders of the key populations, which limited their meaningful engagement.

For these reasons the CSO, CBO and the representatives of the key populations whose term ended in 2022, through LigaSida, developed a technical assistance request to give continuity to the processes of the Strategic Initiative of the CCM Evolution and to improve their engagement in the CCM.

1 Colombia's Country Coordinating Mechanism (2021). Bylaw.

3. *How they did it and what they achieved*

To fulfill the goal of strengthening the engagement of the CSO, CBO and key populations in the CCM for the GF's processes in Colombia, two specific objectives were proposed:

The **first** one was to improve the knowledge about the GF's processes among the key populations on a national level. And the **second** objective was to strengthen the engagement and the effective involvement of the representatives of the civil society, in particular of key populations in the CCM, through the consolidation of mechanisms for democratic participation, and for a clear and transparent nomination, election and accountability processes.

The initial activities of the technical assistance were: coordination planning with the various stakeholders, the development of a detailed work plan, review of documents with emphasis on the products of the CCM Evolution Strategic Initiative and the presentation of the TA proposal to the CCM Assembly.

To achieve the first objective of TA, after a feedback session with the key populations representatives in the CCM and of the people affected by the diseases, and following their recommendations, three communication strategies were posed. Their products are described hereafter:



Informative capsules about the GF's processes in Colombia

According to the recommendations of the CS and key populations representatives it was decided to produce eight informative capsules in a podcast format with information about:

- 1 Global Fund generalities
- 2 The funding model of the Global Fund
- 3 Community Engagement in the GF's processes
- 4 Key stakeholders in the GF's processes
- 5 Advances in the evolution of the CCM
- 6 Populations and territories prioritized by the GF in Colombia
- 7 Requirements for the elections of the CS and key populations representatives of the CCM Colombia 2022
- 8 Roadmap of the electoral process of the CS and key populations representatives of Colombia's CCM 2022

The information was based on the results of the review of documents. With the data obtained, eight scripts were developed, which were validated by the CCM members. It must be noted that members of the CCM were the ones that lent their voices in the podcast recordings. The informative capsules were disseminated through WhatsApp, email and social media. They served as prelude to the following phases of the TA and of the electoral process of the CSO, CBO and key populations representatives in the CCM for the 2022-2026 period.

The informative capsules in podcast format were chosen because they made easier the dissemination and reception of information through social media, and specially through WhatsApp where the message was received directly by the interested stakeholders and it was also very easy to be shared. That's the reason why the original idea in the TA requirement of producing a video was discarded.

The informative capsules are available in the following link:

<https://bit.ly/3CS4Rex>

Design of a training methodology for online sessions

The methodology for the training sessions was developed to be implemented remotely through online sessions in order to reach all the regions of the country. These sessions included and expanded the topics addressed in the informative capsules described above.

Five two-hour sessions were conducted. They were performed through Teams Platform, and they allowed the interaction and participation of 110 leaders of all the country's regions. The methodology tools included a PPT presentation, an input & output evaluation and a Q&A session.

Face-to-face informative sessions

Given that a wider participation was required, that many leaders had difficulties in accessing the technology and that the number of candidates for the electoral process was not met, according to the CCM guidelines, the CCM Assembly suggested to request a time extension for the consulting team that implemented the TA, in order to be able to conduct face-to-face meetings in the country's seven cities where the current grant of the GF is implemented: Bucaramanga, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Medellin, Pereira, Cali and Bogota.

These meetings included the topics and methodologies previously described and were conducted between April 20 and May 24, 2022, where 100 representatives of the CSO, CBO and key populations participated.

Due to the fact that there were no updated directories of the CSO and CBO working with HIV and/or TB to create a database of the key populations leaders, a contact list search was conducted, through the CSO, CBO and key populations representatives in the CCM and through the technical secretariat of the CCM and the Principal Recipient (PR), which allowed to send the informative capsules as well as the calls of the online and face-to-face sessions.

For the second objective, the following activities and products were developed:

Roadmap of the electoral process of CS and key populations representatives of the CCM

In order to ensure the transparency and fulfillment of the norms and guidelines of the CCM's governance system, the first step was to appoint an ad hoc Elections Committee comprised of: the President's Agency for International Cooperation (PAIC), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Gestar Salud and the Rotary Club, all of which are members of the CCM.

With engagement of CS representatives, the ad hoc CCM Elections Committee and based on the CCM's regulatory framework, the roadmap of the electoral process for the representatives of the CSO and key populations in the CCM for the 2022-2026 period was designed.



Roadmap of the electoral process of CS and key populations representatives of Colombia's CCM 2022-2026

The roadmap of the electoral process is a document that included information about:

Call of nominations: to invite the CS and key populations sectors to nominate candidates of each subsector to be members of the CCM

Development of an electoral register through a registration process of CSO and CBO that work with or represent relevant sub-sectors within the CCM, to participate in the elections.

Instructions on how to nominate candidates

Verification process of the candidates' requirements

Development and setting of polling dates

Scrutiny process that included the counting of votes and the drafting of the electoral process act.

Accreditation process of the elected representatives of the CS and key populations

Notification mechanisms for elected titular members and substitutes

Official communication mechanism of elected representatives

Induction process for the new members representing the CSO, CBO and key populations in the CCM

A chronogram with key dates

This roadmap was adjusted according to the process dynamics, and was distributed through email, Facebook, WhatsApp and face-to-face and online meetings.

Electoral register of the CSO and CBO working on HIV and TB

According to the CCM's guidelines, the electoral process of the CSO, CBO and key populations representatives requires an electoral register, where all of these organizations must be registered. To fulfill this, the following steps were taken:

Creation of a registration form through Google Forms.

Dissemination of the registration link with instructions through email, WhatsApp, social media and face-to-face.

Creation of a database with the registered organizations to produce the electoral register.



Electoral register of the CSO and CBO that work on HIV and TB

The electoral register is a document presented as a database, with key information about the CSO and CBO that work with HIV and TB on a national level. It was produced through the registration of organizations in the electoral process and enabled them to participate in the process. The electoral register included information related with:

- 1 Official name of the organization
- 2 Contact information of the organization (email, phone number) and address
- 3 Name of the organization's representative
- 4 Web page address
- 5 City where the organization's headquarters is located
- 6 Legal identity and/or creation date
- 7 Sub-sector for which the organization would vote
- 8 Populations with which the organization works
- 9 Cities or regions where the organization performs its activities
- 10 Authorization on the use of information for its participation

The electoral register was comprised with the information of 157 CSO and CBO that work on HIV and TB from the entire national territory. This was the first time that a national register of this kind of organizations was developed. Of the total number of CSO and CBO that were enrolled, 44 were registered to vote for the CBO that work on HIV sub-sector, 34 for the MSM sub-sector, 27 for the Trans people sub-sector, 26 for the PLHIV (men and women) sub-sector, 17 for the FSW, HP and IDU sub-sectors, and 9 for the TB sub-sector.

The electoral process

The call for nominations and electoral processes consisted in the development of the activities and products previously mentioned, with the support of the ad hoc Elections Committee, the Technical Secretariat of the CCM and representatives of key populations in the CCM. Hereafter, the main results of the electoral process are described.

The nomination of candidates was done by the registered organizations or by self-nomination during a 10-day period

Requirements for nomination of candidates to represent CSO, CBO and key populations according to CCM regulations:

Experience

- Provable experience of at least 2 years with his/her population
- Provable experience of at least 2 years working on HIV and/or TB as the case may be

Skills

- Respectful attitude to work with diverse groups
- Leadership and articulation capacity within his/her sector/institution and the Colombian CCM
- Communication and negotiation skills, conflict management and teamwork

Other requirements

- Being nominated by one or several of the CSO registered in the electoral register or by self-nomination
- To have time, commitment and continuity in his/her engagement with the CCM
- Availability to participate in the induction process to the Colombian CCM
- Write a commitment letter and a communications plan that includes:
 - Provable experience and leadership of at least two years in his/her subsector and in his/her work related to HIV or TB
 - Specific actions to sustain the communication flow with his/her constituent group and the Colombian CCM
 - Annex experience certification issued by one of the CSO, CBP or working network in HIV/TB with key populations
- To have permanent residence in one of the 7 cities where the GF project is being implemented currently: Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Pereira, Bucaramanga, Cartagena and Baranquilla.
- To belong, represent, self-nominate or to be nominated to one and only one of the following populations in the CCM: MSM, TP, PLHIV, PWUD, HP, FSW, people affected by TB or their representatives.

The nominations were done by email between May 16th and 25th, 2022. The registered CSO and CBO sent the information of their nominated candidate with the previously described requirements. Similarly, representatives that fulfilled all the requirements were able to self-nominate.

The ad hoc Elections Committee, the Technical Secretariat of the CCM and the consultant verified the requirements of the nominated candidates in a meeting, and issued a list of those that fulfilled all the requirements, granting them the endorsement as official candidates. Those that did not fulfill the requirements were informed by email that they did not get the endorsement and were given a three day deadline to appeal the decision by presenting the appropriate supports.

The official candidates were given the electoral register of the subsector they were to represent and were encouraged to develop campaigns to earn votes. Among the campaign strategies were short videos, electronic handouts, WhatsApp messages, emails and online meetings.

Ballots with photo and profile of the candidates by subsector were designed and distributed among the CSO and CBO registered in the electoral register, along with voting instructions and times and dates to cast their votes. Reminders were sent to the 157 CSO and CBO registered through all available forms of communication.

Voting was done during June 13th and 14th, 2022 to an email address created for this purpose, which could only be accessed by the consultant and the Technical Secretariat of the CCM.

Resultados de la votación de elecciones de las OSC y PC				
Subsector	Padrón	Votos válidos	Nombre	Votos obtenidos
Personas trans	27	13	Deborah Skenassy	6
			Danne Aro	3
			Juanita Ortíz	3
			Johnnatan Espinoza	1
			Eulicer Medina	0
Representes TB	9	9	Hanna Henao	3
			Deccy González	3
			Carlos Mario Hernández	3
OBC con trabajo en VIH	47	27	Cindy Zapata	20
			Yennifer Urritia	4
			José Fernando Giraldo	2
			Diego Ruiz	1
HSH	37	30	Mauricio Garcés	24
			Ángel Carreño	5
			Andrés Rojas	1
Hombres viviendo con VIH	25	12	Jesús Hernández	4
			Aristóbulo Garaviño	3
			Mauricio Ruiz	3
			Víctor Esteban	2
			Robin Echeverry	0
Mujeres viviendo con VIH	25	10	Gloria Maury	10
Compartido MTS, PUD y HC	18	7	Fidelia Suarez	3
			Julián David Patiño	3
			Marnobis Santillana	1
Total	163	108		

The day after the polling days, in an online meeting, the Technical Secretariat of the Colombian CCM, the ad hoc Elections Committee and the consultant, carried out the vote count and with those results, the titular members, first substitutes and second substitutes of the representatives of the CSO, CBO and key populations in the CCM were defined. This work group drafted the electoral process act that put on record the election results.

Among the results of the electoral process, of the 157 registered CSO and CBO, 108 valid votes were obtained, that is to say that 68.8% of the electoral register voted correctly according to the established criteria. The highest number of votes was obtained by the representative of MSM (24 votes) and in second place the representative of the CBO working on HIV (20 votes), in correspondence with the size of the electoral register of these two subsectors.

As it can be observed, some candidates were tied, which was expected in the roadmap. Two tiebreak criteria were established: years of experience and gender representation where it applied. The ad hoc Elections Committee decided to appeal to the first criteria, so the requirements presented by the candidates were reviewed.

In the following table the new representatives of the CSO, CBO and key populations in the CCM are presented with their city of origin. Some of them, as is the case of the FSW and TP were re-elected.

It can also be observed that some substitute seats were left vacant, as is the case of the TB subsector and the women living with HIV subsector. That will be resolved by the CCM Assembly, because the regulations contemplate the change between the titular member and the substitute on the second year of the period.

Subsector	Representación	Nombre	Ciudad
Personas trans	Principal	Deborah Skenassy	Cali
	Primer suplente	Danne Aro	Bogotá
	Segundo suplente	Juanita Ortiz	Barranquilla
Representes TB	Principal 1	Hanna Henao	Medellín
	Primer suplente 1	Carlos Mario Hernández	Bucaramanga
	Segundo suplente 1	Vacante	
	Principal 2	Deccy González	Bogotá
	Primer suplente 2	Vacante	
	Segundo suplente 2	Vacante	
OBC con trabajo en VIH	Principal	Cindy Zapata	Medellín
	Primer suplente	Yennifer Urritia	Cali
	Segundo suplente	José Fernando Giraldo	Pereira
HSH	Principal	Mauricio Garcés	Cali
	Primer suplente	Ángel Carreño	Bucaramanga
	Segundo suplente	Andrés Rojas	Cali
Hombres con VIH	Principal	Jesús Hernández	Cali
	Primer suplente	Aristóbulo Garaviño	Cali
	Segundo suplente	Mauricio Ruiz	Medellín
Mujeres con VIH	Principal	Gloria Maury	Barranquilla
	Primer suplente	Vacante	
	Segundo suplente	Vacante	
Compartido MTS, PUD y HC	Principal	Fidelia Suarez	Bogotá
	Primer suplente	Juan David Patiño	Pereira
	Segundo suplente	Marnobis Santillana	Medellín

Representaciones de SC y PC en el MCP para el periodo 2022 - 2026

Induction workshop of the new members of the CSO, CBO and key populations in the CCM

In order to develop the necessary capacities among the new representatives of the CSO, CBO and key populations, to perform their new roles in the CCM, during June 29th and 30th, 2022 a face-to-face induction workshop was carried out in Bogota city, where the elected representatives participated, as well as the outgoing representatives and other members of the CCM. These dates were strategically chosen because they coincided with the visit of the Colombian GF Country Team.

The workshop's agenda included topics related with general aspects of the GF's funding model, the CCM's regulatory framework, the strategic monitoring system, code of ethics, online courses that the GF offers to the CCM members and their respective certification credentials, the GF's new grant on HIV 2022-2025, two-way communication strategies, presentation of the PR and participation dynamics in the CCM.

Two-way mechanisms for feedback and communication

Based on the CCM's guidelines, and being a requirement for the nomination of representatives of the CSO, CBO and key populations in the CCM, the elaboration of a simple communications plan was requested. This plan contains the basis to generate a proposal for a two-way mechanism for feedback and communication among the representatives of the key populations in the CCM and the people they represent. This proposal was discussed in the induction workshop with the new members of the CCM and some adjustments were done.

Among the aspects discussed, the need to create a communications plan for the CSO, CBO and key populations came up, as well as the importance to ensure technical and economic resources to improve communication among the communities. This product constitutes an important element to strengthen the communications among the representatives of the CSO, CBO and key populations in the CCM and the people they represent.

4. *The challenges*

To ensure transparency, representativeness, a wide engagement and the democratic character that the process required, were constituted as one challenge. Taking into consideration the diversity of the interested stakeholders and the size of the country. To overcome this challenge, the appointment and active engagement of an ad hoc Elections Committee, wider and diverse communication strategies (online and face-to-face), segmentation of the groups of interest for the CCM from the electoral register, equity in participation, roadmap flexibility and the extension of times for the whole process were all considered.

During the initial phase (online), only a few organizations were registered and some registrations were wrongly filled out, among the causes identified were difficulties for some representatives to fill out the online application forms, internet access, lack of knowledge about the GF's processes among some leaders and a lack of the CCM positioning in the different regions. To rectify all of that, face-to-face informative sessions were carried out in the 7 cities prioritized by the project, and there was accompaniment in the review and correction process of the registrations that were wrongly filled out.

Very few candidates were registered during the initial phase (online). The causes for that were researched and some of the findings were: many of the the key populations leaders work for the PR, which was an exclusion criteria, being a non-paying job makes it not very appealing and there is no perceived benefit of belonging to the CCM, lack of the CCM positioning in the cities and several nominations did not fulfill all the requirements (place of residence, experience supports, etc.). It was decided to implement face-to-face informative sessions, which were accompanied by the outgoing CCM members of the CSO, CBO and key populations. They shared their engagement experiences in this space, giving emphasis to the importance of this participation for the key populations and to the benefits that the leaders obtained for their engagement. Similarly, there was face-to-face accompaniment during the filling out of nominations and follow up for the requirements submission.



5. *Lessons learned*

Due to the novel process, several lessons learned were identified to be taken into consideration in future processes, and can also be shared with CCMs from other countries of the region:

In a context as wide and diverse, it was the use of various extensive communication channels and strategies: face-to-face, online, informative capsules, social media, WhatsApp, among others. Face-to-face sessions were the alternative option for leaders with online technical difficulties, and according to the representatives of the key populations, these were more trustworthy and made communication easier.

Putting together the electoral register, as a base for the elections process, improved equality in the participation, because it allowed the segmentation of the CCM's sub-groups of interest, making participation easier according to their characteristics (capacity, number, etc.), without which they would have been left out of the process.

The process allowed to improve the visibility and to position in a more clear way the processes of the GF in the country and the role of the CCM in the country's different regions, identifying it as an important engagement space where the CSO, CBO and key populations have a voice and are able to make decisions.

There are disadvantages in the capacities of some of the representatives of the CSO, CBO and key populations to participate in the process, for registering their organizations in the electoral register as well as for submitting the requirements for their nominees. These disadvantages are due to a lack of reading comprehension, technological devices and skills, internet access, among others. Those with disadvantages need more personalized accompaniment (in person or by phone) to avoid being left out, for both face-to-face or online registration and the submission of requirements.

The availability of evaluation tools for the informative processes is very important. The results of the input and output evaluations showed an important increase in knowledge related with the processes of the GF, both for online as well as face-to-face sessions: from 54,8% of correct answers in the ingoing evaluation to a 72,3% of correct answers in the outgoing evaluation.

One of the requirements was the development of a communications plan; however the elected candidates mentioned the need of resources to produce those plans and to fulfill the expectations of those that voted for them. Based on what the new representatives proposed as a communication strategy, a two-way communication proposal was formulated, which required resources so that the communication processes were ensured.

In order to ensure the transparency of the process, the creation and accompaniment of an ad hoc Elections Committee with no conflict of interest was very important; this committee was comprised by representatives of PAHO, PAIC, Gestar Salud and the Rotary Club, all of them members of the CCM.

6. *Recommendations and next steps*

Based on the experience and results of the process, it is suggested to update the document: “Guidance for the presentation and accreditation of the representatives of the CS and key populations in the CCM”.

In order to ensure the representation of the new key populations prioritized in the new grant 2022-2025, a recommendation to the CCM was made to make the regulatory adjustments to include a representative of the migrant population from Venezuela in the CCM.

The CCM Assembly must come up with proposals to fill the substitute vacant seats, specifically the ones of the TB sector y women living with HIV, taking into consideration that according to the rules, there must be alternation between the titular members and substitutes on the period’s second year.

It is suggested to the CCM Assembly to guide a transition process between the outgoing members and the new ones, taking into consideration the end of the current grant and the beginning of the new grant funded by the GF.

To take into consideration this process, its results and lessons learned for the next electoral process of representatives of the CS and communities, which according to the GF’s guidelines will take place in 2026.

To mobilize financial resources to implement a two-way communications plan for CSO and the communities.

To strengthen the new representatives and the people they represent around community-led monitoring to improve their engagement in the GF’s processes and in the national response.

It is necessary to continue to reinforce the information about the GF and its processes in local contexts around the country, with particular emphasis on the cities that were prioritized for the new grant 2022-2025.