

An engaged civil society underpins the success of Global Fund's New Funding Model

By **Moi Lee Liow**

There has been a lot of buzz around the Global Fund's New Funding Model (NFM), an important outcome of the *Global Fund Strategy Framework 2012–16: Investing for Impact*¹, launched in March 2014. The impact of the model's more streamlined design and inclusive approach will soon be clear as eligible countries start submitting new funding proposals.

Designed as a simpler, more predictable and flexible way countries can request and receive funding (as compared to the previous rounds-based funding method), the NFM embodies the GFATM's five new strategic objectives: (1) invest more strategically, (2) evolve the funding model, (3) actively support grant implementation success, (4) promote and protect human rights, and (5) sustain gains, mobilise resources.

Under the model, enhanced partnerships constitute a strategic enabler; the NFM is designed to identify opportunities for more robust engagement by civil society and key populations in determining the course of HIV interventions in-country. The success of the NFM (or at least the noble goals behind its design) depends on how well this can be achieved. The mechanism to facilitate this is the country dialogue process (see box opposite).

APCASO, in its role as a Technical Assistance provider for civil society/key populations engagement in Vietnam, reiterates that while civil society and key population stakeholders have critical roles to play in the country dialogue process, it is only when they are appropriately prepared and engaged strategically that their full potential can be realised. APCASO is among the first group of six Technical Assistance providers contracted in early 2014 by The Global Fund for this purpose (Table 1).

APCASO's technical assistance in Vietnam

APCASO is collaborating with the Center for Supporting Community

Understanding the Country Dialogue Process

Country Dialogue Process

The country dialogue is based on three key principles that:

1. It is an ongoing process to develop health strategies for the three diseases, and to strengthen health and community systems.
2. It is a country-led process for requesting the Global Fund funding through development and submission of a country concept note that is aligned with the national strategy plan or investment case.
3. It is to be an inclusive, participatory and open process where key stakeholders to the epidemic in the country are able to get involved and contribute inputs to the concept note.

The GFATM's commitment to human rights, gender equality, sexual orientation and gender identities, key populations engagement and strengthening community systems are to be embodied in the way the country dialogue process would be manifested.

Maximising civil society and key populations' role in the Country Dialogue Process

While the country dialogue is an ongoing process (expected to be 8–10 months in duration), there are several stages in its timeline that offer opportunities for civil society and key populations stakeholders to intervene or provide inputs, as indicated by arrows in diagram below.

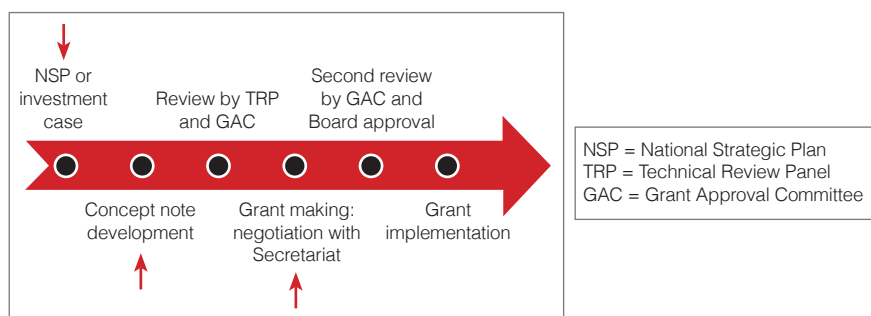


Table 1

No.	TA Provider	Country
1	LBH Masyarakat	Indonesia
2	APCASO	Vietnam
3	MSM Global Forum	Cameroon, Tunisia
4	World AIDS Campaign	Malawi
5	AMREF Health Africa	Ethiopia, South Sudan
6	East Europe & Central Asia Union of PLWH (ECUO)	Tajikistan

Development Initiatives (SCDI), a national-level civil society organisation, well-versed in Global Fund processes and very experienced with key population engagement in Vietnam. Technical assistance is to be provided in two parts: (a) country dialogue engagement, and (b) supporting key populations to engage.

At time of writing, two key activities critical to improve engagement at country level had been implemented: Introduction to the NFM; and training for the newly-elected civil society representatives to the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM). More technical assistance will take place over the next few months.

One, a preparatory workshop held on 16–17 April 2014 in Hanoi, was attended by 35 participants from key populations including people living with HIV, sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender people and people who use drugs. It had two main objectives:

- a. To enhance participants' understanding of the NFM and the country dialogue process including the GFATM's strategies on human rights, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, community system strengthening and key population engagement
- b. To raise awareness on the important role of civil society and key populations in the country dialogue process.

The proceedings were conducted in Vietnamese with SCDI's Dr Khuat Thi Hai Oanh as the main facilitator, and APCASO trustee Don Baxter as the key resource person. From his involvement as a Developed Country delegate to the Global Fund Board, Don brought valuable insights on why the GFATM, guided by the new *Global Fund Strategy 2012–2016: Investing for Impact*, went through extensive structural changes in recent years. The NFM is the new critical mechanism through which GFATM will engage with countries and partners to ensure that existing gains are sustained and accelerated towards achievement of ambitious development goals globally.

The participants displayed keen interest in the CCM, its mandate and goals, as well as the role of civil society members within its framework.

Two, a training program for newly-elected civil society representatives to the CCM and key population stakeholders was conducted 18–19 June 2014, in Hanoi. There are nine elected representatives and nine alternates, a big improvement from only three representatives before the June election. After a quick introduction to the GFATM vision, goals, functions and structures, and the NFM, the 25 participants (including TB advocates)

were orientated to the GFATM strategies on community system strengthening, human rights, gender, SOGI and key population engagement.

For this training, Sara Faroni of the GFATM Vietnam country team, was in Hanoi and joined us to conduct the session on the country dialogue process.

Working in groups, participants expressed their major concerns and issues, and decided on the interventions they wanted to be included in the country concept note, for an effective HIV response. They were motivated to be involved with the writing team as the country got ready for developing the concept note.

Key messages:

- a. **Need to know the GFATM much better.** It is a fallacy that stakeholders knew or were familiar with GFATM processes or terminology even if they were involved as sub-recipients in the previous Rounds-based projects. Participants reported that understanding the NFM and country dialogue process became an eye-opener as they could more clearly see what their roles were and where they could contribute.
- b. **Stakeholders need a platform to express their needs and aspirations under the NFM.** Participants recommended that related groups should be brought together to work on clarifying community priorities, and see that their needs and aspirations were reflected in the concept note. They must have common agreement on the roles they can play and level their expectations. They should also agree on and support those who were chosen to represent them.
- c. **Need to know national investment priorities, epidemiology information, and key population sizes.** Stakeholders need to understand the priorities for an investment case, given the epidemiology and key population sizes, and where the best-impact interventions could be.

- d. **Understand and work with the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM).** The CCM received a lot of attention and resulted in lengthy discussions not only on mandate and procedures but also the potential space it provides for meaningful engagement by key populations and civil society. Participants were encouraged to learn about the new eligibility requirements under the NFM.

APCASO and SCDI would provide further technical assistance for coaching/mentoring of the civil society and key populations representatives to the Country Coordinating Mechanism, targeted consultation with related stakeholders on concept note preparation including review and feedback, as well as appropriate interventions.

For more information, visit www.theglobalfund.org and www.apcaso.org

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Reference

- 1 The strategy is available at: <http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/about/strategy/>

HIV AUSTRALIA

This article was published in *HIV Australia online – HIV and the enabling environment: Australia and our region (Vol 12, No 2)*.

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