

**October 19, 2023 Extended Echo Session: Global Fund Strategy 2023-2028, Priorities and Strategies for the next funding cycle**

**Session Questions/Comments and Some Responses**

SN	Questions/Comments	Answer/ Response / Comments
1.	Does scaling up on TB Investment include Multidrug resistance and bovine tuberculosis detection and control programs?	Yes indeed! MDR testing is a key priority, and GF supports in many different ways. Yes, projects to improve detection of bovine TB in humans, or joint epidemiological studies to understand prevalence in humans/ruminants could be eligible as part of larger One Health programs. Grants are all evaluated on country-by-country basis.
2.	Some of the data related to the grant's performance indicators are not captured routinely by countries, could the speaker please elaborate on what plans are (if any) also to support capacity for data collection/reporting/integration?	Great question, but not easy to answer, because there are so many diverse efforts in this domain, and so many different people working on various aspects of the challenge. Each country team has a dedicated 'PHME' (Public Health Monitoring & Evaluation specialist), who is responsible for guiding the countries with their Performance Frameworks and overseeing the official data collection and reporting requirements. Through the grants, many countries have requested different kinds of support relating to their HMIS systems, or interoperability of LIS with DHIS2 (TA or trainings, or actual software development). Countries that have a NLSP in place are encouraged to evaluate progress towards implementation. We also have a Data Science Strategic Initiative...
3.	On the EQA KPI - one other measure could be coverage - defined as proportion of eligible facilities participating	Excellent suggestion. Agree that aiming to document and improve coverage is most important. Countries can always propose their own customized metrics (Work Plan Tracking Measures)
4.	Supporting countries so that they routinely collect, analyze and interpret relevant data about their system is a great battle to win. There are so many things to do in addition to LIS, we also need to train a cadre of people working with the lab sector and who can manage those data, i.e make them speak. Way to go Juliet!!	Thank you for the encouragement. I'm often advocating for countries to hire data scientists within their Lab Directorates.
5.	Thanks, Juliet for the elaborate presentation. What can be done to improve the uptake of budget funds?	poor absorption of available fund reflects the system weaknesses within and beyond the lab sector. It may also reflect sub optimal partnership, collaboration and TA practices in country. poor absorption rate, might be an inevitable step to actually be confronted to all bottlenecks outside the lab sector and start addressing them. Provided a good and unbiased root cause analysis is conducted by country and funder.
6.	Can you talk more about the gap between funding available and the use of funding? It seems like USAID funding is always completely used. Or is there something I can read to better understand where GF funding fits vs USAID?	Understanding the 'donor landscape' for lab investments in any given country is a major challenge, because sometimes there are so many different donors, not just USAID. In many countries the World Bank is funding many activities and financing major lab construction projects and/or equipment. Especially with the advent of the "Pandemic Fund". As part of grant applications, countries are requested to complete information on donor landscape for RSSH, and identify gaps. At country level, we encourage establishing forums such as a Laboratory Technical Working Groups to convene the lab leaders and partners and review the funding/investment situation all together.
7.	What other support models does Global Fund have apart from the RSSH and what is the budget ceiling for 2024 funding cycle?	In addition to the core country grants (which include the allocations for HIV, TB, Malaria, and suggested RSSH amounts), there are some Centrally Managed Limited Investments (CMLIs). The CMLIs take the form of various regional initiatives, or 'Strategic Initiatives' on particular themes (like Surveillance, or Medical Oxygen, or Community Health Workers). The overall budget ceiling for the entire Global Fund is determined by the success of the Replenishment Campaigns, when foreign governments make their pledges.
8.	What are some of the determinants of grant absorption for labs? and how can ASLM as a unit help?	The best way for ASLM to support 'absorption' is to focus on helping Lab Directorates (and/or disease programs) with implementing the interventions that are already funded. This will require engaging directly with lab leaders and Principle Recipients.

SN	Questions/Comments	Answer/ Response / Comments
9.	Countries have already written and finalized the grant documents for GC7 where some of the indicators may not have been catered for. Is this going to affect the disbursements? Do they have a chance of remedial submissions? Please guide!!!	GF uses multiple different types of indicators, and only some of these will have impacts on disbursements. Indicators are typically discussed in early stages of reviewing grants, but usually do not get finalized until the very last steps, and are formally fixed during grant signing. But there is nothing stopping a country from creating their own custom metrics (e.g. WPTMs work plan tracking measures), and starting to collect and compile data at any time during the grant cycle.
10.	There are obvious challenges regarding fund absorption. Countries need this money and there are huge gaps these funding can address to ultimately improve patient outcomes. We must devise strategies to improve funding absorption for GC7.	Absolutely, totally agree !!!
11.	Integration has been clearly demonstrated in the scale-up of capacity in Genomic Sequencing of pandemic and epidemic prone pathogens. However for HIV Sanger genomic sequencing instruments, none are WHO prequalified and therefore GF funds do not buy those. Is there an opportunity to apply for a waiver of this requirement?	There is always the possibility to explore procurement options for specific lab equipment or reagents, even when these may not be WHO PQ or are not listed in wambo. We encourage people to reach out to us with the specific country request and background context, and then we can discuss how to proceed. RSSH-Labs Team <a href="mailto:RSSHLabsTeam@theglobalfund.org">RSSHLabsTeam@theglobalfund.org</a>
12.	Thanks for these insights Juliet, it will indeed be nice at ASLM2023 to triangulate these TA and adhoc initiatives to collect and integrate lab data/indicators, with efforts (by countries and other partners) to integrate them into routine data collection so that countries can gain appropriate more data analysis and use for decision making.	
13.	What are strategies in place to monitor the supply chain aspect of these COVID-19 test products from Up-stream to Down-stream?	There is a distinct Supply Chain unit within the GF 'Sourcing and Operations Department'. They work on many aspects of logistics management information systems (LMIS), including lots of efforts to digitize the tracking of inventories/distribution networks, etc. It's very important to ensure interoperability of LMIS with Laboratory Information Systems (LIS). And not to get the two acronyms confused !