

Questions & Answers

Supporting Countries and Grants during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The Global Fund and COVID-19

How does supporting the response to COVID-19 fit into the Global Fund's core mission of fighting AIDS, TB and malaria?

As a major investor in resilient and sustainable systems for health, the Global Fund has a vital role to play, together with our partners, in supporting countries response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The threat posed by COVID-19 will increasingly have an impact on the continued fight against HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, which continue to kill three million people each year.

What kind of Global Fund support can countries access for their COVID-19 response?

Countries eligible for Global Fund support can access funding to address COVID-19 through:

- Reprogramming (up to 5%) or grant savings (up to 5%) - for countries with current grants.
- The COVID-19 Response Mechanism. Countries with a Global Fund allocation for the 2020-2022 period can access an amount equivalent to up to 10% of their allocation.

Countries are encouraged to analyze current grant savings and reprogramming first, before applying for C19RM support.

For countries and multi-country grants with no fixed 6th replenishment allocation, support will be based on an amount equivalent to up to 10% of the current grant allocation minus amounts accessed through grant flexibilities.

Can a country request both grant savings and grant reprogramming for COVID-19 support?

Yes. The Global Fund encourages countries to use savings first and reprogram funds, up to 10% total of the grant value.

How long does it take to get approval for a reprogramming or use of savings request?

Speed is of the essence in responding to the new pandemic. The Global Fund will fast-track COVID-19 related decisions and respond to requests in a maximum of five working days. Within that timeframe, the type of support requested will impact response time, with repurposing equipment being the fastest option.

What are the minimum requirements to access this funding?

Countries must follow WHO guidance on the COVID-19 response.

Principal Recipients must submit for CCM endorsement a request that:

- Describes which COVID-19 activities will be funded by Global Fund grants;
- Provide a brief costed budget for these activities (Neither a revised detailed budget for the use of savings, nor a grant revision request form are needed);
- Describe how this will fit into the national COVID-19 response;
- Consider the potential negative consequences that diverting grant funds towards COVID-19 could have on HIV, TB, and malaria programming, and suggest ways to mitigate those consequences;

Within two months of the request approval, the Global Fund will issue an Implementation Letter for grant revision to be signed by the PR and the Global Fund.

What steps should be taken to access this funding?

Following the requirements listed above, the Principal Recipient issues a request to use savings and/or reprogramming to the Global Fund's Fund Portfolio Manager. Preferably, it will be endorsed by the CCM. At a minimum it will be shared with the CCM to ensure transparency. Within two months of the request approval, the Global Fund will issue an Implementation Letter for grant revision.

How should PRs issue a request for COVID-19 support?

The Principal Recipient may send an email to the Global Fund's Fund Portfolio Manager with the CCM Secretariat in copy to ensure transparency. The request should cover all of the requirements listed above.

What options are available to countries with no grant savings?

Countries with no savings can request to reprogram 5% of their current grant value. Approval from the Global Fund is required.

Can multicountry grant funds be used for the response in non-eligible countries?

Multicountry grant funds can be used for COVID-19 costs in constituent countries, including countries ineligible for a Global Fund allocation up to a total value of 5% of the grant.

Under the new COVID-19 response guidance, can multicountry grant funds be used to purchase laboratory testing for countries not eligible for a Global Fund allocation?

Yes, it is possible. However, each request will need to be reviewed and approved by the Global Fund.

Can an advanced disbursement for COVID-19 be requested?

Following Global Fund approval of the COVID-19-related support, the PR can use in-country cash balance to start implementing COVID-19-related activities. If the in-country cash balance is insufficient, a disbursement will be processed by the Global Fund.

How should results be reported for COVID-19 support?

Support for COVID-19 should be reported in the next PU or PUDR.

Funding Requests

What options are available if my funding request for the current allocation period is not ready to be submitted for window 2?

The Global Fund is now offering three submission dates for Window 2 and two submission dates for Window 3, to enable applicants to submit their completed funding request as soon as it is ready. Updated submission dates are published on the Global Fund's [Funding Request Submissions](#) page. The Technical Review Panel (TRP) will review funding requests remotely. The TRP will share feedback through their review form within 8 weeks from the submission date.

Can the Global Fund extend all grants for six months so that funding requests can be developed as usual, but with added time given the current circumstances?

At the moment this is not the recommended approach. The Global Fund's priority is to ensure high impact, lifesaving programs to end HIV, TB and malaria. Extending all grants by six months would diminish the potential for impact of new, more effective grants in the next cycle by delaying their start. However, grant extensions will be available to individual applicants if new grants are not ready for implementation on time.

When can or should a grant be extended beyond its original end date?

A grant extension is justified when it will not be possible to complete grant-making for a new grant in the remaining time available. In this instance, an extension can be developed.

Extensions require additional work for those involved in developing them and slow down the potential to accelerate impact. Given that extensions require updates to the performance frameworks and budgets and countries must still complete their grants, they increase the overall work for countries in the end. In addition, funding for extensions comes from the 2020-2022 allocations. This is not preferred unless absolutely required.

How can we organize an inclusive, transparent country dialogue in these circumstances?

Engagement and transparency are core to the Global Fund model.

During a context where “physical convening” is not possible, alternatives like Zoom, Skype and/or other virtual audio/visual mediums are encouraged; shared documentation over email; WhatsApp group chats to ensure information sharing and input (particularly for those without computers/consistent Wi-Fi).

Should additional funding be necessary to pay for virtual engagement, CCM Secretariats should work with the Country Team and CCM Hub to exercise additional flexibilities for CCM funding. For more in-depth guidance on how to host a virtual dialogue that is inclusive and transparent, see the [Guidance Note on Virtual Inclusive Dialogue](#).

Is there an opportunity to re-program CCM funding to facilitate remote engagement?

Yes, the Global Fund anticipates realized savings from costs associated with convening. These can be reprogrammed to cover emerging technical or data related costs for virtual engagement. Please reach out to your Country Team with ccmhub@theglobalfund.org in copy to work on next steps.

Can the Global Fund provide in-country partners with technology to support robust, inclusive and meaningful technical consultations and country dialogue in country?

The Global Fund Information Technology Department (IT) is currently assessing which technologies can best support in-country partners. Zoom calls can be used free of charge for 45 minutes.

Can you change the CCM Eligibility Requirements?

CCM Eligibility Requirements remain unchanged for the time being. The Global Fund reiterates its commitment to and the importance of inclusive country dialogue and the engagement of civil society, communities and key and vulnerable populations. Input from those closest to and living with the three diseases is critical to ensuring effective programs designed to help those most impacted.

Can I submit my funding request before it is fully complete?

Applicants are encouraged to submit completed, high quality funding requests. However, a two week ‘clarifications’ period is available after submission so that countries can send in remaining pieces of information or make further refinements. The Global Fund country team can assist the CCM in assessing submission readiness.

Can we include COVID-19 interventions in new funding requests?

The Global Fund continues to encourage all applicants to invest in building resilient and sustainable systems for health, including building lab capability and information systems to support better health outcomes for all.

COVID-19 specific interventions should not be included in new funding requests.

Are CCM signatures from all constituencies still required?

CCM members are still required to endorse the funding requests but the Global Fund will accept alternative forms of endorsement when physical signatures are not possible (for example, email, photo of signature on funding request sent by text message, endorsement by WhatsApp), as long as we can confirm the intent of the relevant CCM member.

It is possible for this CCM endorsement to be completed during the clarification period, in the two weeks following funding request submission.

Can we postpone completing some of the sections or annexes currently required for the funding request?

The Global Fund is considering whether any funding request requirements could be moved to the end of the grant-making process and will communicate this once decided.

Do funding requests need to now reflect the potential impact of COVID-19 on their proposed activities?

No, at this time funding requests are not required to specifically reflect the potential impact of COVID-19 on their proposed activities, but this may be a risk that the country wants to highlight. In general, health systems analysis and proposed interventions should include pandemic preparedness.

In this exceptional circumstance can Global Fund grant funds be used to pay for consultants to write the funding request?

No. Global Fund grant funds may not be used to fund consultants to write the funding request. We encourage all applicants to continue to access virtual Technical Assistance from partners using remote tools.

Guidance Notes

Has the Global Fund issued guidance for COVID-19?

Yes. Global Fund investments and advice to Principal Recipients and implementers strictly follow WHO guidelines. An aggregated list of partner COVID-19 technical guidance can be found on [the Global Fund website](#). Specific guidance for Global Fund grants will also be posted on this page.

How are human rights and gender equality considered in the Global Fund's response to COVID-19?

The Global Fund is committed to human rights and gender equality, and has developed the following guidance note: [Human Rights in Times of COVID-19](#) to ensure that a COVID-19 response is rights-based and gender-responsive. This guidance note covers:

- Global Fund commitments on human rights and gender;
- What the minimum human rights standards that all Global Fund grantees must commit to mean in the current context;
- How programs to remove human rights-related barriers to HIV, TB and malaria services can be adapted and expanded;
- Why strengthening community-based capacity to protect health rights is particularly important now, and what should be done concretely to make that happen;
- Funding applications for the 2020-2022 allocation; and
- Longer-term implications.

Can patients get enough medicine for a few months if their country is in lockdown?

According to WHO guidance, the following points are made per disease component:

- **HIV:** Support multi-months- dispensing of ARVs to ensure people on treatment have the drugs they need while reducing the frequency of visits to health facilities. Include important consumables for prevention and treatment, such as condoms, ARVs for PrEP, methadone/ buprenorphine for Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST), in adapted procurement plans. Support is available from Regional HPM managers; Supply Operations and HIV country focal points.
- **TB:** Those co-infected with Covid-19 will be at higher risk of a negative outcome, therefore home-based TB treatment should be encouraged, and TB clinics should dispense drugs for patients to take at home for longer duration. Countries should minimize the risk of stock outs, staff shortage and increase their focus on patient wellbeing issues.
- **Malaria:** The WHO urges countries to continue malaria services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic ([link](#)). [More detailed guidance covers](#) case management, prevention, distribution, IPTp, Communication, M+E and cross cutting considerations.

Annual Funding Decision and Disbursements

Will Global Fund annual funding decision and disbursements be affected by COVID-19?

The Global Fund has put measures in place to ensure that annual funding decisions and disbursements are processed and approved on time based on PR funding needs.

Health Product Supply

1. Delivery & Availability of Health Products

Are there delays in delivery of health products?

Delivery delays of a few weeks or more are currently expected. The Global Fund is assessing potential delays for every single purchase order processed through its Pooled Procurement Mechanism. Currently, 10% of purchase orders are facing delays greater than 30 days.

National responses to COVID-19 across the globe are impacting all transport modes, with increasing challenges related to freight and logistics, such as delivery schedule disruptions or shipping container shortages. Flight delays and cancellations contribute to air freight routing and capacity constraints. Ocean freight remains the most reliable mode of transport; however, constraints with refrigerated container availability have reduced capacity for pharmaceuticals.

Procurement Services Agents of the Pooled Procurement Mechanism consider specific measures that may mitigate delays where possible, such as re-routing shipments, consolidating airfreight shipments and converting them to ocean freight, or changing transit countries to be able to catch “cargo-only” aircraft. Some of these necessary changes may carry cost implications.

Are there any flexibilities to the standard process that ensure health product flows to Global Fund programs?

Yes. These flexibilities include:

- Extending the exception period for delivery of goods to be charged to the current allocation from 90 to 180 days;
- Allowing advance order payments from future allocations, even if a grant is not yet signed, for orders placed through the Pooled Procurement Mechanism (PPM) and Stop TB’s Global Drug Facility; and

- Case-based exceptions to the Global Fund Quality Assurance Policies' pre-shipment sampling and testing requirements.

For grants ending in December 2020, when is an order eligible for the extended exception period for delivery of goods?

This flexibility only applies when all three of the below criteria are met, as described in the [Guidelines for Grant Budgeting](#):

- Orders for deliveries in 2020 were placed on time within (pre-COVID-19) recommended lead times, or by 10 April, and the delivery was expected within the grant period;
- There is a delay outside the Principal Recipient's control that means the delivery will be delayed, which may happen even for orders that were placed on time;
- The delivery happens within 180 days of the grant end date.

Production challenges exist for some products including pyrethroid-based (PBO) and Next Generation bed nets, Lopinavir/Ritonavir, and rifapentine. We will address these orders on a case-by-case basis.

What do Principal Recipients need to do to support timely delivery?

All Principal Recipients are required to submit requisitions and requests forms by 10 April 2020 for all requisitions for deliveries expected in 2020 for all grants. This includes:

- In wambo.org for Principal Recipients participating in the Pooled Procurement Mechanism.
- Via Procurement Request Forms (PRFs) to the Global Drug Facility.

PRs sourcing health products outside of the Pooled Procurement Mechanism are also strongly advised to place orders for deliveries in 2020 by mid-April.

Rapid approval by Principal Recipients of freight estimates may permit securing the best currently available option; approval delays may lead to missed shipping slot opportunities.

How can Principal Recipients minimize freight and logistics disruptions?

Rapid approval by Principal Recipients of freight estimates received by Procurement Services Agents will permit securing the best currently available option; delays in approval of freight estimates may lead to missed shipping slot opportunities, further delays and cost increases.

Extra collaboration is necessary as changes to delivery schedules and freight providers may be necessary. Principal Recipients will be required to produce the associated documentation that may be needed to accommodate late changes to flight routes under expedited timelines. Please discuss exercising flexibilities with the pertinent in-country stakeholders.

What is the impact on future orders of health products?

It's important for all PRs to submit their orders for all deliveries expected in 2020 by 10 April and consider adjustments for future procurements.

In case the supply or logistics situation significantly worsen, please discuss accommodating greater flexibilities with relevant in-country stakeholders, including:

- Reducing remaining shelf life requirements.
- Accepting later deliveries for some quantities.
- Consider using alternative WHO-recommended products if there are supply shortages.

Is customized labeling impacted?

Yes. The Global Fund will not accept new requests for customized labeling to ensure that products can be quickly manufactured and efficiently deployed to all countries, and to better enable the ability to address potential stock out situations.

Principal Recipients sourcing health products outside of the Pooled Procurement Mechanism should also waive requirements for customized labelling.

How can Principal Recipients ensure the program has enough medical supplies/health products?

The Global Fund, the Stop TB Partnership and procurement service agents will reach out to implementing partners participating in the Pooled Procurement Mechanism to minimize impact on deliveries where delays of more than 30 days are expected.

If implementing partners not participating in the Pooled Procurement Mechanism incur significant challenges sourcing core life-saving products, the Global Fund Health Product Management Specialist will reach out to the Global Fund's Supply Operations Department and other partners. Delays are expected due to the current supply situation, and **Principal Recipients** are asked to consider a 30-day delay threshold for requesting sourcing support from the Global Fund, except in exceptional circumstances.

What tools are available to countries for quantifying WHO-recommended COVID-19 essential supplies?

PRs should consult the WHO's list of [COVID-19 Critical Items](#), which includes PPE and other emergency medical supplies such as oxygen therapy devices.

The WHO has also published a [Forecasting Tool](#).

2. Global Fund Support

What can Principal Recipients do should the situation significantly worsen?

Principal Recipients will be asked to accommodate greater flexibilities, such as reducing remaining shelf life requirements, accepting later deliveries for some quantities or to consider using alternative WHO-recommended products if there are supply shortages.

Principal Recipients are encouraged to consider these potential adjustments when planning future procurements and discuss alternate options with relevant in-country stakeholders.

Can countries procure PPE locally if they are available, or should they all be channeled through to UNICEF?

PPE should be sourced locally or regionally. It should be sourced internationally as a last resort. There is a shortage of products at the global level.

Should countries face significant challenges sourcing PPE through local channels, UNICEF is best placed to provide support as it has expertise in emergency procurements and has existing relationships with suppliers of these products. UNICEF's PPE catalogue has been integrated with wambo.org so Principal Recipients can place orders directly through existing mechanisms. TB programs can also reach out to the [Stop TB Partnership's Global Drug Facility](#). There may be extended lead times when procuring internationally.

Where can I find updated information about the COVID-19 impact to procurement and supply chain?

The Global Fund is actively working with suppliers and partners to ensure mitigation measures are in place for any potential delays. Regular updates will be shared on the [COVID-19 section of the Global Fund website](#) and this [update page](#) to provide clarity on the supply security situation for core products and freight/logistics.

Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs)

Can CCMs adapt their activities to COVID-19 emergency?

Yes, CCMs can adapt activities funded by CCM Funding Agreement resources to COVID-19 emergency activities. More guidance on this will follow.

CCMs are encouraged to strengthen remote participation and engagement. With the CCM Secretariat's support, CCMs are invited to opt for remote attendance to meetings and avoid large gatherings. CCMs should reprioritize activities included in the CCM annual work plans and reprogram savings from the reduced travel costs. CCMs have increased flexibility within their annual CCM funding agreement to reprogram resources to cover costs such as increased bandwidth, platform memberships, additional routers, etc. For more information, [see this guidance note](#). Additional flexibilities on the use of CCM Funding can be discussed with the CCM Hub Focal Point and Country Team (with the CCM Executive Committee and/or CCM leadership in copy to ensure transparency).

Do CCMs still have to comply with the annual reporting requirements?

Yes. CCMs are still expected to report on their expenses and performance at the end of each CCM funding year. Deadline extensions will be granted on a case by case basis, and CCMs will not be penalized if they are unable to fully execute the planned activities in light of COVID-19.

Are CCMs required to submit an Eligibility Performance Assessment before Funding Request submission?

Yes, an Eligibility Performance Assessment (EPA) is mandatory. However, flexibilities are being considered for the submission of the Light Eligibility and Performance Assessments (EPA Light).

Are CCMs still required to coordinate an inclusive country dialogue process with full CCM sign-off of the funding request submissions and nomination of the principal recipient?

Yes. Engagement and transparency are critical to ensure an inclusive response to end the diseases. CCMs must leverage existing websites, virtual and mobile communication channels and other platforms to reinforce CCM members' engagement, with timely sharing of agendas, meeting minutes and feedback, as well as core decision points.

For more information on virtual inclusive dialogues, [see this guidance note](#).

The Global Fund remains committed to supporting in-country partners in achieving high standards during funding request development to the extent possible, considering the unprecedented level of disruptions. Therefore, CCMs should discuss any barriers to inclusive country dialogue with their relevant country team as early as possible.

Do funding request submissions still require sign off from the full CCM?

Yes. engagement and transparency are critical to ensure an inclusive response to end the diseases. CCMs should leverage existing websites, virtual and mobile communication channels and other platforms to reinforce CCM members' engagement, with timely sharing of agendas, meeting minutes and feedback, as well as core decision points.

What is the current status of the CCM Evolution project amidst COVID-19?

The Global Fund's CCM Hub is currently reviewing its approach to the Evolution project, based on the [findings of the Pilot](#), as well as core business practices, to understand how CCMs can be more responsive to country and partner needs. The CCM Evolution methodology included assessment and intervention phases that are being re-examined to ensure interventions enhance CCM health governance contributions without disruptions to critical COVID-19 responses and funding request development.

Given the critical role CCMs play in convening and ensuring an inclusive and transparent process during funding request development and oversight of investments, all potential solutions are being analyzed to maintain engagement across sectors and populations. This may require shifting resources to accommodate virtual solutions. Emerging resources from the CCM Evolution will be launched in 2020 to focus on enhancement of core responsibilities that can be catalytic to updating remote modalities during COVID-19 and beyond.

Will the CCM Evolution project be postponed or timelines shifted?

Yes, the CCM Evolution launch will not begin with in-person facilitated assessments in Q2 2020, as originally envisioned. However, other solutions, including ways to leverage existing assessments (e.g. the Eligibility Performance Assessment, CCM Pilot End line results), are being analyzed including the most appropriate timing.

Grants

What if grant operations cannot continue under a new government directive, such as a local public health declaration banning gatherings of people?

Principal Recipients should follow official government decisions, directives and guidelines for managing the COVID-19 response. They should ensure Global Fund-supported programs are not putting staff, patients and others at risk. To the extent possible, Principal Recipients should undertake business continuity planning to develop alternative ways of working with the aim of keeping people safe while critical work continues.

Should services continue?

Every effort should be made to continue services for delivery of key and essential medicines, ensuring continuity and safety of people living with HIV, TB and malaria.

Principal Recipients should begin or implement contingency plans for how to continue providing services as much as possible, defining potential new ways of reaching to those in need like through virtual meetings or phone consultations.

Should staff salaries, normally paid as part of a grant, continue to be paid?

Yes, salaries should continue to be paid as well as salary top-ups that are linked to total salary payments. The Principal Recipient should determine whether and how the employees can deliver work over the internet, by phone or in some other way.

Can we request a deadline extension? What are the criteria?

Please inform the Fund Portfolio Manager when submission delays are foreseen due to COVID-19. They will make case-by-case decisions.

My progress update (PU) or progress update/disbursement request (PU/DR) will now have incomplete information. What should I do?

If you are a Principal Recipient, the Global Fund recommends documenting what information is missing and proceeding with submission – with the intention of following up once the situation stabilizes. Proceed especially if the work yet to be completed is data verification. In such cases, please consult and agree with your Country Team.

If you are a Local Fund Agent who cannot fully verify information, the Global Fund recommends documenting what information is missing or unverified information and proceeding with the request to ensure submission – with the intention of following up once the situation stabilizes. In such cases, please consult and agree with your Country Team.

We foresee implementation disruptions in Global Fund-supported programs. What documentation do we need to provide to the Global Fund?

Principal Recipient should stay in close contact with their Country Teams and copy the gps@theglobalfund.org general address in case Global Fund staff is unavailable or falls sick. By

email, Principal Recipient should detail the extent of program disruptions and suggested mitigating measures.

We foresee incurring additional program costs, such as for staff safety, which weren't originally envisaged. Do we need to follow a specific process?

No. Such expenditure will generally be considered eligible. Implementers are requested to stay in close contact with their Country Teams to inform them about these additional costs and copy gps@theglobalfund.org.

Health workers and outreach staff are not able to do their jobs. Can they continue to be paid?

Yes. Maintaining them as workforce allows to immediately resume services once movement restrictions are lifted. In the interim, Principal Recipients should encourage creative solutions to continue work while respecting government decisions, when possible.

Not all activities under Matching Funds can be implemented under COVID-19 restrictions, leading to financial savings. Should these savings be kept separate from funds that can be reprogrammed for COVID-19?

Matching Funds (unlike country allocation funds) must remain invested in activities relating to the catalytic priority with which they are associated and may only be reprogrammed for other activities supporting that priority. The Global Fund will only approve reprogramming for COVID-19 that supports the relevant catalytic priority.

Audits and Reviews

What happens to reviews, audits and investigations that are already planned for 2020?

Under the current exceptional circumstances, it is appropriate for the OIG to prioritize and reforecast its audit plan. Some audits may not be completed as planned for some portfolios. The standard timelines for the completion of audits will also likely be affected.

How will the Global Fund ensure transparency and accountability in the funded programs for the remainder of the year?

Again, these are exceptional circumstances. Whilst OIG audits and investigations have been impacted by this situation, we are proceeding with some of our work, whilst other reviews must be delayed or cancelled. We are working with the Global Fund Secretariat to provide advice and guidance in real-time on any special arrangements being put in place.

When will the next in-country reviews/audits/investigations take place?

At the moment, we do not know when we will be able to travel to recipient countries. From the perspective of staff safety as well as curbing the spread in recipient countries, it is not advisable for anyone to travel at this time. This will be continually reviewed.

What if a Principal Recipient cannot provide information to support or comply with an ongoing audit by the specified deadlines?

The Global Fund recognizes current audits may not be completed on time. There is flexibility to delay the progress of an audit. Contact your Country Team to discuss possible new timelines.