

Dual-track financing a decade on: Reflections on civil society space in the implementation of Global Fund grants

Gemma Oberth, Policy Advisor 21 May 2018

In April 2007, at the 15th Board Meeting of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, [a decision was taken](#) to encourage countries to include a Principal Recipient (PR) from both the government and non-government sectors in each disease proposal. This was called “dual-track financing”.

In a 2011 [information note](#), the Global Fund expresses that dual-track financing is important because it can help:

- ▶ Raise awareness of service availability, including primary prevention services at the community and sub-national level, by reaching a wider range of people;
- ▶ Scale-up existing service delivery to a broader range of population groups, and/or geographic regions;
- ▶ Move more quickly towards the provision of access to prevention, treatment, care, and support to all persons in need, including key populations and people who may not already be included in national disease programming; and
- ▶ Contribute to sustainability of programmatic interventions over the longer term, through the increased capacity that comes from a broader range of implementing partners.

In Round 8 of its grants (in 2008), the Global Fund began implementing dual-track financing as policy. It was quickly popular. About half of Board-approved disease proposals in Round 8 included implementation approaches that had both civil society and government PRs.

Ten years later, dual-track financing remains the gold standard. Updated in January 2018, [the Global Fund's instructions](#) for applicants maintains that applicants are encouraged to consider dual-track financing.

Lots of countries in Africa are expanding the role of civil society in the management of Global Fund grants. In the 2014-2016 funding cycle, a civil society PR was added to the implementation arrangements in Botswana and Swaziland for the first time. For the 2017-2019 cycle, Mozambique and Tanzania both added two new civil society PRs.

Yet, recent calls suggest that the role of civil society organizations in the implementation of Global Fund grants may need reaffirming and reinforcing.

In March 2017, 40 PRs from the Civil Society PR Network (CSPRN) met in Geneva and [called on](#) the Global Fund to examine ways to establish more effective systems and guidelines for dual-track financing and to strengthen the role of civil society within this framework.

Even in countries where dual-track financing is in place, challenges persist.

There is often a sentiment that international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) tend to be awarded PR roles at the exclusion of indigenous civil society organizations. According



to a recent [thematic review](#), just four INGOs – Catholic Relief Services, Population Services International, Save the Children and World Vision – are responsible for implementing more than 30 active Global Fund grants worth over US\$1.2 billion.

In December 2017, The Zimbabwe AIDS Network (ZAN) wrote a letter to the chair of their Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), copying several high-level Global Fund Secretariat and Board representatives. The letter raised alarm bells that “space for local NGOs/CBOs is shrinking as heavy weights get into communities to implement [Global Fund grants]”. Specifically, the letter problematizes the National AIDS Council’s choice to appoint Plan International and the United Nations Population Fund as sub-sub-recipients for programs to reach men who have sex with men and adolescent girls and young women, respectively.

Bolstering their concerns, ZAN’s letter sites the commitment in the [2016 UN Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS](#) to expand community-led service delivery to cover at least 30% of all service delivery by 2030.

Even in South Africa – where there are currently five indigenous civil society PRs – [grievances remain](#) that funding is not trickling down to communities. On the 5 April 2018, the Civil Society Forum (CSF) of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) had a protest sit-in at a CCM meeting, voicing concerns that non-governmental and local community groups do not have access to adequate resources to implement quality HIV and TB services.


Indeed, dual-track financing does not mean that the dollars and cents are shared equally by government and civil society. A 2017 ICASO [discussion paper](#) found that less than a quarter of Global Fund money for HIV prevention in 11 African countries is managed by a civil society PR.

Countries are exploring innovative solutions to these challenges with dual-track financing. Many are finding new and creative ways to ensure a meaningful role for civil society in Global Fund grant implementation.

In Zambia, a conceptual model for identifying non-governmental sub-recipients (SRs) has been agreed upon by the PR and the CCM. This is chiefly aimed at expanding the scope of Global Fund investment to create increased space for civil society organizations.

South Africa’s [recent call for PRs](#) ring-fences two non-governmental PR spots – one for a civil society organization to focus on advocacy with key population networks and one for a private sector body to bring co-investment and improve efficiency and effectiveness of investments.

In 2017, the Kenya Coordinating Mechanism (KCM) purposefully adapted its SR requirements to enable more community-based key population organizations to successfully access funding and implement programs through the Global Fund. There was



also a change to the SR selection process, to prioritize community-led key population organizations as implementers of the key population modules.

Others have proposed a quota system for civil society funding, or a benchmark for funding for the community responses and systems module in Global Fund grants. For the first time in the 2017-2019 funding cycle, the Global Fund made recommendations in the country allocation letters for a proportional amount to be invested in building resilient and sustainable systems for health. It remains up to countries to determine how much of this amount is for health systems and how much is for community systems.

A decade ago, [observers were questioning](#) whether the Global Fund ought to make dual-track financing into a requirement instead of a recommendation. Today, the debate about how to optimize civil society's role in Global Fund grants remains as relevant as ever.

ICASO would like to hear from civil society and community-based organizations...

about their experiences with Global Fund implementation arrangements.

Please share your stories about dual-track financing in your country with ICASO Policy Advisor, Dr. Gemma M. Oberth (gemma.oberth@gmail.com)