

"No Such Accountability is Available on the Ground"

A Review of Community Engagement in Malawi's Global Fund Processes

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Introduction

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Development partners contribute more than 80% of all HIV funding in Malawi. One million people living with HIV depend on these partners for sustained access to antiretroviral therapy and treatment monitoring. With 39,000 new HIV infections a year, strategic prevention investments are also critical. For the 2017-2019 funding cycle, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria made \$450.5 million available to support Malawi's national response (Table 1).

Table 1. Malawi's 2017-2019 Global Fund Allocation

Disease Component	Allocation (USD)
HIV	\$370,804,766
TB	\$9,000,000
Malaria	\$70,670,374
TOTAL	\$450,475,140

Engagement of communities most affected by the diseases is vital to ensure effective and efficient use of these resources. In 2017, ICASO partnered with Health and Rights Education Programme (HREP), a local Malawian civil society organization, to support meaningful and impactful civil society engagement in Global Fund processes in Malawi for the 2017-2019 allocation period. As part of the initiative, ICASO and HREP rigorously document the consultation process, the priorities put forward, and the key enabling and inhibiting factors for effective community engagement.

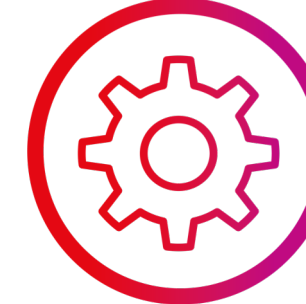
Methodology

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This review assesses:



The level of funding requested for key program areas



The quality of program design



The inclusion of community-articulated priorities in the funding request



Community-identified successes, challenges, and opportunities to improve their Global Fund engagement

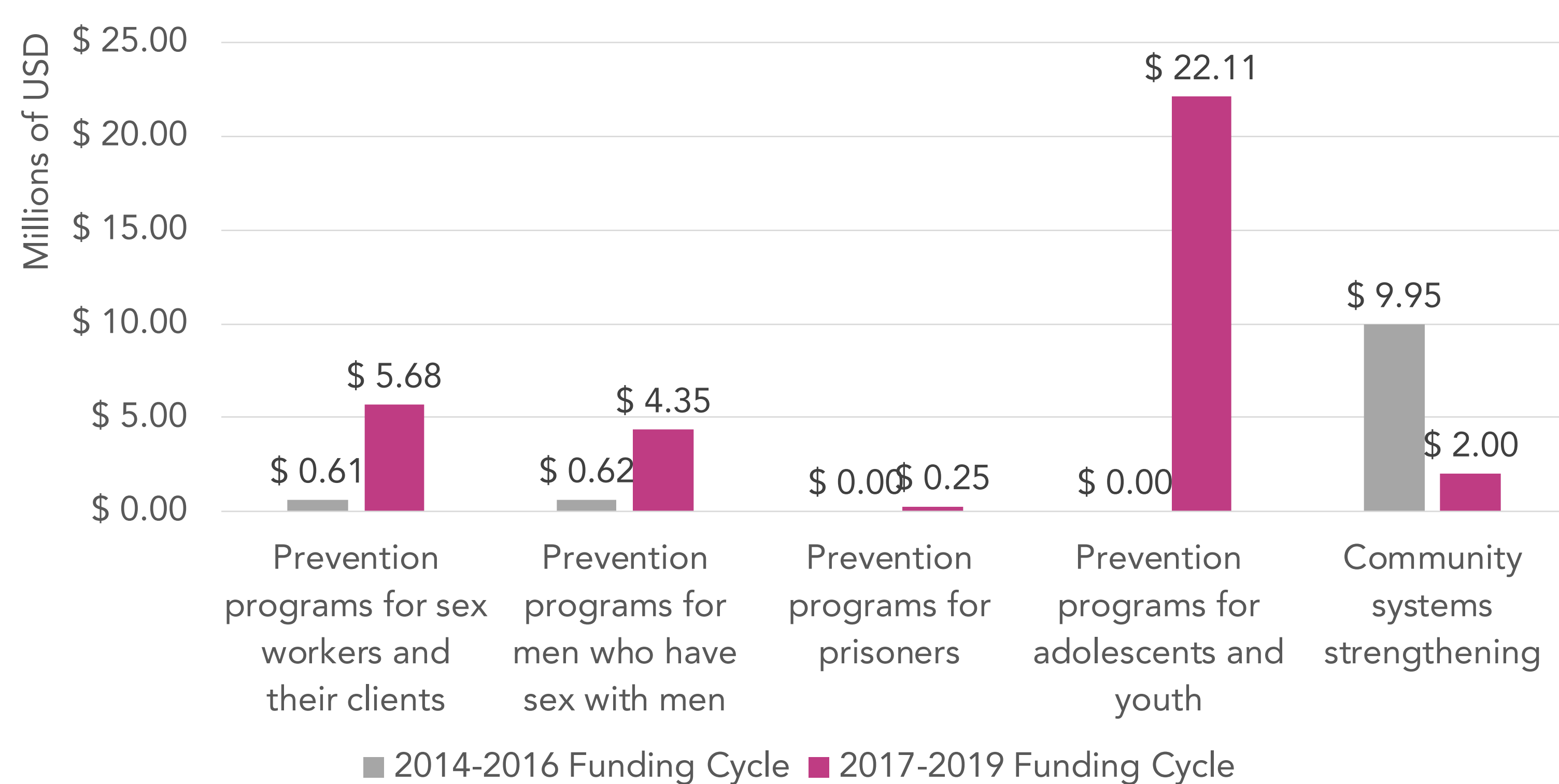
Data was collected through a desk review of national Global Fund documents as well as 13 key informant interviews that were conducted in person in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Zomba, in April 2018.

Results

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In the 2017-2019 cycle, \$10.28 million was requested for prevention programs among sex workers, men who have sex with men and prisoners, compared to \$1.23 million in the 2014-2016 cycle (Figure 1). The amount of funding for adolescents and youth also increased most dramatically. Malawi is among the 13 countries prioritized by the Global Fund for intensified investments in adolescent girls and young women.

Figure 1. Comparison of total funding requested in Malawi's 2014-2016 and 2017-2019 Global Fund funding requests (select modules)



The review also revealed clear improvements in program quality in Malawi. The reach targets for sex workers and men who have sex with men significantly increased to scale up access to services. The grant aims to cover 6000 sex workers and 3600 men who have sex with men with a comprehensive package, compared to 2000 and 1350 in the last cycle, respectively. These key populations programs expressly move from partial service packages to comprehensive ones, as well as from fragmented delivery to a one-stop-shop approach.

For adolescent girls and young women, the 2017-2019 funding request explicitly mentions a focus on quality over quantity, reducing the reach targets to expand and improve the depth and breadth of the package of services offered. Structural elements are introduced, including activities to address gender-based violence, keep girls in school, and strengthen economic opportunities.

Of the 26 priorities set by communities during country dialogue, 16 were either fully or partially included in the final submission to the Global Fund. Many priorities related to key and vulnerable populations were included. However, priorities related to monitoring treatment stock-outs, developing community scorecards, conducting community oversight and feeding back monitoring information to communities, were not fully taken on board.

Discussion

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Key informants suggest that the improvements to Malawi's Global Fund program are as a result of civil society-led priority setting exercises, conducted through a wide and inclusive country dialogue process.

"Now [in 2017], we were able to go beyond Lilongwe. We were able to go subnational. The people on the ground—those that are at CBO [community-based organization] level—had their voices added to the table in the new grant. We were also able to expand the constituencies. We included the key populations, FSW, MSM, prisoners, women and young people. In the other round [in 2015], this was not comprehensive and now we were able to get the input of these groups to the table, which does really matter [for what gets included in the grant]."

"We conducted several sub-regional workshops with CSOs. We explained the whole process. We even had consultation meetings with those very small CBOs especially in order to solicit what their main priorities were. We made sure we involved the very small CSOs."

However, significant gaps remain. There is a need for increased civil society capacity and community-based monitoring support.

"Due to the lack of capacity on the part of the CSOs [civil society organizations] to check the accountability of the PRs, SRs [sub-recipients] and SSRs [sub-sub-recipients]—if they are properly implementing on the ground—the transparency and accountability is also very weak. Since it is weak, no such accountability is available on the ground."

"There is need to do more monitoring, especially to find out how the money is able to trickle down to the ground."

There is evidence that community engagement in Malawi's Global Fund processes is improving, and leading to more responsive programming. To improve even further, the following is recommended:

- ✓ Civil society should set fewer, more evidence-based priorities
- ✓ Civil society should engage throughout the funding cycle, including following up on the final funding request and reconciling what got included and what got cut
- ✓ The Global Fund should explore creative ways of making sub-granting more flexible, to enable more community-led service delivery, advocacy and monitoring
- ✓ Applications to the Global Fund should include interventions to strengthen technical capacity of civil society organizations

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