

Civil Society Engagement in the Global Financing Facility: Analysis and Recommendations

ADDENDUM

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This paper was developed with support and guidance from RESULTS Educational Fund. Susannah Hurd and Maty Dia (Global Health Visions) were the primary authors. It serves as an addendum to an earlier paper:

Hurd, Wilson and Cody. February 2016. [Civil Society Engagement in the GFF: Analysis and Recommendations](#). Global Health Visions and Catalysts for Change.



Background

To better understand the engagement of civil society in the Global Financing Facility (GFF) processes to date, in the fall of 2015, RESULTS¹ commissioned Global Health Visions and Catalysts for Change to undertake an analysis of civil society engagement and consultation in the development of Investment Cases in the four GFF frontrunner countries. The analysis provided insights on successes and challenges in civil society engagement reported by key stakeholders, as well as lessons learned and recommendations for enhancing civil society engagement moving forward.

This addendum is the result of an additional rapid analysis conducted in October and November 2016, through key informant interviews with 13 national civil society stakeholders in a selection of “frontrunner and second wave” GFF countries and additional inputs gathered through a meeting of civil society representatives engaged in the GFF, which took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on November 1, 2016.²

Findings and Lessons Learned

Civil society has contributed a diverse set of skills, knowledge, and expertise to advancing reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) and nutrition, and it is well-positioned to help ensure that the GFF can accomplish its goals, if meaningfully engaged in GFF planning and processes. While there have been some notable improvements in civil society engagement since early 2016, the experiences of civil society organizations (CSOs) in different GFF countries varies, and significant challenges persist.

□ **Consistent, timely communication with civil society has improved, but challenges remain**

Strong communication about GFF processes and products (e.g. Investment Cases) has been, and continues to be quite weak throughout GFF countries. There are communications challenges between governments and civil society, and among civil society representatives themselves.

Interviewees noted some examples of strong or improved communication with civil society. For example, interviewees in **Kenya** and **Nigeria** talked about a virtual learning meeting hosted by the GFF Secretariat and World Bank offices at the country level in October 2016, to which three to four CSOs were invited in each country. In **Cameroon**, civil society self-selected six CSOs to engage in GFF Country Platform discussions; they have continued to be involved in GFF processes and serve as a liaison between the government and the rest of civil society, particularly in improving information-sharing.

“We are not updated unless we ask – they are trying to finalizing things and civil society is not part of that.”
Kenya CSO Stakeholder

¹ The CEO of RESULTS, Joanne Carter, was one of two civil society representatives to the GFF Investors Group in 2015 and 2016; the other representative was Mesfin Teklu Tessema of World Vision International. In 2017 Angela Mutunga of Advance Family Planning/Jhpiego and Aminu Magashi Garba of the African Health Budget Network became the new civil society representatives to the GFF Investors Group.

² A similar methodology to the first analysis and report, was used in this analysis. The 13 civil society representatives were from: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Senegal, Cameroon, and Uganda. Not all GFF countries were included due to budget and time constraints, which is a recognized limitation of this analysis.

But, challenges persist. When civil society does receive information about the GFF, they report that it often comes from international partners, or from personal relationships with the government. Invitations to participate in meetings or to review documents often come with little notice. Even when some CSOs are engaged or informed about GFF processes, the communication with a broader network of CSOs seems to be mostly through informal, ad hoc channels (forwarded emails, SMS etc.) Local CSOs have been largely uninformed about GFF processes, and some CSOs report that while the government is communicating with a few key CSOs, those CSOs are not necessarily sharing information regularly or consistently with others.

"There has been some openness, some sharing about where the government is with GFF... but it's not really engagement. It's not asking for input or telling us how CSOs can be engaged."
Tanzania CSO Stakeholder

For example, in **Senegal**, stakeholders report that the PMNCH focal point in-country was enormously helpful in facilitating communication and consultation between government representatives and civil society, and among CSOs themselves. However, since she left in the summer of 2016, communication channels have weakened, with many CSOs feeling as though they no longer know what is going on, and they are not receiving information from the government or from other CSOs. In **Kenya** and **Tanzania**, CSOs report that little or no information about the GFF has been shared with CSOs since the Investment Cases were finalized; they have been able to get brief updates when they have reached out to government contacts for information, but there has been no systematic approach for communication with CSOs, or for meaningfully engaging them in ongoing decision-making about implementation or monitoring.

Lessons: Having a focal point for communications in country, with strong relationships with government and civil society, can help to facilitate information-sharing and engagement. Resources are needed to support consistent, reliable systems for enhancing communication – i.e. via regular convenings or consultations, web platforms, and/or working groups. Clear guidelines for communications – from government to civil society and other GFF stakeholders; and among civil society – would also help to clarify expectations for all interested and involved GFF stakeholders. Grassroots and traditional media should be leveraged to enhance communication about the GFF to a larger network of stakeholders from different sectors.

□ **Examples of diverse representation of CSOs engaged in GFF processes exist, but must be strengthened in most GFF countries**

Interviewees in most countries noted that the selection process for inclusion of CSOs in GFF consultations and country platforms has not been systematic and there has been a lack of transparency around how and by whom civil society representatives are selected to participate.

Diverse and balanced representation of civil society is important not just for inclusivity, but for leveraging the full benefit of the breadth of CSO experiences and knowledge. Engagement in the GFF to-date has been mostly dominated by CSOs from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and by those with prior relationships with government, with limited representation from local CSOs. Stakeholders reported that the family planning community of CSOs has been more engaged in GFF processes than other communities in some countries (e.g. **Uganda, DRC, Senegal**). In many countries, nutrition- and youth-focused CSOs have not been engaged at all.

Cameroon is an example of a strong process for diverse and transparent selection of civil society partners to engage in the GFF. The Ministry of Health (MoH) and World Bank colleagues, together with civil society, hosted a broad civil society consultation to provide input on the Investment Case; in addition, civil society was able to self-select six representatives – from diverse geographic regions in the country, and from across issue areas – to serve as representatives for civil society in GFF processes. Stakeholders report that the MoH and CSOs are now planning a meeting to highlight community interventions identified in the Investment Case where CSOs can play a role.

Lessons: Providing a forum for civil society to select its own representatives to be engaged in the GFF creates a transparent process that civil society will feel invested in, and sets up natural channels for enhancing communication; however, resources are needed to support information sharing and ongoing coordination of civil society, including youth platforms. The family planning community has strong support from international partners and donors, as well as existing coalitions and working groups (at national, regional, and global levels) that have facilitated civil society alignment, organization, and communication to support their engagement in the GFF; this should be replicated for other issue areas. Greater coordination across the RMNCAH continuum is needed in some countries, and existing platforms (e.g. through SUN, Gavi, and Global Fund) should be engaged and leveraged.

□ **Value of civil society engagement not widely recognized; systems to support meaningful engagement must be enhanced**

In order for the inclusion of civil society in government processes to be beneficial for all involved, the value of what civil society can contribute needs to be well articulated and understood, and strong systems need to be in place to support an inclusive, transparent, and accountable process. Stakeholders expressed that in many GFF countries, governments do not recognize how civil society engagement can significantly contribute to meeting GFF global and country goals (e.g. through resource mobilization, implementation support, technical assistance, social mobilization, monitoring and accountability, and many other skills). In places where some government representatives recognize the value-add of civil society, they may lack the capacity for implementing effective multi-stakeholder processes through which to engage civil society. Civil society also needs capacity strengthening for communicating and engaging among themselves, and for supporting local and community-based CSOs to align around common priorities and get involved in key sub-national, national, and global processes.

“The biggest challenge is the traditional power equation – the government is not used to engaging with other stakeholders. But, they depend a lot on the technical knowledge of civil society. They have experienced the value add many times, but their processes have not institutionalized CSO engagement. So, it is about breaking the system.”

Nigeria CSO / Private Sector Stakeholder

In **Nigeria**, for example, civil society is involved in a multi-stakeholder technical working group focused on health care financing; this group, one of five convened by the MoH to support the operationalization of Nigeria’s National Health Act, is tasked with advising the Minister of Health on the GFF. In **Senegal**, following a January 2015 CSO consultation on the GFF there, an effort was made to map the specific roles and contributions that CSOs can and do make to RMNCAH, in order to clearly outline for government how CSOs can contribute to achieving GFF outcomes and results. However, while these represent important steps in the right direction, interviewees reported that the processes and systems in place for communication, transparency, and meaningful engagement of civil society are still weak – documents and meeting invitations often arrive late or not at all,

engagement of civil society representatives is ad hoc, and often, civil society is informed but not asked for input.

Lessons: Strong guidance for countries is needed to support multi-stakeholder country platforms and civil society engagement. But, guidance alone will not necessarily change systems and norms that are deep-rooted. Technical assistance is needed to support country governments in operationalizing guidance around inclusive, transparent, and accountable country platforms, and in engaging with a wide, and diverse network of CSOs. Strong voices by GFF leadership and country champions are needed to endorse civil society engagement, and to emphasize the critical role that civil society must play in order to realize the goals of the GFF.

Conclusion

As a unique and innovative financing mechanism for RMNCAH, the GFF has the potential to be a trailblazer in many ways, including in supporting country partners to meaningfully engage with civil society. Modest improvements in CSO engagement are materializing in some GFF countries; more needs to be done to share these successes, and to support other GFF countries to find equal success in leveraging the value of civil society to support their goals.

If civil society is not engaged, there is a risk that a huge network of potential advocates and supporters of the GFF could be lost. Already, civil society representatives in some GFF countries have noted feeling defeated because they have tried so hard to be involved and have repeatedly not been included in processes and communications.

"It is very discouraging – it is a lot of work, and it is hard to keep going when you don't get anything."
Kenya CSO Stakeholder

If civil society organizations are recognized for the true knowledge, expertise, and skills that they bring and they are engaged in the GFF in a meaningful way, they have the potential to garner significant citizen support and mobilize resources for the GFF, to support implementation and reach the poorest and most vulnerable populations, and to facilitate robust monitoring and accountability that will make the GFF stronger.

