

Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Regional Meeting to Review Country Experiences with the Global Fund against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM)

Summary Meeting Report

Rio de Janeiro, 5–6 June 2002

1. EXPERIENCES TO DATE

The meeting was convened by UNAIDS, PAHO/WHO and the LAC representative to the GFATM Board (Brazilian government) in order to review experiences of LAC countries with the GFATM and agree on a joint strategy for further supporting country submissions to the Fund in the future. The meeting shared experiences of countries which were successful in their applications to the first round of the GFATM as well as of those that did not get approval. International partners that were instrumental in supporting country submissions also participated in the meeting (full list of participants attached).

Main lessons learnt regarding LAC country applications to the Fund

The ***active role of the LAC representative to the Board of the GFATM*** in providing information, convening briefing meetings and ensuring involvement of other LAC countries in key meetings related to the Fund - including in meetings of the Board of the GFATM - helped improve communication and mobilize countries to make use of the opportunities provided by the Fund.

A clear presence and strong role of NGOs and PLWHA was identified as the most powerful single factor for success. Country coordination mechanisms (***CCMs***) ***must be inclusive*** and ***involve civil society***, including PLWHA in the ***proposal development and implementation***.

A good design and quality of the country proposal is essential, including the following elements:

- Vulnerable populations and the poor are the best targets that should benefit from the proposed projects.
- HIV prevention and care, including treatment must both be included and any missing components should be justified.
- Expected results need to be clearly defined.
- The costing and budgets need to be well defined, including a clear indication of how the proposal complements existing projects (i.e. ‘additionality’)

- Proposals should refer to the capacity for implementation (including human resources and financial ‘absorptive’ capacity and sustainability)
- A good monitoring and evaluation plan with concrete and realistic indicators needs to be included.
- Proposals dealing with multiple diseases should clearly indicate cross-cutting aspects and indicate how the treatment components will be included for all three diseases.
- Community participation, gender equity and poverty reduction issues should also be referred to.

Project management needs to be well defined, specifying the role and accountability of the CCM and including a proposal for effective, credible and accountable financial and fiduciary arrangements. **Financial management arrangements** with institutions that have international credibility and that would ensure transparency and proper use of funds tend to improve chances for success.

Political commitment and support for the CCM and for the common country proposal is a key factor facilitating submissions to the Fund.

The existence of a **multi-disciplinary technical assistance ‘pool’** of institutions and experts supporting the CCM efforts helped improve chances for success.

The lower burden of disease and higher development indexes in LAC countries are handicaps for favourable consideration of the LAC country submissions by the Fund. The Rio meeting agreed on the need to intensify the **policy dialogue with the GFATM** to consider **options for ensuring that LAC countries are able to fully benefit** from the Fund, including the option of ensuring that an adequate percentage of GFATM funds be available for financing countries in the region.

2. MEETING AGREEMENTS RE: ELEMENTS OF AN LAC STRATEGY FOR THE GFATM

- The core of the strategy is the **‘partnership approach’ to optimize multidisciplinary technical assistance to countries**. While the development of a GFATM submission remains a national responsibility, international technical assistance should build on the present ‘pool’ of institutions that have already demonstrated their competence in helping countries prepare GFATM applications. Thus far, the ‘pool’ of partners that have offered technical support include the UNAIDS Secretariat, UN System agencies (particularly PAHO/WHO, UNDP, UNICEF), SIDALAC, the Futures Group, CARICOM and bilateral partners such as the US government – though USAID, CDC and HHS - as well as PASCA. The existing ‘pool’ of partners should be enlarged to include other bilateral donor agencies (e.g. DFID, Spanish cooperation, CIDA), UNAIDS Collaborating centres (National Institute of Public Health in Mexico and Fio Cruz Foundation in Brazil) the Inter-American Development Bank, the Horizontal Technical Cooperation Group (HTCG) and other partners. It is essential to ensure the full involvement and participation of the regional NGO and PLWHA networks as part of the ‘pool’ of partners supporting GFATM applications.

- In terms of the *flows of requests for technical assistance* it was agreed that:
 - *at the country level*, expanded Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS (TG) should work closely with the CCMs and serve as the node for coordinating requests for technical assistance on HIV/AIDS. The TG would be responsible for coordinating locally available technical resources and/or request international support when needed. In cases of applications including TB and malaria, PAHO/WHO has the primary responsibility to serve as the country node for requests for international technical assistance.
 - *at the sub-regional level*, the UNAIDS inter-country advisers would help coordinate requests for assistance as appropriate (e.g. in Central America the calendar for the provision of international technical assistance to specific countries has been coordinated at the sub-regional level).
 - *at the regional level*, it was agreed that UNAIDS should work in close collaboration with PAHO/WHO and the LAC representative to the GFATM board in order to ensure overall coordination as well as the monitoring and sharing of information among countries. The HTCG, CARICOM and representatives from key regional NGO networks should also be involved.

- In addition to supporting proposal design and development, there will be an increased need to provide technical and management support on issues such as project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, resource management, governance, results based disbursements, ensuring accountability of the CCMs etc. It was agreed that there should be regular information exchanges to share country experiences with proposal development as well as with the management of GFATM resources. An *“implementers’ network” among countries that are starting to implement their GFATM projects* should be established. *Haiti, Chile and Argentina already agreed to meet on this* and share their experiences on setting up project implementation. *UNDP agreed to work on presenting some options for financial management and fiduciary arrangements*, including the elaboration of a ‘check-list’ for the management of funds that would facilitate project implementation.

- UNAIDS, working together with the LAC representative to the GFATM Board and PAHO/WHO, will work on *further facilitating flows of information. A directory of available technical resources as well as an electronic folder of key background documents and materials on the GFATM. will be organized by SIDALAC.* UNAIDS, PAHO/WHO and other partners will also make available key technical documents that may facilitate GFATM applications (e.g. monitoring and evaluation guidelines, lists of key indicators, information on costing).

- *Regonal civil society networks, including associations of people living with HIV/AIDS agreed to work* in collaboration with UNAIDS and the LAC representative to the GFATM Board to *define better ways in which information flows to national NGO’s networks working on HIV/AIDS* can be ensured (e.g. through Web pages) to facilitate advocacy for their full inclusion in the national CCMs and participation in proposal development and implementation.

- A key aspect for the future is capacity building on monitoring and evaluation. As the Fund places special focus on results-based disbursements, the importance of good monitoring and evaluation is even higher. ***UNAIDS will identify specific opportunities for building skills in monitoring and evaluation through training*** both for countries applying for the GFATM as well as those that are starting implementation of projects.
- The LAC strategy will examine and define specific ***options for financing*** the technical assistance provided to countries.
- Although no country should be excluded, as discussed at the Rio meeting, the LAC strategy recognizes the need to ***give priority support to countries with the highest burden of disease/quickest progression of the epidemic and those with major needs.*** The decision on whether and how to prioritize countries was left to the Horizontal Technical Cooperation Group. Regional projects should also be considered.
- The meeting agreed on the desirability of having further encounters to ***exchange experiences*** with further rounds of the GFATM. The Inter-American Development Bank and the US government offered to host the next meeting in Washington.

3. THE ROLE OF THE UN SYSTEM *VIS-À-VIS* THE GLOBAL FUND

The GFATM is a new financial mechanism available to countries. It works in a complementary way with existing programmes and agencies. The Fund aims to support programmes against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria while achieving an appropriate balance between the three diseases as well as between prevention and care. The processes of the GFATM are country-led. The programmes and activities supported by the GFATM aim to contribute towards the achievement of nationally established plans and priorities. In this context, the UN System should be called upon to support and enhance the work of the GFATM.

As recommended by the UNAIDS Programme Coordination Board, the UN System and the UNAIDS Secretariat should continue their contribution to and engagement with the Fund. The following are some of the roles of the UN System:

- broker technical support for proposal development and for the implementation of successful applications
- provide strategic information
- provide assistance for human capacity development
- provide support for monitoring and evaluation and serve as ‘watch-dog’ for ‘resource tracking’ and monitoring of implementation
- take on a strong advocacy role in support of the involvement of civil society
- engage in direct policy dialogue with the Global Fund