COVID-19 Guidance Note: Virtual Inclusive Dialogue

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At the time this guidance is published, national responses to COVID-19 have prohibited many in-person meetings, providing a challenge for hosting inclusive and transparent country dialogues. Despite this, meaningful input from key and vulnerable populations is essential to the effectiveness of national HIV, TB and malaria responses and country dialogue should continue despite the challenges, though perhaps in a different form. To ensure that continued efforts are made for a transparent and inclusive country dialogue and Principal Recipient selection process CCMs have the possibility to reprogram activities in their costed workplan to fund changes to their ways of working. Further details and options are described within this guidance note.

The Global Fund's expectations related to CCM eligibility requirements 1 and 2 <u>remain the same</u>:

1. A transparent and inclusive funding request development process, including key population engagement, and

2. A transparent and documented Principal Recipient (PR) selection process.

The realities of the COVID-19 response will require alternative and innovative approaches to outreach and engagement. The Global Fund expects each Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) to be creative and use available virtual and remote tools to reach out to relevant stakeholders and ensure that the funding request is developed considering this input.

When screening for whether CCM eligibility requirements 1 and 2 have been met, the Global Fund will ask whether each CCM has made their best effort despite contextual limitations and constraints. In lieu of signatures on the funding request endorsement form, other forms of endorsements are acceptable (e.g. an email or photo of endorsement sent by SMS), however this endorsement is still required from all CCM members.

While these standards are not changing, the ways that these standards are met will certainly be different. This guidance note provides:

1. Tips and Tools for a Virtual Country Dialogue

2. Points to Consider when Choosing Tools and Platforms

3. A Case Study on Virtual Consultation Done Well

4. Guidance on Repurposing CCM Funds for Supporting Virtual Country Dialogue

1.   Tips and Tools for a Virtual Country Dialogue

There are many tools which can be considered when organizing country dialogue. Each will be suitable for some contexts and a poor fit in others. Connectivity constraints are one important point of consideration, but so too are the impact that a given tool may have on participants of country dialogue. It is important that CCMs work with representatives from key and vulnerable communities to identify and use those approaches most accessible and appropriate to their constituencies. Furthermore, CCM Secretariats should take the lead in documenting the dialogue happening in more informal settings, and reporting this back to the CCM leadership.

This section outlines some tools which can be used to supplement or replace the more common forms of in-person country dialogue meetings, provides alternatives for different telecommunication capacity levels, and provides examples that different countries have used in the development of their funding requests. The Global Fund recognizes that the availability of these tools will differ across countries and that within them, community access is often inequitable. CCMs should budget as best possible to mitigate such inequity.

High telecommunications capacity: High expectation of robust and reliable hardware and bandwidth. Videoconferencing feasible.

Medium telecommunications capacity: Inconsistent hardware and bandwidth capability or reliability. Chat or video messaging feasible.

Low telecommunications capacity: Minimum expectations of telecommunications infrastructure. Likely to be on-phone, via mail or in-person.

IT capacity of both organizer and participant should be considered, with a variety of tools chosen to ensure accessibility.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but to serve as a starting point for planning for virtual country dialogues.

Invitations and Announcements

Regardless of the IT capacity in a country, it will be crucial to invite participants to the dialogue and to transparently and publicly share how and when to participate.

- Tools useful for a Medium Level of Telecommunication Capacity
    - **Facebook** can be a great tool for inviting and announcing the dialogue. Event invites can be sent to known participants and ad space can be purchased to announce the dialogue more broadly.
    - **WhatsApp/Line/Facebook Messenger/Viber** and other chat platforms can be used to distribute shareable images or messages with details on how to participate.
    - **Email** and **CCM websites** can be used to share information and invitations.
    - **Examples**:
        i.   When inviting individuals to country dialogue to inform the development of their concept note, Ecuador used a "snow-balling" invitation strategy where each participant was responsible for reaching out to their networks to invite other potentially interested stakeholders to participate in the dialogue. This and other informal network invitation strategies helped ensure that key populations which had never participated in meetings or activities organized by CCM representatives, could take part in these country dialogues.

     ii.   In Mauritius, invitations to consultative meetings and the national stakeholder meeting for the development of the HIV funding request were shared by email, phone, and field canvassing.

     iii.   CCM Mongolia published invitations and announcements on their CCM website to the country dialogue for their TB funding request.

- Tools useful for all Telecommunication Levels
  - **Television/Radio/Newspaper** continue to be reliable media for advertising a country dialogue, especially for those of different ages, abilities, and income levels.
  - Word of mouth campaigns may be necessary in all contexts. In a virtual setting this may done entirely by phone.
  - **Examples**:
    - i.   Burundi conducted one country dialogue for both the TB/HIV and malaria concept notes. The CCM informed the public on the country dialogue process that was going to take place through media such as radio and press releases.
    - ii.   Malawi partnered with a recognized community-based organization experienced in LGBT advocacy to help the CCM consult with gay and other men who have sex with men, and sex workers. Besides relying only on general advertisements in newspapers or untargeted email invitations, the CCM ensured it would collect quality data from consultations by utilizing the established network of the partner CSO. Through this partnership, the communities of gay and other men who have sex with men, and sex workers, were effectively engaged in the development of the HIV funding request.

Information Sharing

In order to ensure meaningful participation in country dialogue, it can be important to guide individuals on how to participate. This is especially important when transitioning to a virtual environment as participants may not know how to use the tools and platforms to advocate for their needs.

- Tools useful for a High Level of Telecommunications
  - **Webinars** can be a great way to share more information on how to participate: **YouTube Live/Facebook Live** are easily accessible and shareable platforms for when the focus is on sharing information. Videoconference platforms such as **Zoom/Webex/BlueJeans/Microsoft Teams** may be better when participants may need more support or clarification, such as through a Question & Answer session.

- Tools useful for a Medium Level of Telecommunications
  - **YouTube** videos of a presentation or training can be a great way to share information.
  - **Brochures/1-Pagers** can outline important steps to participation and direct readers to further resources.
  - **Mobile-native presentations** can easily be shared on messaging platforms.
  - **CCM websites/Facebook Pages** can be easily accessible repositories for these resources. "Responsive" design of CCM websites can help ensure access on mobile devices.
  - **Email** can be used to share important information on how to participate.
  - **Example:**
    - CCM Indonesia created a video and social media campaign to share information about their country dialogue. See the case study below to learn more.

Consultations

Many in-person dialogues included discussions with separate groups of individuals from key and vulnerable populations to discuss their needs as a community. No matter the tool used, the safety and security of participant information is paramount and should be a key consideration in any planning.

- Tools useful for a High Level of Telecommunications
    - **Videoconference platforms** such as **Zoom/Webex/BlueJeans/Microsoft Teams** can be a great way to have conversations with small groups.
    - **Example:**
        i. For the development of their Malaria funding request, CCM Honduras included a webinar as a part of their country dialogue assembly which allowed remote participants from key populations the ability to contribute their recommendations and share their respective comments on the draft of the funding request.

- Tools useful for a Medium Level of Telecommunications
    - **WhatsApp/Line/Facebook Messenger/Viber** and other chat platforms allow for participants to respond and participate when they have capacity. Groups can continue to be consulted throughout the funding request development process.
    - **Facebook** can be used both as a platform for discussion of needs and as a place for individuals to respond to a Call for Ideas/Suggestions.
    - **Survey** platforms such as **SurveyMonkey/Google Forms** can be used to gather ideas and suggestions if the link is shared widely.
    - **CCM websites/emails** can serve as a place for individuals to respond to a Call for Ideas/Suggestions.
    - **Examples:**
        i. The Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM) organized consultations on social media to inform the development of their regional HIV concept note. An invitation to participate in online consultations was sent out to relevant Facebook groups and Internet communities connecting men who have sex with men and transgender people. An online survey was developed and received responses from key populations in 12 countries included in the regional grant.
        ii. The East Europe & Central Asia Union of People Living with HIV (ECUO) used survey tools several times when developing their Expression of Interest for HIV funding. Their first survey assessed the feasibility of a regional application and helped define its focus. A second survey helped identify and prioritize key focus areas for programming.

- Tools useful for a Low Level of Telecommunication
    - **Individual consultations** by phone can provide important information used to help shape the funding request.

- Tools useful for All Levels of Telecommunications
    - Physical **mail services** or a **hotline** may be an effective method for individuals to respond to a Call for Ideas/Suggestions.
    - **Example:**
        i. CCM Eritrea published a Call for Suggestions in the national newspaper to attract participants to the country dialogue.

Workshops

Workshops generally involve a combination of information sharing, training and co-production.

- Tools useful for a High Level of Telecommunication
    - **Video-conference platforms** such as **Zoom/Webex/BlueJeans/Microsoft Teams** offer many functions which can help replicate the cooperative nature of a workshop. **Breakout rooms** can help split larger groups into smaller groups for discussions.
    - **Live-editing documents** on platforms such as **Office 365/Microsoft Teams/Google Docs** can help groups of users in co-production.

- Tools useful for a Medium Level of Telecommunication
    - **Conference calls** combined with **WhatsApp/Line/Facebook Messenger/Viber** and other messaging platforms can be an effective way of engaging those without the capacity for live video.
    - **Surveys** and **votes** can be used on or in conjunction with these chat platforms to help bring consensus or direction to the discussions.
    - **Example:**
        - For the development of their TB funding request, Tajikistan created diverse working groups which communicated via email and teleconferences.

Plenaries

Large-scale convenings of stakeholders can include hundreds of participants and can be an important venue for advocacy.

- Tools useful for a High Level of Telecommunication
    - Video-conference platforms such as **Zoom/Webex/BlueJeans/Microsoft Teams** can replicate many aspects of a plenary. **Breakout rooms** can help split larger groups into smaller groups for discussions.

- Tools useful for a Medium Level of Telecommunication
    - **Conference calls** combined with **WhatsApp/Line/Facebook Messenger/Viber** and other messaging platforms can provide venues for advocacy, discussion, and prioritization. Breaking a plenary into **break-out calls** can help provide venues for discussion and advocacy.
    - **Surveys** and **votes** can be used on or in conjunction with these chat platforms to help bring consensus or direction to the discussions.

- Tools useful for a Low Level of Telecommunication
    - **Voice-only conference calls** can still be an effective platform for a plenary, especially if **break-out calls** are used for discussion, advocacy, and gauging consensus.

Funding Request Sharing

Best practices for funding request development include the sharing of the funding request documents with those involved in country dialogue.

- Tools useful for a Medium Level of Telecommunications
    - Collaborative writing software such as **Office 365/Microsoft Teams/Google Docs** can help participants in country dialogue to provide ongoing feedback on documents used in the development of the funding request.
    - For sharing completed drafts, **CCM websites/Facebook Pages** can be a great place to share these drafts with a wider audience.

- Tools useful for a Low Level of Telecommunication
  - For sharing completed drafts, if some movement is permitted, the CCM Secretariat could print some copies for collection by **CCM members.**

2.   Points to Consider when Choosing Tools and Platforms

Each of these platforms and tools comes with specific risks that should be evaluated before an engagement strategy is chosen. A discussion of these risks with Country Teams is advised for those organizing country dialogues. Some key risks to consider include:

- Privacy and anonymity concerns:
  - Facebook pages and events do not provide much anonymity and may present risks to marginalized or criminalized populations.
  - Likewise, care should be taken when planning public meetings on What's App/Line/Facebook Messenger/Viber, as members of marginalized or criminalized populations may be at risk of having their contact information exposed.
  - Special care in choosing tools should be taken if a country tracks SIM ownership or monitors web traffic.
  - Emails can likewise be a risk when individually identifiable addresses are shared/forwarded externally without careful consideration of whose addresses are being shared and who might eventually receive the communications.

- Connectivity concerns:
  - Form of engagement should be considered when evaluating expected connectivity levels. Those involved in funding request development may have an expectation of high levels of telecommunication capacity, but consultations may involve individuals with medium or low levels of connectivity and tools should be chosen which provide them inclusive access.

- Communications concerns:
  - Many individuals from key and vulnerable populations may not be accessible via email, may not feel safe sharing via email, or may respond differently for a personal request from a trusted individual rather than a mass-email sent by an organization.

3.   Case Study: Indonesia

Indonesia's experience developing its TB/HIV concept note offers great examples of how to carry out inclusive country dialogue through effective electronic consultations.

Given that Indonesia is the world's largest country comprised solely of islands, it was important for the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) to capitalize on online resources to facilitate country dialogue with maximum reach. The CCM, key population representatives and technical partners used existing social media platforms effectively to engage their constituents throughout the process of concept note development. This proved more effective than creating temporary online platforms and accounts for the sake of fulfilling application requirements, because the channels were already in place and reached a broad range of stakeholders.

For example, the Indonesia AIDS Coalition heavily used its bilingual Twitter account during country dialogue. With nearly 8,800 followers, this community-based HIV advocacy organization used its account to share information on Global Fund and World Health Organization workshops, progress on the development of the concept note, and links to relevant reports. These tweets

were in English and Indonesian, making it easier for more stakeholders to participate in the process.

The organization also produced an [entertaining video](#) encouraging more Indonesians to get involved, and posted it on YouTube during the concept note writing period. The clip provides a visual overview of the Global Fund and its funding model, allowing people to understand the process and participate in country dialogue. The video is Indonesian and has English subtitles.

Still shot from video "[Global Fund - CCM Indonesia](#)"

In addition, key population representatives on the CCM as well as members of participating nongovernmental organizations used their personal social media accounts to publicly share the progress of concept note development online. The usage of personal individual accounts was effective in this case because many stakeholders already followed them and had the effect of strengthening these existing networks.

4. Guidance on Repurposing Funds to Support Virtual Country Dialogue and PR Selection Process

CCMs have access to funds from the Global Fund to support country dialogue through two main channels.

The first is through CCM Funding Agreements where all virtual activities and related costs needed to support the country dialogue process will be considered as eligible costs. This is particularly critical to ensure civil society input into the process. In the current crisis, an increase is expected on the investment focused on Civil Society in addition to the 15% required in the CCM Funding Agreement. All CCM activities approved in the costed workplan can be repurposed and submitted to the CCM Hub by email from the CCM Secretariat, with the CCM Chair/leadership and Fund Portfolio Manager in copy. Types of eligible revised activities include:

- IT solutions for virtual meetings (BlueJeans, Skype, other), to improve internet quality (buying extra broadband capacity), mobile solutions and specific needs for Civil Society representatives (mobile data and sim cards);

- In coordination with PRs and in-country partners, purchase user access to existing virtual meeting applications or getting a combined service;

- Purchase of devices (laptop or smartphone) for CCM Secretariat and CS representatives to allow remote quality engagement;

- Hire a local facilitator capable of moderating meetings virtually to ensure all voices are heard and inputs are collected during discussions; particularly from key populations;

- Purchase of internet / data plans for CCM Secretariat and Civil Society representatives;

- Exceptionally reimbursement of taxi costs, only during COVID-19 situation but where some movement is allowed by the Government, for CCM Secretariat and Civil Society constituency members to attend critical meetings thus avoiding public transport during the outbreak. This can be reported on a receipt-basis or calculated as a percentage of Per Diem if taxi receipts are not available; and

- Purchase of a generator for the CCM Secretariat to increase electricity stability allowing for better access to IT equipment.

Should there be gaps remaining, the second option is through reprogramming of savings from existing grants to **support country dialogue** up to a maximum amount of US$150,000 (per component) as per the OPN on Design and Review of Funding Requests (2020-2022 Allocation Cycle)

Finally, if all funds have been utilized in the aforementioned two options, increases or one-time supplemental resources for enhanced virtual engagement to the CCM Funding Agreements will be considered upon request to the CCM Hub and Country Team, from the CCM Chair, citing the amount needed and justifying its support to the country dialogue or funding request development processes.