

THE GLOBAL FUND'S APPROACH TO HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING (HSS)

An effectively performing health system is key to improving the population's health status, providing protection against health-related financial risks and enhancing the health sector's responsiveness to customers' needs. The Global Fund's major objective in providing support for HSS is to maximize the overall impact of the response to HIV, tuberculosis and malaria and to contribute to achieving the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Global Fund views health systems strengthening as a means to an end, not the end objective in itself. Based on country circumstances, and depending on countries' national health strategy goals, HSS interventions may be designed to address a wide range of health system bottlenecks. The Global Fund provides flexibility to strengthen any area of the health system. The Global Fund's experience in supporting HSS and recent independent research highlighted several components that are key to building a well-functioning health system capable to effectively address priority health objectives. These include, but are not limited to:

1. An effective **healthcare delivery** system, capable to efficiently deliver high quality personal and public health services to those who need them;
2. Easy access to a skilled, motivated and supported **health workforce** that is responsive, fair and efficient in achieving the best health outcomes possible, given available resources and circumstances;
3. A well-functioning **health information** system that ensures the production, analysis, dissemination and use of reliable and timely information on critical health determinants, health systems performance and health status;
4. A well-functioning procurement, supply chain management and logistics system for providing equitable access to quality **medical products and technologies**;
5. A strong **health financing** system to raise and equitably distribute adequate funds for health, and to ensure population's protection from health-related financial risks;
6. An effective **leadership and governance** system to ensure that strategic policy frameworks exist which enable and support effective oversight, coalition-building, identification of areas of responsibility and development of appropriate regulations, incentives and accountability mechanisms.

In Round 11, eligible countries have several possibilities to request HSS support from the Global Fund. **Maldives will be opting for a Cross- Cutting HSS proposal.** The scope of cross-cutting HSS interventions would cover broader health system areas, which affect more than one of the three diseases (HIV, tuberculosis, malaria) (e.g. upgrading primary health care facilities, strengthening planning and policy-making capacity of the Ministry of Health and Family and

local councils, improving the national health management information system). An important new development in Round 11 is that cross-cutting HSS proposals can be submitted as separate, stand-alone proposals, just like HIV, tuberculosis and malaria proposals. Countries applying for cross-cutting HSS support should justify how the proposed activities improve the health system's performance in terms of outcomes related to more than one of the three diseases (HIV, tuberculosis, malaria). Potential benefits to the health system, through proposed cross-cutting HSS activities may at times go beyond the three diseases, and may address broader health MDGs, by for example contributing to maternal and child health. This is encouraged, as long as the minimum requirement of "improving the health system's performance in terms of outcomes related to more than one of the three diseases (HIV, tuberculosis, malaria)" is satisfied.

Applicants requesting HSS support from the Global Fund are encouraged to review the following considerations for maximizing the quality of HSS proposals.

As a general principle, HSS proposals should demonstrate that proposed interventions:

- Are coherent with national health policies, strategies and plans;
- Bring added value to existing programs by addressing identified gaps and unmet needs;
- Contribute to equitable coverage across population groups in need;
- Ensure the most efficient use of available resources and high value for money;
- Ensure the use of feasible, effective and technically sound approaches that are adapted to suit the local context;
- Are aligned to country processes and demonstrate a meaningful involvement of a broad range of stakeholders.