

October 1, 2008

Dear Colleagues,

Do weaknesses in your country's health system impede efforts to improve outcomes in your country's efforts to combat AIDS, TB, or malaria? For very many countries, the answer will be yes. **You can do something about it – now – by taking advantage of Round 9 of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which is now underway.**

Perhaps your country or community has too few health workers, health workers operating in unsafe conditions, or clinics with empty shelves. Perhaps the health system suffers from inadequate management and planning capacities, crumbling infrastructure, or poor integration between HIV and other health services and between the formal health sector and community organizations and structures. Where these and other undesirable yet undeniably common features of many health systems exist, countries will need to respond to them to enable everyone to access a comprehensive set of quality preventative and curative services, and additional support, that will dramatically reduce the impact of the scourges of AIDS, TB, and malaria on individuals, families, communities, and countries.

The Global Fund welcomes applications that, in addition to addressing other needs related to the Fund's priority diseases, include health system interventions needed to overcome constraints to improved outcomes for AIDS, TB, or malaria. These interventions can – and indeed, quite often should – be cross-cutting, that is, designed to address not only the needs of a program for a single disease, but rather to simultaneously address several diseases or, quite possibly, strengthen basic health system functions in ways that have a still broader impact. The Fund can be used to help build more equitable, effective, and efficient health systems that will deliver on improved outcomes for the Fund's three target diseases and, through these same actions, develop the same systems needed to help reduce maternal and child mortality and meet other basic health needs.

Applicants have successfully used the Global Fund to support many cross-cutting health system needs, such as increasing the number of nursing tutors, paying for health worker salaries and incentives, creating safer working conditions for health workers, supporting a community-based health insurance scheme, electrifying and rehabilitating health facilities, training district management teams in developing comprehensive district health plans, supporting task-shifting, and more. Countries can use – and have used – the Global Fund to cover funding gaps in existing health workforce plans and other aspects of their national health strategies.

And yet, to a large extent the Fund's potential in this regard is untapped. Even as the health system needs for an effective response to the Fund's priority diseases remain immense, there have been few ambitious, high-quality proposals to the Global Fund. Previous rounds have more often seen proposals for minor interventions rather than proposals for interventions to address fundamental health system constraints.

To contribute to changing this dynamic, and in combination with other efforts by ourselves and other partners, the Health Workforce Advocacy Initiative, an international coalition affiliated with the Global Health Workforce Alliance, in collaboration with Health Systems 20/20, the

flagship health systems project of the US government, have teamed up with various technical support providers to prepare and distribute this packet of information.

The material in this packet, described below in more detail, includes information from the World Health Organization, the Global Fund, and other sources that should be useful in conceptualizing and preparing cross-cutting health system strengthening interventions, including to address such key constraints as inadequate human resource management capacity. It also contains information in a related area, community system strengthening. We hope this material will help applicants better understand how to use the Global Fund to strengthen their health systems and what resources are available to support them in doing so. And we hope an enhanced understanding of these possibilities will motivate applicants to develop ambitious proposals for cross-cutting health systems strengthening interventions and for meeting community needs to overcome AIDS, TB, and malaria.

Round 9, which launched on October 1, with proposals due January 21, 2009, provides an immediate opportunity to seek funds for health system strengthening, whether through an entirely new proposal or by revising – and perhaps expanding – health system strengthening-related proposals from Round 8 that the Technical Review Panel rated as Category 3. We also encourage you to look ahead to Round 10, currently scheduled to launch in April 2009 (please check the Global Fund’s website, [www.theglobalfund.org](http://www.theglobalfund.org), for confirmation) – not putting off until next Round what might be submitted for this Round, but rather using the lead-time available for Round 10 to engage in the planning and consultation that will lay the groundwork for an ambitious, HSS-related proposal that may supplement or build on that which your country submits in Round 9.

As you develop this and future proposals, and engage now and in the months – and years – ahead in developing and implementing strategies to strengthen your country’s health system, we hope that you will ensure that these strategies are grounded in human rights. Adhering to such principles as equity, participation, and accountability will be required to ensure that the increased investments in the three diseases and in health systems are making continuing, equitable, real, and sustainable progress in improving people’s health. Some relevant material is in the packet.

The material included also contains information on seeking additional technical support to develop the proposal. We encourage you to take advantage of the resources available to create the strongest possible proposal, while simultaneously developing a strategy to effectively implement the proposal.

We would also welcome your feedback on the usefulness of this material, so that we can improve upon this effort in future rounds of the Global Fund. Please email Eric Friedman ([efriedman@phrusa.org](mailto:efriedman@phrusa.org)) and Asia Russell ([asia@healthgap.org](mailto:asia@healthgap.org)) with any feedback.

Sincerely,

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