



# **CSOs and Community Insights: Lessons Learned from GC7 Country Proposal Development in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan**

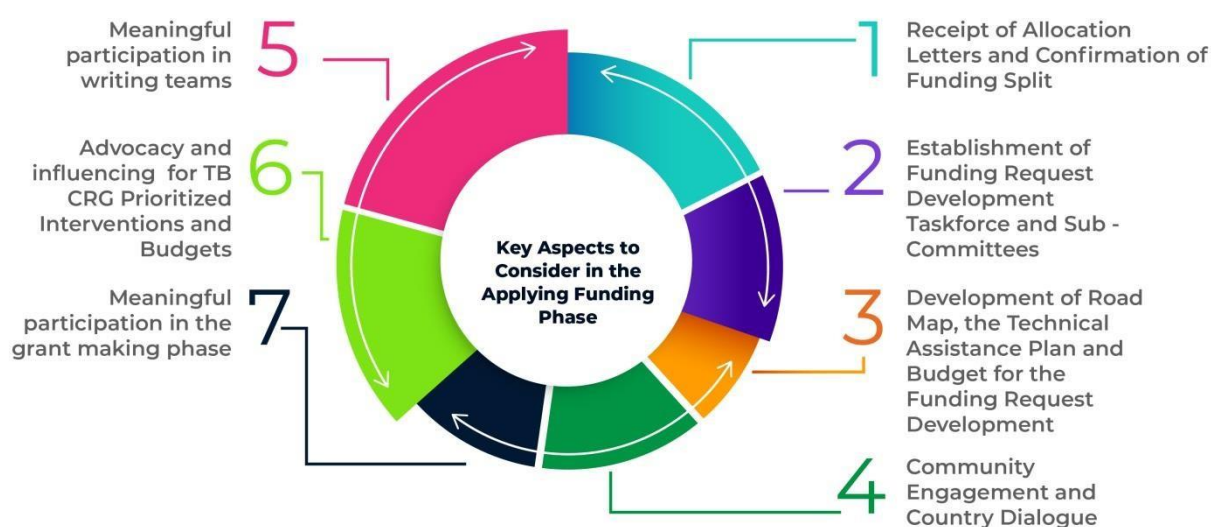
**2023**

## Background

In 2023, majority of the countries in the EECA region prepared their country funding proposals for financing from the Global Fund (GF) within the framework of the new allocation period of 2023-2025. During this period, the GF emphasized one of the goals of its strategy for 2023-2028: expanding the participation and increasing the leadership role of the most affected communities at all stages of the grant cycle.

Within short-term technical assistance (TA) TBEC provided TA to the four countries in the region: Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Thanks to this technical support, representatives of CSOs and communities in these countries were able to identify their main priorities and develop targeted interventions reflecting their needs. This was achieved through the participation of community and CSO representatives in consultations and national dialogues, analysis of necessary data, and active involvement of CSO and community representatives in thematic groups for the development of interventions. Thus, interventions were adapted to the urgent needs of the communities in these countries, which were subsequently addressed by the primary and additional funding from the GF.

### The TB funding request development phase comprises 7 important steps



Despite the innovations implemented, such as Funding Priorities of Civil Society and Communities Most Affected by HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria in the preparation of proposals within this allocation cycle, CSOs and communities faced barriers at each stage of the process. Addressing these barriers in the future will guarantee a more streamlined approach to preparing and engaging CSOs and communities in the proposal preparation process, ultimately fostering greater efficiency.

Following participation in the current allocation period, interviews were conducted with representatives of country partners, who participate in all steps of country proposal

preparation. Based on these interviews, lessons learned were identified and recommendations were formulated, which can be considered in the next allocation period.

It is important to note that some of the recommendations for overcoming barriers are addressed to the CCM and the GF, while others are directed toward the communities themselves. The recommendations will allow all stakeholders to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of the community's meaningful participation in intervention development during the funding processes.

### **Step 1. Receipt of allocation letters and confirmation of funding split**

- It is important for the CCM to promptly inform representatives of CSOs/communities about the allocation of funds and the details of funding distribution.
- It is desirable for the GF and the CCM to allocate sufficient technical support in advance to ensure inclusive and transparent community participation throughout the grant application process. This will enable preparatory work, analyses, and surveys that can serve as additional evidence for the proposed interventions.
- To discuss key issues prioritized for both the community and other stakeholders, a meeting with the portfolio manager is recommended. For a more open dialogue, separate meetings are suggested for community representatives and other interested parties. Recommendations from the portfolio manager can facilitate the active inclusion of community interventions in the country proposal.

### **Step 2. Establishment of funding request development taskforce and sub-committees**

- The CCM should encourage diversity in the composition of the Target Group and subcommittees, including representatives from various stakeholders and key population groups. This ensures a comprehensive and inclusive approach to decision-making.
- It is also advisable to implement effective communication strategies within the Target Group and subcommittees to facilitate smooth information exchange. Regular updates and transparent communication contribute to better coordination.
- Furthermore, it is important that CCM establish clear and realistic timelines to ensure that communities have ample time for the development of interventions.

### **Step 3. Development of the road map for the technical assistance plan and budget for the funding request development**

- The development of a comprehensive roadmap for TA should commence at least one to two months prior to receiving the funding allocation letter. Such early initiation allows for active engagement of all stakeholders, facilitating the provision of necessary support for proposal preparation.
- The Secretariat of the CCM should inform the community in advance about the availability of budget for TA in the preparation of the country's proposal. This transparency ensures that all stakeholders are aware of the resources available to them.

- At the same time, it is important for communities to inform the Secretariat of the CCM about any TA they receive from any external sources, such as the GF or UNAIDS or any other funding agents. Such information exchange promotes collaboration and ensures more efficient resource utilization.
- Based on feedback received from communities, the Secretariat of the CCM should consider the possibility of reallocating existing budget to areas that will improve the proposal preparation process. This adaptive approach maximizes the impact of available resources.

#### **Step 4. Community engagement and country dialogue**

- By collaborating efforts to enhance community training on the GC7 processes, we aim to promote constructive and informed participation in all stages of proposal preparation. Close cooperation with national programs and coordination among CSO groups enables them to contribute to national processes.
- The implementation of clear and effective communication strategies is crucial for facilitating constructive dialogue and interaction among community members and stakeholders.
- It is desirable for the GF and the CCM to ensure adequate funding to facilitate meaningful participation of representatives from key population groups at every stage of the funding request development process. This is particularly important for people living outside major capitals, where most meetings typically occur.
- Communities and their organizations play a vital role as implementers and providers of programs and services in many GF grants. Communities and their organizations play a vital role as implementers and providers of programs and services in many GF grants. Wherever possible engage communities to develop interventions to complement healthcare services and it is helping ensure their resilience and sustainability. The CCM can develop a capacity-building plan for community members regarding the grant cycle process for the upcoming funding cycle.

#### **Step 5. Meaningful participation in writing team**

- It is important for the CCM to promote diversity and inclusivity within the writers' team, including representatives from the community who ensure the development of tailored interventions and incorporation of final decisions into the proposal.
- One of the gaps identified in the proposal preparation process was the absence of community representatives in the team of the writers, leading to inaccuracies in describing some interventions or their partial inclusion, despite receiving support from relevant thematic groups.
- It is advisable for the CCM to provide the final proposal along with the budget to the community for thorough review and verification of activities and budget descriptions.

#### **Step 6. Advocacy and influencing for TB CRG Prioritized Interventions and budgets**

- It is crucial to align the interests and priorities of various stakeholders has been a constant challenge in advocating for budgets oriented towards CRG. The importance of strategic

communication, backed by reliable data, became evident when garnering support for TB-focused CRG activities. Establishing and maintaining partnerships with key stakeholders played a crucial role in strengthening advocacy efforts. A key lesson learned was the necessity of adaptive strategies and flexibility in response to changing conditions. Direct involvement of the TB community in advocacy efforts enhanced the credibility and impact of messages.

- It is recommended to continue investing in building the capacity of advocates and stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of future advocacy initiatives. Giving special attention to community-led advocacy and ensuring diverse representation in decision-making processes is crucial for comprehensive and inclusive measures. Information and advocacy strategies should include a long-term vision, focusing on sustainable impact rather than short-term gains. Mechanisms for regular monitoring and evaluation are needed to assess the effectiveness of advocacy efforts and guide ongoing improvement.

### **Step 7. Meaningful participation in the grant-making phase**

- It is crucial for the CCM and key recipients to actively engage community representatives in the grant-making process, soliciting their opinions, feedback, and recommendations. This can be achieved through community meetings, consultations, or advisory committees.
- The final version of the proposal and budget should be sent to the GF with copies to all CCM members. This practice will help prevent any changes in activities and budget, which were supported by CCM members. The precedent was in one of the countries where in the final stages of the grant-making process, one of the primary activities suggested by the TB community underwent reprogramming without the community being aware of it.
- To organize a webinar featuring experts who, on one hand, possess a deep understanding of grant-making processes, and on the other hand, comprehend the fragile position of communities and civil society representatives within this process. During such a webinar, experts will inform civil society representatives and communities about their rights and opportunities to influence grant-making processes, as well as provide communication mechanisms with the funding organization to form effective inquiries and receive feedback in case of rights violations.
- Establish a system for regular monitoring and evaluating the implementation of interventions outlined in the funding request. This allows for timely adjustments and ensures accountability. Evaluation helps assess the impact and effectiveness of interventions, informing future decision-making and programming.