

## Latin America and the Caribbean must not be sent to the back of the queue again

*The Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is considering reviewing its current prioritisation model which determines the order in which proposals are approved in the event of restricted funding. Friends of the Global Fund - Latin America and the Caribbean (Friends-LAC) is concerned that a new prioritisation model would have a negative impact on the LAC region by prioritizing generalised epidemics and low income countries.*

### Background

- Applications submitted to the Global Fund are first reviewed and ranked according to technical merit by a Technical Review Panel (TRP). The TRP recommends a list of applications for approval to the Global Fund's Board. In the event of insufficient funds immediately available to approve all TRP recommended applications, the latter are scored and prioritised according to disease burden and poverty. The scores accorded to applications determine the order in which they are funded. To date, prioritisation has affected only the timing of the approval of proposals and not the approval per se. However, in the event of limited funding, prioritisation could play a significant role in the approval process.
- In light of the current resource-constrained environment, the Global Fund's Board has requested that the prioritisation model be reviewed for Round 10.<sup>1</sup> There is a concern that Round 10 commitments could require the use of a substantial amount of the funds acquired through the 2010 replenishment process, consequently reducing the amount available for 2011-2013.
- The options under consideration are as follows (*options C and D contemplate the introduction of new criteria to the prioritisation model*):
  - A – **Maintain existing prioritisation model** but review the disease burden scores to reflect different levels of intensity of the epidemics. For example, in the case of HIV/AIDS, there is a proposal to amend the scores as follows.

Indicator	Value	Score
HIV prevalence in the general population and/or in vulnerable populations	Above 5% in the general population	4
	Between 2 and 5% in the general population OR above 15% in at least one vulnerable group	3
	Between 1 and 2% in the general population OR between 5% and 15% in at least one vulnerable group	2
	Below 1% in the general population AND below 5% in all vulnerable populations	1

- B – **Integrate technical merit into the score table together with disease burden and poverty.** Technical merit would no longer be the first criterion against which applications are ranked. Disease burden and poverty could potentially play as important a role as a proposal's technical merit in determining approval of application. This option also includes review of the disease burden scores to reflect different levels of intensity of the epidemics.

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<sup>1</sup> Full detail of the current prioritization model is included in the Global Fund's Comprehensive Funding Policy, available at: [http://www.theglobalfund.org/documents/comprehensive\\_funding\\_policy.pdf](http://www.theglobalfund.org/documents/comprehensive_funding_policy.pdf)

- **C – Continuity of existing programs or addressing urgent gaps.** This criteria acknowledges the importance of protecting the gains that have been made under existing programs.
- **D – Funding history.** In cases where applicants have repeatedly submitted unsuccessfully proposals, prioritisation could provide an advantage by favouring such proposals with a higher score or increasing their ranking. Conversely, in cases where applicants have recently had grants approved, prioritisation could result in a lower score or ranking for these proposals.
- **E – Continuity then funding history.** This is a combination of Options C and D. Applications would be prioritised first according to whether they address the continuity of a program that is coming to an end (option C). Applications would then receive a second score according to the applicant’s recent funding history (option D).

## **Concerns around the issue of prioritisation in the current resource-constrained environment**

### ***Refining the understanding around disease burden***

- Although, there have been efforts to dissociate prioritisation discussions from eligibility (to be reviewed in the 22nd Board meeting in December 2010), Friend of the Global Fund - Latin America and the Caribbean (Friends-LAC) is concerned that if funding a full Round 10 is not possible, then changes under Options A and B could have the same effect as restricting eligibility. Under the current prioritisation model, lower and upper middle-income countries receive a low score; this is the case for most of Latin America and the Caribbean. However, in countries with an HIV prevalence rate of more than 5% in at least one vulnerable population, the low score is compensated by a higher score in the disease burden criteria. In the model currently under review (see table, p.1) , applicants with a high prevalence among at least one vulnerable group would no longer classify for the highest score of 4 points. Using epidemiological data from the 2008 UNAIDS report, only three countries in Latin America would now classify for 3 points for having a prevalence rate of more than 15% among men who have sex with men. The remaining countries would receive 2 points for having a prevalence rate between 5% and 15% in at least one vulnerable population. It is clear that the revised disease burden scores in Options A and B would significantly deprioritise Latin America and the Caribbean in the queue of applicants awaiting funding approval.
- Prioritisation should seek to maintain equity between countries with a general epidemic and those with a concentrated epidemic with a prevalence rate higher than 5% in more than one population group. Friends-LAC is concerned that any changes to prioritisation should not further disadvantage countries which are struggling to adequately respond to concentrated epidemics and already face difficulties in securing funding from the Global Fund by virtue of being middle-income.

### ***Integrating technical merit together with disease burden and poverty as equal criteria***

- Friends-LAC is concerned that by grouping the technical ranking provided by the TRP together with disease burden and poverty (option B), this would send the wrong message to applicants regarding the importance of submitting high-quality, technically sound applications. It would also devalue the role of the TRP as the most significant body responsible for providing recommendations to the Board with regards to the selection of applications for funding.
- Friends-LAC believes that technical merit should continue to be the **only criterion** used to determine proposal approval. Prioritisation should be applied only once the TRP has agreed on a list of recommended applications.

***The effect of a new prioritisation model on demand***

- Friends-LAC recognises the importance of communicating any changes to prioritisation in a timely, transparent and simple way. However, a new prioritisation model should not be used to discourage potential applications from applicants who would receive low prioritisation scores. Ultimately, prioritisation assumes significance in the context of limited funding for a full Round. Nonetheless, applicants should continue to develop applications based on their need. They should not base their decision on the availability of funding. In short, a new prioritisation model should not be viewed as a mechanism for curbing demand.

***Continuity of existing programs (option C) and funding history (option D)***

- Friends-LAC appreciates the importance of protecting gains made by existing programs and agrees that continuity of funding could be a significant criteria in prioritizing applications. However, it is important to strike the right balance between providing continuity of services and treatment while not compromising the significant increase needed in prevention and treatment services necessary to meet Universal Access targets and contribute to Millenium Development Goals 4 and 5.
- If continuity of funding is prioritised alone, this also could threaten gains made by existing programs by not focusing on further controlling the spread of the epidemics.
- Friends-LAC recognises that taking funding history into consideration could provide an advantage to applicants who have repeatedly been unsuccessful. However, Friends-LAC believes that this criteria should be considered after applications have been ranked according to their technical merit by the TRP. Under no circumstances should unsuccessful funding history be considered equal criteria to technical merit.
- Friends-LAC also believes that funding history should not automatically disadvantage recent successful applicants. The nature and complementarity of their current application must be considered in the context of their existing progams.

***Providing an advantage to multiple small proposals***

- As countries scale up interventions, it is not unusual for the Global Fund to receive large proposals (for example: US\$100 million and above). In a resource-constrained environment, approving such large proposals from applicants with higher prioritisation scores would be to the detriment of smaller proposals lower in the queue.
- Friends-LAC believes that the revision of the prioritisation model is a significant opportunity to provide an advantage to smaller proposals.
- Friends-LAC suggests adding the monetary size of a proposal as a criterion within the score table. Proposals that are US\$15million or less could be given the score of 2 whereas proposals that are above US\$15million would not receive a score under this criterion.
- Facilitating the flow of funding to multiple small proposals allows the Global Fund to increase its geographical coverage even in a resouce-constrained environment as well as having a significant impact on the cost-benefit ratio of Global Fund interventions.

### **Global Fund Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean**

- To date, Latin America and the Caribbean has received just under 7% of total funds approved globally, of which just under 70% has been for HIV/AIDS.<sup>2</sup> However, recent studies that disaggregate MSM and transgender HIV prevalence rates (up to 40% among transgenders in parts of Latin America)<sup>3</sup> suggest that significant investment is still needed throughout much of the region, particularly in prevention targeted at key populations (MSM, female sex workers, transgenders, drug users).<sup>4</sup> **Prioritisation must not send Latin America and the Caribbean to the back of the funding queue.**
- In recent rounds, the region as a whole has been more successful at securing funding not least because of a marked improvement in the technical quality of the proposals. Latin America and the Caribbean has improved at articulating a need which clearly exists. Yet, many countries in the region are still far from reaching their Universal Access targets, particularly prevention targets with key populations.<sup>5</sup> Global Fund financing will permit these countries to access much needed resources with a specific focus on key populations. This investment is key to controlling the spread of the HIV epidemic and further mitigating its impact.

### **Conclusion**

- Friends-LAC urges the Global Fund to ensure that the prioritisation model does not disadvantage Latin America and the Caribbean. Applications must continue to be considered first and foremost on the basis of their technical merit. Prioritisation must not disregard concentrated epidemics in middle-income countries nor should small programs be subject to the same prioritisation criteria as large programs of over US\$100million. Prioritisation should be used an opportunity to facilitate funding to high-quality applications from multiple small programs. The Global Fund must continue its significant contribution to ensuring that Universal Access targets and the Millenium Development Goals 4 and 5 are met. Ultimately, this should mean focusing efforts on raising the necessary funds to meet the demand. Prioritisation must not be used to curb this demand.

Friends of the Global Fund - Latin America & the Caribbean (Friends - LAC) is a regional initiative which works to mobilize strategic political and financial support for the fight against AIDS, TB and malaria. Friends LAC will contribute to increasing the understanding of and support for the Global Fund through awareness-raising and educational campaigns, advocacy activities at the country and regional levels and documenting Global Fund stories and lessons learned. This initiative aims to promote the meaningful participation of governments, the private sector, academia and civil society in all of the Global Fund's structures whether at the national, regional or international levels.

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2 Most recent available data from the Global Fund available at  
<http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/commitmentsdisbursements/>

3 International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 'The Hidden HIV Epidemic, Transgender Women in Latin America and Asia', 2008, available at: [http://aidsportal.org/Article\\_Details.aspx?ID=9528](http://aidsportal.org/Article_Details.aspx?ID=9528)

4 FLACSO, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, CICT, 'VIH/SIDA en América Latina desde la Perspectiva Social, 2009, available at: [http://www.portalsida.org/Article\\_Details.aspx?ID=9998](http://www.portalsida.org/Article_Details.aspx?ID=9998)

5 Full list of progress against Universal Access targets is available at:  
[http://www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/mapping\\_progress.asp](http://www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/mapping_progress.asp)