

NSWP – GLOBAL FUND QUARTERLY UPDATE - DECEMBER 2018

It has been a relatively quiet period for the Global Fund, with little activity that impacts on sex workers.

The 40th Global Fund Board meeting was held in Geneva between 14th-15th November. The Board approved the Global Fund Secretariat operating expenses (OPEX) and work-plan, and it remains within the budget limit set by the Board at a maximum of US\$900 million over the 2017-2019 period.

The other main decision relates to Private Sector Engagement. There are some exclusions to potential private sector engagement, including excluding tobacco industries, arms manufacturers and pornography. We argued for 'pornography' to be allowed on the list of Private Sector Engagement industries, as it is part of the sex industry and involves sex workers. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful and pornography remains excluded. This argument would likely have been strengthened through a sex worker representative on the Global Fund Communities Delegation, where currently there is not one.

The Board noted the revised Framework on Private Sector Engagement, which will guide future relationships with the private sector, and confirmed the importance of the private sector to the Global Fund in terms of resource mobilisation and as partners who can share their skills at country level.

The call for applications to become a member of the Communities Delegation has now closed and it seems we will continue to not have sex worker representation in the Delegation. This is unfortunate as it means that sex workers are represented only through NSWP's Senior Programme Officer. We would encourage sex workers to apply to join the Communities Delegation in future rounds.

The Communities Delegation fully supported the decision of the Board to provide financial support, for the continuation of ARVs for people living with HIV, to Venezuela under the auspices of the broader decision to support countries in crisis, within limited available resources.

We continue to struggle to get Transition on the Board Agenda as a discussion item, despite a request for this over the past few Board Meetings. There remains a reluctance to consider this as a discussion item, even though it remains such an important issue.

Discussion on the Allocation Methodology continues and the current view from the Board and the Secretariat is that the allocation methodology is working. Despite there being some progress, which we applaud, there is too little improvement to access to funds for our communities. Any proposed changes to the Allocation Methodology will be discussed and a final decision made at the May 2019 Board Meeting.

There was a Human Rights Special Session, organised by the Communities Delegation among others, during the pre-meeting to the Board Meeting. It was a very well attended event and we had three civil society speakers as well as hearing from the Secretariat. The session was chaired by Stephanie Seydoux, the French Ambassador for Global Health.

The brief presentation from the Global Fund was positive but it is clear that we need to develop new ways to consider and measure impact. We also raised the question of the impact of criminalisation of key populations in many countries, and how this affects our ability to make real progress on Human Rights. The panellists all acknowledged that the decriminalisation of key populations is essential for progress on human rights to be made and called for more funding to support advocacy for decriminalisation.

During this Board meeting there was a call from Costa Rica for the Global Fund to focus more on people rather than numbers, and others highlighted the importance of the Global Fund continuing its support for human rights within grants. Although there was no specific outcome from the event it was important as it keeps the issue of human rights, and to a lesser degree decriminalisation of key populations on the agenda and visible. Decriminalisation of drug use and drug users will have a main focus in the Ukraine grant.

The main message from this brief update is that we need to keep the pressure on around issues important to our community. Progress may be slow, but it is happening and we need to continue to pressure the Global Fund to support us. The Global Fund is the biggest supporter of harm reduction for people who use drugs; they are outspoken critics of the persecution of LGBTI people by states and their systems, such as the CCM, provide one of the very few platforms where key populations can have an equal voice with other decision makers. We need that support to continue.

Mick Matthews
Senior Programme Officer
NSWP