

Global Fund Human Rights Complaints Mechanism

An Independent Assessment of Why Uptake Has Been Limited

3 March 2018

This independent assessment of the Global Fund human rights complaints mechanism was undertaken for the Global Fund by Priti Patel, an independent consultant with over 15 years of experience working on human rights, HIV and the law.

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Introduction

In April 2015, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) established a human rights complaints mechanism.¹ The mechanism was based on the incorporation of human rights standards outlined in all grant agreements, and was designed to assist in the Global Fund's objective to be accountable and its strategic goal to protect and promote human rights.

Since the establishment of the mechanism, the Global Fund has engaged in extensive awareness-raising activities among civil society organizations, community groups and technical partners. Despite these activities, the mechanism has yet to receive any actionable complaint.

This study, undertaken by Priti Patel, an independent consultant with over 15 years of experience working on human rights, HIV and the law, seeks to understand why the mechanism has not been utilized through interviews with potential users of the mechanism and Global Fund staff responsible for programming at country level. This report begins with a background on the human rights complaints mechanism, including a discussion of how to file a complaint. It then outlines the methodology and limitations of the study; summarises the findings based on the interviews conducted; and provides recommendations based on the findings. The list of people interviewed for the study along with their affiliation and contact information are provided in appendix A. The topics covered in the interviews are provided in appendix B.

Background on human rights complaints mechanism

Global Fund Framework Agreements (Framework Agreements) include five human rights standards with which all projects and activities under the grant must abide. The five human rights standards are as follows:

1. non-discriminatory access to services for all, including people in detention;
2. employing only scientifically sound and approved medicines or medical practices;
3. not employing methods that constitute torture or that are cruel, inhuman or degrading;
4. respecting and protecting informed consent, confidentiality and the right to privacy concerning medical testing, treatment or health services rendered; and
5. avoiding medical detention and involuntary isolation, to be used only as a last resort.

Complaints can be filed by individuals affected by a violation of one of these five human rights standards, an individual who has witnessed such a violation, and an organization on behalf of an individual or group that is directly affected, provided that it has a letter of authorization.

Importantly, the identity of the person making the complaint will remain strictly confidential, unless consent is clearly provided.

Complaints can be filed via phone, email or mail. They must include the following information:

1. the type of wrongdoing being reported
2. where and when the wrongdoing took place
3. what happened
4. the name, title and office of everyone involved
5. the name of anyone else who is aware of the wrongdoing
6. why the incident should be investigated
7. any other relevant information

¹ Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Global Fund Launches Human Rights Complaints Procedure (27 April 2015) available at <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/news/2015-04-27-global-fund-launches-human-rights-complaints-procedure/> (last accessed 10 October 2017).

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of the Global Fund receives the complaints, and works with the relevant country team and others to assess and review the complaint. The OIG initially assesses the complaint to ensure that it meets the basic criteria. These criteria are as follows:

- The complaint is about a Global Fund Principal Recipient, Sub-Recipient, or Sub-Sub-Recipient.
- It is submitted by an individual or organization who has been directly affected or who witnesses the alleged violation or the complaint was submitted by another organization which supplies a signed authorization letter from those directly affected.
- The complaint potentially indicates non-compliance with one or more of the five human rights standards set out in the Global Fund Framework Agreement as outlined above.
- The complaint is not solely about an employer-employee dispute.
- The complaint is not solely about an alleged violation of other Global Fund procedures.

If one of the human rights standards is determined to have been violated, the Global Fund can do the following:

- Treat the matter as a critical grant management issue and recommend a specific course of action to address the problem. This could include raising the issue with senior government leaders.
- Consult with partners to solicit their recommendations for a specific course of action, and determine the scope of their engagement.
- Arrange for technical assistance to develop a specific course of action and/or help implement the interventions.
- Utilize the country dialogue process.
- Communicate regularly with key populations networks, domestic civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and other partners to gain further information.
- Work with senior Global Fund management and communications to issue a public statement.

Global Fund activities with respect to the human rights complaints mechanism

Since the launch of the human rights complaints mechanism, the Community, Rights and Gender Department (CRG) has organized a number of activities to raise awareness of the complaints mechanism.

This has included conducting in-person trainings, regional and country-level trainings and campaigns, holding webinars, and making information about the mechanism widely available in an easy-to-understand manner. To raise awareness of the human rights standards outlined in the Framework Agreements and the complaints mechanism within the Secretariat, a number of trainings and presentations were also conducted with the Grant Management Division, the Legal Department and the OIG. Country teams were provided with the presentation slides on the Global Fund's work on human rights, including the launch of the human rights complaints mechanism, for their discussions with their respective Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs). The information on the mechanism was also included in standard training materials on community, rights and gender issues for CCMs and other in-country partners. In addition to the training materials, communication materials, including posters and brochures were developed and sent to all CCMs for them to distribute to the Global Fund implementers.

Efforts were also made to reach civil society and community groups at the country level. Four regional calls with civil society organizations and technical partners were organized immediately after the launch of the complaints mechanism to raise awareness of the mechanism and how it can be used. In August 2016, an extensive human rights training was conducted on the human rights complaints mechanism for the Community, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiative (CRG SI) partner organizations, including regional platforms, key populations organizations, community-based organizations, and organizations selected to provide the CRG team technical assistance on the Global Fund's human rights work. Through the CRG SI, the regional coordinating platforms organized information sessions on the human rights complaints mechanism as part of a broader regional trainings for communities and civil society organizations throughout 2016 and 2017 where CRG and OIG participated to present and discuss the details of the mechanism.

The OIG has also engaged in a number of activities thus far to raise awareness of the human rights complaints mechanism and to increase the likelihood that individuals will raise human rights concerns in Global Fund-funded projects. The OIG has established the I Speak Out Now! campaign (ISON) which sought to raise general awareness of wrongdoing and how to identify it. Part of the campaign included a sustained effort in Cote d'Ivoire, Malawi and Ukraine to focus on theft and corruption. In Phase II, the campaign sought to position the OIG as a partner and advisor for the Secretariat. The objective is to encourage the Secretariat to come to the OIG more often and more informally to disrupt wrongdoing and improve grant impact.

The OIG team has also attended several regional training events for sex workers and people who use drugs and provided inputs on the human rights reporting mechanisms. In addition, the OIG team regularly provides training inputs for partners at meetings, including the annual/regional local fund agents' training events where fraud and human rights wrongdoing categories are raised. Finally, since 2016, for each country investigation mission, the agenda includes making ISON presentations, often to a wide audience of principle recipients, sub-recipients, and members of the CCMs.

Methodology and limitations

The findings and recommendations in this report are based on interviews with 42 individuals from 37 civil society organizations and networks of people living with HIV and key populations, and the Global Fund's Ghana country team. Of these 13 individuals from 13 civil society organizations were interviewed as part of a 3-day mission to Malawi. Of the others interviewed, 15 were from sub-Saharan Africa; 4 from Eastern Europe; 6 from Asia-Pacific; 3 from Latin America and the Caribbean; and 1 from Middle East and North Africa. The interviews were conducted from January 2017-June 2017. These interviews took place in person, via email or skype. Language did create some barriers as some of the interviewees spoke limited English. However, these barriers were overcome through the use of written communication and Google translate. In addition, access to the internet was a barrier as a number of the interviewees had difficulty accessing skype. In such cases, interviews were conducted via email.

Interviewees were chosen due to their work with key populations as key populations are most likely to experience human rights violations within Global-Fund funded projects. Thus, the people interviewed were from organisations directly working with key populations or organisations which work with community-based organisations working with key populations. In addition, the interviewees were chosen to ensure regional diversity. Some interviewees were also selected due to their involvement in Global Fund activities.

A list of the people interviewed along with their affiliation and contact email is provided in Appendix A. The topics covered in the interviews are provided in Appendix B.

In addition to the language and technological limitations identified above, it was difficult to ascertain with any certainty whether there were any cases of a clear violation of one of the five key human rights standards in Global Fund-funded services as most interviewees did not have a clear understanding of the five human rights standards. They were therefore unclear on whether there were any cases where one of the five human rights standards was violated in Global-Fund funded services. Thus, this study was unable to identify whether such violations existed, and it is possible that the under-use of the mechanism is due to there not being any violations to report to the mechanism.

Findings

Many of the informants expressed the importance of the mechanism as a tool for addressing human rights violations, and indicated that they were thankful that it existed. A number of those who were unaware of the mechanism indicated a keen interest in learning more about it and being part of a training on the mechanism.

Based on the interviews, this study found the following barriers to organizations and individuals accessing the mechanism.

1. There was a lack of awareness of the existence of the mechanism. Even among those who were aware of the existence of the mechanism, there was a lack of knowledge about the details of how the mechanism operates.
2. Some people indicated that they were unaware of how the Global Fund operated and the specific activities funded by the Global Fund in country.
3. There was a belief that the OIG and the in-country Global Fund team lacked awareness of human rights and thus potential users of the mechanism were reluctant to file a complaint.
4. There were concerns raised as to the remedy offered by the mechanism and the possibility that the mechanism could be undemocratic.
5. Some informants thought Geneva was too remote for filing a complaint.
6. There were a number of other potential barriers raised by a small number of informants. These were a lack of knowledge of rights among key populations; criminalization of key populations; and limited scope of violations covered by the mechanism.

Each finding is discussed in greater detail below.

Lack of awareness of the mechanism

The primary barrier to the use of the mechanism was lack of knowledge about the existence and operation of the mechanism. Of the 37 organizations interviewed, 30 were either unaware of the mechanism or lacked knowledge of how to make a complaint and the types of complaints covered by the mechanism. One informant indicated that they had interviewed 25 civil society organizations in Botswana, Malawi and Zambia to gain an understanding of the experiences and capacities of these organisations to support healthcare users to seek accountability and redress when experiencing discrimination for a research report and not a single person mentioned the Global Fund's human rights complaints mechanism. This was true even in countries where awareness raising activities were conducted by the Global Fund. For instance, two informants from Ukraine indicated that they were unaware of the mechanism. In Malawi, 12 out of the 13 individuals interviewed were either unaware of the mechanism or of the details of its operation.

A number of informants said that Global Fund staff, such as the fund portfolio managers, and members of the CCMs, were either unaware of the mechanism or never mentioned or discussed the mechanism. For instance, one interviewee from Ukraine indicated that he sat on the CCM as a key population representative, but was unaware of the mechanism. Similarly, in Malawi, one informant sat on the CCM but was unaware of the mechanism. Indeed, another informant in Malawi sits on the Global Fund board, but was unaware of the existence of the mechanism.

Even among informants who were aware of the mechanism, there was little understanding of how the mechanism operates. For instance, one informant when asked why she had not utilized the mechanism raised concerns and issues about the CCM process as she believed the mechanism operated through the CCM. Another informant at first seemed unaware of the mechanism, and only later realized he did know about it after further details were provided about the mechanism, but claimed that he never considered using the mechanism. A number of informants indicated that this was due to the fact that initial information was provided on the mechanism but no further follow up information or trainings had been provided. For instance, one regional organization noted that they had shared the initial email announcing the establishment of the mechanism with their partners, but as there was no further follow up, they did not have any further information to share with their partners.

It is worth noting that a number of the organizations interviewed did engage in broader advocacy with the Global Fund on issues that do not fall within the scope of the complaints procedure, such as through writing letters calling on the Global Fund to pressure government on particular issues, including for instance seeking the Global Fund's support when the Tanzanian government halted imported lubricants at customs.

Lack of awareness of what activities are covered by the Global Fund

Eight individuals interviewed for this study indicated that they were either unclear on how the Global Fund operated or that they were unaware of the specific programs financed by the Global Fund in country. For instance, one informant noted that he was aware of the advocacy activities funded by the Global Fund, but was unaware of which services in country were funded by the Global Fund. Other informants expressed confusion as to how the Global Fund operated and the various mechanisms and ways one can engage with the Global Fund. A number of informants were unaware of the OIG and what its role and responsibilities were. Most were more familiar with the CCMs.

Perceived lack of knowledge of human rights within the OIG and among local Global Fund teams

A number of informants (3) indicated a general view that apart from specific departments in the Global Fund, such as the CRG Department, there was a lack of understanding and support of human rights throughout the Global Fund, especially among Global Fund staff in the Grant Management Division, and also among members of the CCM. Four informants recounted instances where they or people they knew complained of things that in their view constituted human rights violations to fund portfolio managers or CCMs and yet no visible action was taken. According to informants, this gave them the sense that there was no point to complaining to the mechanism as the CCM, fund portfolio managers and the mechanism are all seen as part of the Global Fund despite their being separate independent entities.

Concerns with remedy

A number of informants (7) raised concerns regarding the remedy offered under the mechanism. Two informants indicated that the remedy did not provide any redress or justice for the victims of the rights violations and thus they were hesitant to utilize the mechanism. However, neither of the informants indicated that they had in fact experienced or were aware of violations that would fall within the ambit of the human rights complaints mechanism. Another two informants indicated that potential users of the mechanism may be concerned of the programme losing its funding or of the organization the individual works with losing its Global Fund financial support due to the complaint. A number of informants expressed concern about the complaints mechanism itself, saying that a donor (e.g. the Global Fund) pressuring government was or could be undemocratic and non-transparent.

Local point of contact

A number of informants (4) indicated that Geneva felt far away and remote for filing a complaint. This was raised primarily by organisations working in Malawi. They indicated that people and organisations were more likely to file a complaint if it was with someone they had met or if it could be sent locally or even regionally. They noted that many people did not even know where Geneva was which makes the mechanism feel removed from the actual reality in country.

Other findings

A small number of informants raised three potential other obstacles to accessing the human rights complaints mechanism. These are as follows:

- People having little knowledge of their rights and thus the likelihood that they would use the mechanism is low.
- Criminalized populations may find it more difficult to access the mechanism.
- The mechanism covers only a limited set of violations.

These obstacles were raised by one to three informants.

Recommendations

Based on the identified obstacles, the interviewees identified a number of recommendations. As the lack of awareness of the mechanism was found to be the greatest obstacle to individuals and organisations using the mechanism, the recommendations primarily address that barrier.

To address the lack of awareness of the mechanism and concerns over the remedy:

- **The Global Fund should continue to raise awareness of the mechanism.**
 - Work with civil society organisations who are already convening trainings on complaints mechanisms/access to justice/accountability to include training on the mechanism.
 - Ensure country teams and CCMs are aware of the mechanism and are actively promoting the mechanism in country.
 - Explore where awareness of the complaints mechanisms can be included under existing grants, as part of a comprehensive human rights program.
- **Continue to engage in on-the-ground awareness-raising activities.**
 - Integrate raising awareness of the mechanism with existing trainings convened by Global Fund implementers and existing Global Fund activities.
 - Work with CCMs when raising awareness in country.
 - Regional platforms should raise awareness of the mechanism as part of their activities.
- **Continue to engage in other types of awareness-raising activities**
 - Continue implementing awareness campaigns.
 - Hold more webinars.
 - Translate information on the mechanism into more local languages.
- **Raise awareness of the fact that the name and details of the complainant can be kept confidential.**
- **Raise awareness of the independence of the mechanism.**

To address the view that the OIG, country teams and CCMs lack capacity on human rights:

- **Long-term human rights training for the OIG, Grant Management Division and CCMs should be conducted.**
- **Fund portfolio managers and the CRG Department should proactively monitor country-level developments to ensure the five human rights standards covered under the complaints mechanism are not violated, and if they are at threat of being violated that steps are taken to prevent such violations.**

To address the lack of awareness of Global Fund activities:

- **Make information about the Global Fund and Global Fund-funded activities more accessible in each country.**

To make the mechanism more local:

- **Establish a local or regional point of contact for the mechanism.**
- **Encourage other Global Fund staff apart from the OIG to relay any complaint they receive or hear about from individuals or organizations that may fall within the ambit of the human rights complaints mechanism to the OIG.**

Appendix A: List of interviewees

Sub-Saharan Africa

African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHer)	Kene Esom	kene@amsher.org
AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA)	Michaela Clayton	michaela@arasa.info
	Felicita Hikuam	felicita@arasa.org.na
	Ntabhiseng Mokoena	ntabhiseng@arasa.org.na
	Lynette Mabote	lynette@arasa.org.na
Alcondoms Cameroon	Patrick Fotso	patfotssy@yahoo.fr
Center for Health Human Rights & Development (CEHURD)	Nakibuuka Musisi	nakibuuka@cehurd.org
Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS Malawi (COWLHA)	Edna Tembo	tembo.edna@cowlha.org
KELIN Kenya	Allan Maleche	amaleche@kelinkenya.org
Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT)	Kohli Buthelezi	kholib@sweat.org.za
Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC)	Annabel Raw	AnnabelR@salc.org.za
Tanzania Sex Workers Alliance (TASWA)	Lulu Nyenzi	nyenzilulu@yahoo.com
Tanzanian Network of People who Use Drugs (TaNPUD)	Happy Assan	happy.assan@gmail.com
Voice of Hope Trust	Rachel Gawases	gawases.lr@gmail.com
Wings To Transcend Namibia (WTTN)	Madam Jholerina Brina Timbo	jbtimbo@gmail.com

Eastern Europe

Alliance for Public Health	Anton Basenko	basenko@aph.org.ua
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network	Mikhail Golichenko	mgolichenko@gmail.com
Eurasian Network of People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD)	Igor Kouzmenko	kouzzig@gmail.com
Harm reduction activist	Alexey Kurmanayevsky	kurmanaevskii@gmail.com

Asia-Pacific

Asian Network of People who use Drugs	Jimmy Darobjee	jimmyd@anpud.org
	Bikas Gurung	bikas@anpud.org
	Anand Chabungbam	anand.chabungbam@anpud.org
Friends Frangipani (PNG)	Cathy Ketepa	manager.friendsfrangipani@gmail.com
Jagriti Mahila Maha Sangh [JMMS](Nepal)	Rajan KC	rajankc.jmms@gmail.com; jmms.fswfederation@gmail.com
Organisasi Perubahan Sosial Indonesia (OPSI)	Liana Benny	liana.opsi@gmail.com; managerprogram.opsi@gmail.com

Latin America and the Caribbean

Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC)	J. Carolyn Gomes	carolyn.gomes.cvc.ed@gmail.com
Jamaican Network of Seropositives (JN+)	Ricky Pascoe	pascoericky@hotmail.com
Latin American Platform of Persons Who Perform Sex Work (PLAPERTS)	Karina Bravo	karinabravo200@gmail.com

Middle East and North Africa

Middle East and North Africa Network of/for People who use Drugs (MENANPUD)/Amitiel Welfare Society	Zeeshan Ayyaz	amitielwelfare@gmail.com
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Malawi

Centre for Human Rights Education Advice Assistance (CHREAA)	Victor Mhango	victormhango74@gmail.com
Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR)	Michael Kaiyatsa	michaelkaiyatsa@gmail.com
Female Sex Workers Association	Zinenani Lucy Majawa	lucymajawa@gmail.com
Foundation for Community Support Services (FOCUS)	Kossam Munthali	kmunthali@focusmw.org
Grassroots Movements for Health and Development (GMHD)	Edward Banda	chikhwanae@yahoo.com
International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW)	Clara Banya	clarabanya@yahoo.com
International Training and Education Center for Health (I-TECH) Malawi	Safari Mbewe	safarimbewe2008@rocketmail.com
Ladder for Rural Development	Godfrey Kammunda	ladder.cbo@gmail.com
Malawi Network of AIDS Service Organisations (MANASO)	Abigail Dzimadzi	dzimadzia@manaso.org
Malawi Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (MANET+)	George Kampango	
Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living with HIV/AIDS (MANERELA+)	Pirira Ndaferankhande	Pirira197644@yahoo.com; Pirira197644@gmail.com
MANGO Key Population NGO Network	MacDonald Sembereka	msembereka@gmail.com
Passion for Women and Children	Darlington Harawa	Passionorg67@yahoo.co.uk; dharawa@yahoo.co.uk

Appendix B: Topics covered in interviews

1. How aware are you and your organization of Global Fund-funded activities in country and how the Global Fund operates?
2. Do you or your organization have experience engaging the Global Fund or utilizing Global Fund-funded activities?
3. Are you or your organization aware of the human rights complaints mechanism? Have you or others in your organization attended any meetings regarding the human rights complaints mechanism?
4. If you or your organization is aware of the mechanism, how much do you know about how to file a complaint and what types of complaints are covered by the mechanism?
5. Are you or your organization aware of human rights violations in Global Fund-funded activities in your country?
6. Why have you or your organization chosen not to file a complaint with the mechanism?

Appendix C: Response to the recommendations

This appendix contains the Global Fund Secretariat and Office of the Inspector General's May 2018 response to the independent assessment of the human rights complaints mechanism.

Background

In April 2015, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) established a human rights complaints mechanism. The mechanism was based on the incorporation of human rights standards outlined in all grant agreements, and was designed to assist in the Global Fund's objective to be accountable and its strategic goal to protect and promote human rights.

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of the Global Fund receives the complaints, and works with the relevant country team and others to assess and review complaints.

Since the establishment of the mechanism, the Global Fund and the OIG have engaged in extensive awareness-raising activities among civil society organizations, community groups and technical partners. Despite these activities, the mechanism has yet to receive any actionable complaint.

The assessment

In late 2016, the Global Fund Secretariat, with input and support from the OIG, therefore decided to commission an independent assessment, seeking to understand why the mechanism has not been utilized through interviews with potential users of the mechanism and Global Fund staff responsible for programming at country level.

The final version of the assessment report was recently submitted to the Global Fund.

We welcome the report and its recommendation, and propose to undertake the following activities to implement the recommendations:

The Community, Rights and Gender Department of the Global Fund will:

1. Use the CRG Strategic Initiative Regional Platforms to:
 - a) widely disseminate information regarding the human rights complaints mechanism and the five human rights standards in the Framework Agreement through their updates shared with their networks;
 - b) include in their regional trainings a session on the five human rights standards in the Framework Agreement and how to use the complaints mechanism in; and
 - c) identify and support opportunities within their network organizations to disseminate information and training on the complaints mechanism to other organizations
2. Use existing and planned training and information sharing events to increase awareness of the mechanism, among other things by:
 - a) ensuring that the trainings/information sessions, especially those targeting new staff, include information about the five human rights standards and the complaints mechanism, as part of a comprehensive session about the human rights work at the Global Fund;
 - b) integrating information on the human rights standards and complaints mechanism in all human rights trainings with GMD colleagues
3. Hold periodic webinars with CSOs and other in-country partners, including implementers of the Global Fund programs, to raise awareness of the complaints mechanisms and the five human rights standards in the Framework Agreement. The first such webinar will take place in September 2018.

The Office of the Inspector General will continue to:

- Ensure all campaigns and information sharing sessions highlight independence of the OIG from the Global Fund Secretariat;
- Raise awareness of the complaints mechanism (including its confidential and anonymous process) as part of its ongoing engagement with in-country implementers;
- Include information on how to use the mechanism in its relevant publications and printed information materials;
- Ensure that the human rights standards and the complaints mechanism are adequately covered in its staff training curriculum.

The complaints mechanism is a small, but important component of the Global Fund's work on human rights, and we are committed to making sure the mechanism is well known and better understood.

Ralf Jurgens
Senior Coordinator, Human Rights
The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria

Kathryn Hodson
Head, Investigations
OIG Investigations Unit