

TRP Update

46th Board Meeting

GF/B46/11

8-10 November 2021, *Virtual*

Board Information

Purpose of the paper: The objective of this paper is to update the Board on the TRP's work in 2021.

Context

1. The mandate of the Technical Review Panel (TRP) is to: (i) provide rigorous, independent technical assessment of funding requests made to the Global Fund, (ii) document and share lessons learned, and (iii) act as an advisory body to the Board. The TRP carries out its mandate under the oversight of the SC, to which it reports periodically.

Where are we now? Progress to date

2. In 2021, through three review windows, the TRP reviewed an additional 43 Funding Requests amounting to US\$1.2 billion in allocated funds, representing 9 percent of allocated funds. Overall in the 2020-2022 allocation cycle, the TRP has to date reviewed and recommended a total of 200 Funding requests for funding, amounting to US\$12.5 billion in allocated funds and representing 98 percent of allocated funds for the cycle.
3. The TRP Terms of Reference (TORs) require the TRP to undertake and submit an annual assessment of its performance to the Strategy Committee (SC). The TRP assessment is a retrospective self-evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency and quality with which the TRP carried out its mandate. In July 2021, the TRP presented its assessment of its 2020 performance to the SC. The SC acknowledged the great achievement of the TRP in terms of ensuring effective review of funding requests despite the challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The SC noted that review costs were significantly higher in the virtual work setting, and urged the TRP and Secretariat to work towards making the virtual review process more cost-efficient.
4. With the bulk of Funding Requests of the allocation cycle already reviewed in 2020, the TRP in 2021 started shifting attention to documenting lessons learned and preparing for the next cycle.
5. In March 2021, the TRP produced a report on lessons learned from its review of funding requests in 2020.¹ For the October 2021 SC meeting, the TRP produced an advisory paper on RSSH lessons learned in 2020-2022 allocation cycle², which follows up on the comprehensive report on RSSH produced in the 2017-2019 allocation cycle.³ Key messages of the report are summarized below as updates to the Board.
6. In preparation for the next cycle, the SC, in March 2021, created an SC Working Group on TRP matters to oversee revision of the TRP TORs and Recruitment.⁴ The revised TRP TORs will be reviewed and approved by the SC in March 2022, and recruitment of new TRP members will be addressed in the September 2022 SC meeting. Furthermore, to inform the evolution of the TRP for the next cycle, the Secretariat commissioned the OIG to conduct an advisory review of the TRP Model. The OIG Advisory Report was presented to the SC at its October 2021 meeting. Key recommendations from the OIG Advisory are summarized below as update to the Board.

¹ 2020 TRP Lessons Learned Report: https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/10771/trp_2020-lessonslearned_report_en.pdf

² 2021 TRP RSSH Advisory Report: https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/11447/trp_2021rssh_advisory_en.pdf

³ TRP Report on RSSH Investments in the 2017-2019 Funding Cycle: https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8093/trp_rssh2017-2019fundingcycle_report_en.pdf

⁴ GF/SC16/EDP01: Establishment of the Working Group on Technical Review Panel Matters

Key messages and Priorities

7. OIG Advisory: 'Evolving the TRP model'

The objectives of the Advisory were to assess: (i) the adequacy of the TRP's mandate, structure, governance, and accountability mechanisms to support effective delivery of the Global Fund's strategy, and (ii) The effectiveness and efficiency of processes in place to review funding requests and strategic initiatives (including virtual, onsite or hybrid reviews), ensuring robust oversight and value-add. The OIG noted that:

- There is an opportunity to re-assess the TRP's mandate to ensure that the TRP focuses on key impact areas, namely: portfolios with substantial disease burden, poor performing countries, and bottleneck areas observed across different portfolios.
- In order to further differentiate, the TRP would benefit from having an evaluation process by which all Funding Requests are assessed based on two criteria, namely: allocation size and performance. Based on this assessment each funding request would follow a differentiated review route which could include:
 - i. TRP review for high allocation and low performing programs;
 - ii. No TRP review for high allocation and high performing programs
 - iii. TRP review every six years for some funding requests (i.e. after every other allocation cycle) to maintain independent review while allowing the TRP to focus effort on high allocation and low performing programs;
 - iv. Fast track TRP review for some funding requests.
- There is an opportunity to differentiate further among Funding Request Reviews across various dimensions, including: the review process steps; review group composition; review timeliness; review outcomes in terms of number of recommendations; and review cost per funding request.
- There is an opportunity to strengthen governance and oversight by enhancing both the TRP internal monitoring mechanisms and the SC oversight role.

Following presentation of the OIG Advisory in its October SC Meeting, the SC appreciated the collaboration between the OIG, TRP and Secretariat and the constructive ideas recommendations generated through the Advisory.

8. TRP Advisory on RSSH:

The report produced by the Advisory on RSSH examines how Global Fund RSSH investments can be optimized to further strengthen health systems in support of the implementation of HIV, TB, and malaria programs, while also strengthening pandemic preparedness and response. The TRP noted the following key observations:

- COVID-19 disruptions to health systems span multiple areas of the health system. Some elements of health systems supported by the Global Fund have performed well in COVID-19 response but, at times, to the detriment of the HIV, TB and malaria programs.

- Trying to strengthen a health system starting from a single disease program is problematic. The focus of Global Fund investments continues to be more on “supporting” rather than “strengthening” health systems.
- RSSH investments require longer-term commitments and investments than the three-year Global Fund allocation periods.
- Global Fund RSSH guidance and information notes are not consistently used by applicants. Additionally, RSSH indicators are being used insufficiently in measuring Global Fund grant performance, and course-correction is lacking in case of under-performance.
- Diversity of views on RSSH among the Global Fund Secretariat, stakeholders and donors leads to siloed RSSH implementation and confusing messaging. As a result, RSSH investments are overly fragmented and often sacrificed when cuts must be made.

Based on these observations, the TRP recommends that RSSH investments be more consistently shifted from *supporting* to *strengthening and sustaining* health systems, by providing greater conceptual clarity, developing a Theory of Change, and an accompanying Performance Framework that lays out the rationale for Global Fund RSSH investments. Additionally, the TRP recommends that the Global Fund consider RSSH investments beyond the three-year implementation period. The TRP also recommends that the Global Fund foster integration of health system strengthening and health security so that RSSH investments can contribute to pandemic preparedness and response, while supporting HIV, TB and malaria outcomes and other essential health services.

The SC welcomed the TRP’s advisory on RSSH and noted that these important findings will feed into and support operationalization of the new Global Fund Strategy.

What are the next steps for Committees and Board?

1. The SC Working Group on TRP Matters will take into account the above OIG Advisory including SC feedback on the OIG recommendations as it moves forward with supporting the revision of the TRP Terms of Reference (to be presented to the SC in the March 2022 Meeting) and subsequently in new TRP Recruitment (planned for discussion in the September 2022 SC Meeting).
2. The recommendations of the TRP Advisory on RSSH will inform and support the Secretariat’s operationalization of the new Global Fund Strategy.

Annex: Further information

- [2020 TRP Lessons Learned Report](#)
- [2021 TRP RSSH Advisory Report](#)
- [TRP Report on RSSH Investments in the 2017-2019 Funding Cycle](#)
- GF/SC16/EDP01: Establishment of the Working Group on Technical Review Panel Matters