

APNSW Regional workshop: Capacity building on the Global Fund

Siem Reap, Cambodia, 6-10 September 2015

Background

APNSW first conducted training on the Global Fund with their member organizations in 2010. Since then, a number of sex worker groups in the region have been closely involved with Global Fund's work in their countries, including receiving funding for various projects.

However, in recent years APNSW became aware that other sex worker groups across the Asia Pacific region were not accessing funding opportunities that are available through the Global Fund. There were a number of reasons for this. Some were technical, such as self-organizing groups who do not have a legal identity not being eligible. However in other cases there was a lack of awareness of the details about how the Global Fund mechanisms worked.

As members of key populations (KP), and as community-based organisations working with key populations, sex worker groups and networks should be closely involved in contributing to their country's Global Fund National Strategic Plan, Country Dialogue and Concept Note. Furthermore, sex worker groups and networks may be eligible to submit project proposals under a number of GF categories ranging from direct HIV outreach work, to community system strengthening and human rights monitoring.

With technical support from NSWP, Global Fund and additional support from Robert Carr Network Fund, APNSW developed a new five-day training workshop, designed specifically for sex workers, to build their technical knowledge and capacity to engage to accept or work with the Global Fund mechanisms in their country as they move to the New Funding Model.

This workshop curriculum was developed in partnership with APNSW and NSWP in 2014, and the first global training of trainers took place in July 2015. Since then training has been delivered in Nairobi in partnership with Africa Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA), and twice in Cambodia with APNSW and sex worker organisations from Asia and the Pacific. Refinements are made to continuously improve the program each time, and the next training is planned for December 2015 when APNSW will organize together with East European/Central Asian members of NSWP and South Asian members of APNSW.

September workshop summary



Participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Vietnam took part in a five-day workshop held from 5 – 10th September 2015, in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The workshop was facilitated by Michael Matthews, Communities Delegation to the Global Fund, and Kay Thi Win, Regional Coordinator for APSNW. A number of Global Fund staff from the Cambodia Country Team, and the Office of the Inspector General, also took an active part in delivering the training.

The first day began with an overview and history of the Fund. The GF is primarily a financing organization, established in 2002, and exists because there is recognition of the need to find innovative and creative ways to reach key populations with life-saving knowledge, tools and treatments. The Fund describes itself as a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and people affected by the diseases, and has evolved significantly over its lifespan.

Participants were keen to share their experiences so far with the fund, and were quick to point out some of the topics they perceive to be issues. Examples included the current transition away from funding Middle-Income Countries (MIC) and towards funding to Lower-Income Countries (LIC): what will happen if MIC governments do not take over funding of current cost-effective and successful programs?

Another immediate issue was the degree of representation of key populations at the country level. One participant highlighted that groups getting funding to support sex workers in their country were not doing any empowerment work, and religious organizations were getting funding for shelters. Another told of how they were aware a Country Team existed but it was not clear how sex worker organizations could participate in meetings when they came to visit - and in fact it was only because the Country Team Fund Manager had contacted them personally that they knew about GF grants being awarded in their country.

Several newer aspects of the GF system were introduced on day one, and expanded on later in the training. These included the:

- New Funding Model,
- role of Community Systems Strengthening (CSS), and Health Systems Strengthening (HSS),
- increased emphasis on Human Rights,
- Fund's Equality and SOGI strategies, and
- the role of the Office of the Inspector General.

Kay Thi Win presented the WHO Guidelines for implementing comprehensive HIV/STI programmes with sex workers – also known as the Sex Workers Implementation Tool (SWIT) – and emphasized that advocacy, community empowerment, addressing violence against sex workers, and building the organizational capacity of sex worker led groups were all an inherent part of the process. Some participants had never heard of the SWIT, others were aware of it but the document was not yet recognized as the best model by their government, and others emphasized the need for the simplified version of SWIT developed by NSWP to be translated into local languages.



The second day went straight into the details of how Global Fund ought to work in practice in each country through the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM). The importance of inclusion of key populations at CCM was emphasized, and that funding recipients are accountable to the CCM as well as to GF directly. Rules around funding were outlined, including the need for transparency, oversight and policies on conflict of interest.

The way in which key populations are represented on CCM was of particular interest to participants, who asked whether that representation was meaningful or tokenistic, and whether the selected person was really representative of the wider key populations – as KPs are not all one homogenous group. It was clear from group feedback there is significant room for improvement in a number of CCMs in terms of inclusion.

Participants wrote a sample letter to their CCM introducing their organisations and their work, and learned of their rights to participate in the Country Dialogue process, and of the need to build relationships with GF Country Teams as well as in-country organizations.



Human rights and Gender Equality were the final topics of the day, with Ximena Naviahenao from the Cambodia Country Team introducing the Global Fund's Equality and SOGI strategies. Participants had no shortage of stories of how human rights were routinely infringed in their countries: from insults by health care workers and doctors telling sex workers to have unnecessary abortions, to the use of condoms as evidence by police, the need to pay bribes to get out of jail, criminalization of sex work and/or same sex acts, and confiscation and difficulties obtaining citizenship and identity documents. All members were very keen to hear more about the new human rights complaints procedures.



Living proceedings up throughout the workshop was APNSW's media director, Dale, introducing Art for Advocacy. Whether through paintings, banners, and other visuals or through music, dance and flash-mobs, being creative and playful in getting a message across to an audience can be effective. Participants drew some of their reactions to the training and hopes for the future working more closely with GF, and then painted them into a big banner combining all their ideas.

