IMPROVING WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT IN CCMS IN THE MENA REGION
NAWARA WOMEN'S NETWORK FOR THE MENA REGION

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Executive Summary

Nawara Women's Network for the Middle East and North Africa surveyed members to learn from their experiences with women's participation in Global Fund Country Coordinating Mechanisms, the COVID-19 pandemic, and Nawara's agenda. The survey was available in Arabic, English and French. 34 survey responses were received from 12 countries across the region.

CCM participation

The greatest number of responses was from Yemen (n=8); there is no CCM in Yemen and no mechanism for civil society to communicate with the Global Fund. This survey is no substitute for communication channels.

16 respondents reported that they had participated with the CCM, 6 as permanent members and 9 as observers (1 did not answer the question). Differences among the three languages were noticeable: Respondents using the English (n=4 of 6, 66 percent) and French (n=3 of 4, 75 percent) language surveys were more likely to report CCM participation than respondents using the Arabic language survey (n=10 of 23, 43 percent).

No responses reflected great satisfaction with the participation of women, saying that there were "but few" women included (Afghanistan). Survey respondents offered many recommendations of ways to improve women's meaningful participation and inclusion in the CCM and its processes. Recommendations followed five themes:

- Governance,
- Evidence production and data collection,
- Capacity building,
- Legitimacy of representation, and
- Better communication.

The COVID-19 Pandemic's Effects on Women in the MENA Region

Nawara's survey of 34 members reifies the findings of UN Women's assessment about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the MENA region, and that found by CARE in their assessment of the West Bank and Gaza.[1] Respondents described effects on HIV and TB programming, with reduced access to medicines and services, but also permeating throughout women's lives, affecting their economic situation, their work lives and their home lives, with increased family and home responsibilities for women, in situations that have become increasingly strained. Participants reported that women face more violence in the home. In addition to increased violence, women also faced increased responsibilities in the home. Women were burdened with additional pandemic-related costs. Women's economic responsibilities did not abate during the pandemic, and some women had to go out to work and take risks to bring in food. Even as women's responsibilities increased, women's participation in planning in response to COVID-19 was weak. Burdens upon women reflected women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work including cooking, cleaning, childcare and care of the sick. Women perform the overwhelming majority of care work around the world, and this has been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic of 2020.[2] In response to these increased economic needs and the risks taken to meet them, some respondents recommended economic empowerment programs for women, saying

"Because the crisis affected, in general, all sectors, women had a large share of this impact, whether they were a worker or a housewife, they had the responsibility to take care of their families. We recommend supporting and empowering small projects that could be undertaken by housewives and improve the income of their families"-Yemen

[لان الازمة اثرت بشكل عام على جميع القطاعات كان للمرأة نصيب كبير من هذا التأثر سواء كانت عامله او ربة منزل فمسؤليلة" الاعتناء والرعاية وقعت.على عاتقها المشاريع الصغيرة التي من الممكن ان يقمن بها ربات البيوت ويحسن من دخل اسرهن نوصي بدعمها وتمكينهم"-اليمن]

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[1] Care Palestine/West Bank and Gaza. March 2020. Rapid Gender Assessment: A Summary of Early Gender Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/5eaebacaa7de5.pdf

[2] The International Labor Organization estimates that women perform nearly 80 per cent of care work (or nearly 4 times the care work performed by men.] International Labour Organisation. 2017. *Care Work and Care Jobs, For the future of Decent Work*. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633166.pdf

Considering this, recommendations include long-term actions to overcome challenges related to crises and build resilience, including the provision of mental health services and ensuring that community-based organizations have access to funding.

Nawara's Agenda

Four issues were identified during Nawara's 2019 meeting:

1. Gender-based violence

2. Access to medicines

3. Access to treatment, care and support

4. Access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, particularly related to HIV.

Survey respondents were very strong in their willingness to work on these four issues through the GF processes. Nawara members demonstrated the strongest support for working on GBV and access to treatment, care and support, through GF processes, with over 85 percent of participants reporting yes. Strong support was demonstrated for working on SRHR and access to medicines through GF programming, at over 70 percent.

Recommendations for the evolution of CCMs

CCM evolution requires that the CCM promote gender justice and gender mainstreaming in GF programming and strategic thinking in every location where the GF operates. Across the MENA region and around the world, CCM internal functioning must evolve to better include women in all their diversity, women members of key populations, and throughout the life cycle in order to develop and build the capacity and expertise to effectively address the needs of women and girls in the response to HIV/Aids. For some CCMs, evolution may be a true transformation, and in the places those CCMs govern, the pandemic response will improve immensely. Considering the breadth of the task of CCM evolutions, the recommendations fall into overlapping, interrelated categories that reinforce each other. Improved communication is necessary to improve women's participation, and genuine representation of constituents and civil society including women and members of key populations. Representation is a key aspect of governance; data collection similarly relies on representation and communication, even as it informs

governance and representation. As the CCM controls the processes of proposal writing and submission, gender mainstreaming and gender justice in grantmaking requires data about and from women, which itself requires the genuine inclusion of women. For this reason, a gendered lens is a necessary element for the strategic thinking and planning for the grantmaking role of the CCM and even its internal functioning. Indeed, without the appropriate data, the CCM and GF response would lack the ability to address women's pandemic-related needs. CCMs and CSOs can use these recommendations, in some cases, to continue pushing forward with their ongoing activities, while others can use these recommendations to advocate for and implement changes.

Recommendations addressing CCM governance

● CCMs must establish and implement a process to recruit and elect new CCM members, including clear qualifications, a description of responsibilities and anticipated time commitment, and encourage women from all groups to be candidates, with a minimum percentage of women's participation. The ultimate aim is for gender parity, therefore, constituency groups from different sectors including the government, civil society and financial and technical partners must encourage the CCM to consider a gendered approach in electing representatives, without sacrificing ability and qualifications.

● CCMs should develop and implement internal regulation and selection guidelines to guarantee that the election process respects the demand for transparent and free elections by supporting community members to elect their representatives, including capacity building among community members and community groups, including women's groups, to organize elections, and hosting and observing elections.

● All CCMs should develop and implement effective management mechanisms to prevent and address conflicts of interest within the CCM.

● CCMs should perform a capacity assessment at the beginning of each new mandate, and implement a Capacity Building Plan based on the assessment. Capacity building should address the role of the CCM, its responsibilities and functions, proposal writing, and CCM oversight of GF grants and their implementation. Civil society organizations should invest in capacity building for their members to develop the skills and ensure the commitment of qualified and promising candidates.

● CCMs should accommodate women's needs and specific challenges by amending internal rules and working conditions to maximize women's ability to meaningfully participate, enshrined in CCM policy.

Recommendations to improve communication

CCMs have an enormous opportunity to improve their communication with CCM members, community members, and civil society. Improved communication could ameliorate many of the obstacles identified to women's meaningful participation within the CCM, including developing a gendered approach to communication to ensure that women receive the information necessary to participate meaningfully. Better communication can take multiple forms including:

● Sharing information and documents in local languages, not only colonial languages

● Offering capacity building for women and other community members to actively participate, including through mentorship

● Developing communication channels in two-directions: from the CCM permanent members to the communities represented, from constituency groups, and civil society to the permanent members of the CCM

● Sharing information beyond an inner circle to ensure transparency of GF processes and decision-making processes

● Actively seeking out information from members of vulnerable groups and key populations - this is related to genuine representation, and sharing information and decisions with constituencies, forming both consultation and feedback

● Developing and implementing policies and procedures to manage conflict within the CCM

● Capitalizing on networks including W4GF and Nawara to help distribute information about GF processes. This is happening already and can be built upon to reach more women in affected groups, vulnerable groups, and key populations.

● Nawara can help facilitate an informational exchange across the MENA Region, to share the experience among CCMs and the gendered approach. This could take the form of the establishment of a regional platforms for women members of CCMs with the support of

the Global Fund, with the specific aim of improving women's participation in the CCM and strengthening their capacity.

Recommendations for genuine representation

● All places with GF support should have a CCM, including places where travel is difficult. The CRG supports the use of new technology to hold remote meetings.

● CCM voting members should include people, particularly women, with lived experience as members of KPs: this may require additional capacity building and communication;

● CCM membership expansion should include more NGO and CBO representatives from vulnerable populations, including AGYW: this will rely on capacity building and communication

● In order to ensure genuine representation of civil society, including KPs, AGYW and community members, CCMs should support an effective and transparent election process. This will require

○ Clearly defined profiles for representatives of community groups,

○ Widespread dissemination of the call for representatives and encouraging women to apply

○ Encouraging good candidates to submit their applications as members of community groups and for the CCM board, and

○ Seeking applications from outside CSOs. Moving beyond CSO representatives is necessary because, when members of KPs become permanent members of CSOs, some lose their connection to the people on the ground, and those who join the CCM can become even more distanced; CSOs can ensure relevance by taking steps to remain close to the ground with active recruitment. In some places, NGOs that are not GF grantees support candidates from KPs to be part of the CCM.

● Encourage veteran CCM members to mentor new civil society representatives on the roles of the GF; mentoring could be a position with a stipend and regular hours. This could take the form of CS Constituency Groups in which former CCM members accompany newly elected members in their new missions on the CCM, with practical

guides translated into the languages of the country will be necessary to clarify their roles on the CCM.

● Genuine representation will require including women in all their diversity, including transgender women, from CS as part of the proposal writing committee; their input will be especially valuable with regard to programs promoting women's economic empowerment and combating gender-based violence.

● Genuine representation is related to evidence gathering and data production, because genuine representation will lead to the collection of better data through CCM members and CS partners.

Recommendations for data collection and the production of evidence

Data collection typically relies on collaboration with CS through CBO and NGO cooperation and participation. Examples of GF-related data include population size estimations of members of key populations, and gender assessments may rely on qualitative data about women, and specific groups of vulnerable women like AGYW, people at risk of child marriage, and female members of key populations including people who use drugs and sex workers.

● Foundational research can ensure that larger studies like population size estimates build upon critical information in each local context.

● Participatory methods are recommended in order to ensure that the concerns of women and girls are included in research that contributes to programming decisions.

Survey participants offered many suggestions to improve the COVID-19 pandemic response, and these suggestions may be applied to many types of crises. In this way, the CCM can fulfil a role in building resilience among community-based groups and their members. Participants' recommendations included:

● Use participatory methods by which women participate in the design and implementation of specific interventions and programs addressing women's needs, like addressing "women as a key population". Such interventions could include

○ Reducing women's economic burden, through economic empowerment programs, possibly including special grants for women, hygiene kits, food baskets, capacity building

for entrepreneurship, and

○ Implementing programs to combat violence against women and girls, including the use of social media and special sessions

○ Raising awareness about COVID-19 prevention and care using social media and special meetings

● Ensure that psycho-social support is available, including through online applications

● Secure access to medicines to prevent patients' running out of medicine, and ensure that health care is provided safely without risk of COVID-19 transmission in healthcare and other clinical settings.

● Develop community capacities to ensure some treatment and care services for vulnerable populations difficult to reach/support and document community initiatives

● Establishing a support team to deliver medicine, treatment, care and support to the homes of people who are unable to go out for treatment, while taking all preventive measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission.

Capitalize on women's networks to promote the involvement of women in CCMs across the MENA region and beyond. These networks can effectively share information and also collect information to share with the governors of CCMs, and can be strong assets for communication to and from CCM members and constituencies, including vulnerable groups and members of key populations.

The role of networks in promoting the involvement of women in CCMs

In addition to the very successful award-winning ITPC-MENA Platform, there are two additional networks to rely on to mobilize women in the region. They are Nawara and Women for Global Fund (W4GF.)

Women for Global Fund is a world-wide civil-society network that promotes women's issues in Global Fund processes, including decision making and funds allocation. W4GF works with the Global Fund as an interface with women, girls and transwomen constituencies. In 2018 and 2019, W4GF worked with the GF Secretariat to organize a monthly webinar series, during which community members gave direct feedback to the Secretariat and to hear updates on relevant policy and program issues. The W4GF Accountability Toolkit is a tool used to hold the Global Fund accountable to the quality of its programs for women and girls through community-based monitoring.[3]

Nawara Women's Network is an emerging network and a great resource for mobilizing participation by women and people organizing services for women across the MENA region. Nawara is well-integrated with the ITPC-MENA Platform, and in 2019 ITPC-MENA Platform and Nawara Women's Network held a joint meeting co-sponsored by the UN Development Program [link to report] with strong GF participation.[4] (ITPC-MENA and Nawara commissioned this report together.) Nawara members have been active within W4GF.

W4GF and Nawara can fulfil complementary roles in expanding women's knowledge and capacity-building for women's meaningful participation in CCMs across the MENA region. In addition to sharing information, Nawara and W4GF have a role to play offering expertise and technical assistance to develop programs that target and reach women in all their diversity throughout the life cycle.

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[3] Community, Rights and Gender Report, 41st Board Meeting of the Global Fund, 15-16 May 2019, Geneva. GF/B41/10 available from https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8528/bm41_10-crg_report_en.pdf page 14.

[4] Community, Rights and Gender Report, 41st Board Meeting of the Global Fund, 15-16 May 2019, Geneva. GF/B41/10 available from https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8528/bm41_10-crg_report_en.pdf page 8.

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