

## Building the capacity of trans communities to provide Monitoring and Oversight of Global Fund Processes in Belize



**DATE: 24-25 November 2018**

**Location: Belize City, Belize**

**Activity: 2-day training/workshop**

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**Participants: 15 local trans activists**

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## ACRONYMS

BTC	Belize Trans Colors
CCM	Country Coordinating Mechanism
CRG SI	Community, Rights, and Gender – Strategic Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSO Hub	Civil Society Organization
EPA	Eligibility and Performance Assessment
ER	Eligibility Requirement
FBO	Faith-based Organization
FPM	Fund Portfolio Manager
GATE	Global Action for Trans Equality
GF	Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
HSS	Health Systems Strengthening
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KP	Key Populations
LFA	Local Fund Agent
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
NAC	National AIDS Commission
NFM	New Funding Model
NSP	National Strategic Plan
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
PF	Performance Framework
PLHIV	Persons Living with HIV
PLWD	People Living with the Diseases
PR	Principal Recipient
PWUD	People Who Use Drugs
SR	Sub Recipient
TIA-Belize	Trans in Action - Belize
TA	Technical assistance
TRP	Technical Review Panel
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

## INTRODUCTION

### The Situation of HIV/TB and Key Populations in Belize

Globally, there are major concerns that the response to HIV, TB and Malaria is still not reaching the populations that need it the most. According to UNAIDS, as of 2016, Belize has the highest overall HIV prevalence rate in Latin America with an estimated HIV prevalence of 1.8% among adults 15 to 49 years with 4,300 (3,400 – 5,200) adults and children living with HIV. The Ministry of Health reports that as of 2017 there are 4,373 persons living with HIV in Belize.

HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men is high in Belize. The 2012 BSS and the Modes of Transmission Study 2014 indicate a high prevalence rate of 13.8% among MSM. This is of major concern for a country with a small population that is experiencing high levels of stigma and discrimination against men who have sex with men and transgender people<sup>1</sup>. The 2014 Modes of Transmission study projected that, by 2020, 68% of newly reported cases of HIV would be among men who have sex with men, based on trends at the time of the study. To date there is no study conducted to corroborate this projection. However, the analysis of incoming data continues to provide strong evidence that MSM constitute the most affected key population.

Even though there is no epidemiological data on the situation of transgender persons and HIV in Belize, patterns indicate high HIV prevalence among the transgender population in the region. UNAIDS 2017 estimates show that HIV prevalence for transgender women in the LAC region range from 8% to 31% with countries bordering with Belize, such as Mexico and Guatemala, reporting HIV prevalence of 17.4% and 22.2% respectively among transgender women, with few support programs to address their specific needs. Key data collected on the transgender population also indicates a trend of higher risk and incidence due socioeconomic factors that increase vulnerability of the population in Belize. The 2016 TraC Study also has information about the transgender community, with 49% consistent and correct condom use in the last 30 days and 84.6% having done a HIV test and received results.

A Population Size Estimate Study among men who have sex with men and transgender persons is presently being finalized. The preliminary data indicates approximately 13,000 MSM and 900 transgender persons in the country. The final report is yet to be released.

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<sup>1</sup> UNIBAM Situational Assessment 2017

## **The Situation of Transgender Persons in Belize**

In Belize, there is limited data on the transgender population. However, a few preliminary studies have been conducted. One of the studies conducted by UNIBAM in 2010, found that even though the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1, establishes that all human beings are created equal in dignity and rights, 78% of those interviewed believe that the laws do not protect the transgender population in Belize. Incidences of violence, abuse and discrimination go unnoticed in the legal system because the system fails to see the connections that exist between the crimes and the victims' gender identity. It is due to these conditions that the trans population does not trust the legal system to be responsive to its concerns if they make a complaint.

Amongst the transgender community in Belize, it is felt that there is often a trade-off between balancing rights, personal wellbeing and social isolation. A critical need for transgender persons is being able to access emotional support in times of great stress. Twenty-five persons of those interviewed in a Rapid Assessment of the Situation of Transgender Persons in Belize in 2017 felt that they did not have support in their lives because of fear that has been instilled by society. Although transphobia is considered a major societal issue, when presented with the hypothetical opportunity to actively campaign against transphobia, 41.4% of respondents did not wish to participate. This implies that public exposure may not be a comfortable option for them. It is felt that concerns regarding health, education, work, immigration, police and social acceptance remain neglected. A lack of visibility causes the trans community to feel fear in all their daily activities. Recommendations from the UNIBAM study included the need for more comprehensive health information that realistically caters to the needs of the trans community and demonstrates a concern for their wellbeing. Furthermore, law enforcement agents such as police and immigration officers need to receive correct information and appropriate training in order to decrease stigma-driven acts in the form of abuse towards members of the transgender community. Members of this community should be allowed access to education regardless of gender identity (dress code, garments, physical appearance). No discrimination should exist in access to employment.

The trans community in Belize has continuously attempted to organize itself as a network. As a part of the USAID/PASCA LMG focus to strengthen the capacity of key populations to play a key role in the response to HIV in Belize, efforts were undertaken to assist key members of the trans community to discuss the situation of trans persons in Belize, to develop a strategic plan and to commence the process of legalizing its status as an organization. As a result, TIA Belize was registered as a legal entity in December of 2015. In 2018, a newly registered transgender organization, Belize Trans Colors, was established.

## The Global Fund in Belize

From 2004 to 2015, the Global Fund has contributed significantly to the response to HIV and TB in Belize, approving US\$10.8 million in support. To date, the country has been approved a total of three GF grants. The first grant of \$2,097,976 approved in 2004 for an implementation period of five years was entitled: “Strengthening of Belize’s Multi-Sectoral Response to HIV/AIDS.” The second approved grant of US\$5.5 million in 2009 for another five-year period entitled: “Accelerating the Pace: Reaching Marginalized and Vulnerable Populations with Critical Services,” targeted the most vulnerable populations including youth, women, orphans and children made vulnerable, persons with HIV, MSM and sex workers. The third grant of \$3,359,024 in 2016 was submitted and approved under the new funding model of the Global Fund, entitled: “Investing for Impact against Tuberculosis and HIV.” This grant, presently still active, is a joint HIV and TB grant. In 2017, a decreased allocation of \$1,916,278 for the new grant period of 2019-2021 was announced. This grant marks a significant reduction of 43% from the current grant.

In accordance with the 2016 Transition, Sustainability and Co-Financing policy (SPTC) of the Global Fund, Belize is now classified as an Upper-Middle Income (UMI) country by the World Bank, thus making it ineligible to receive further funding for Tuberculosis as its disease burden is considered low or moderate. The country, however, remains eligible to receive funding for its HIV program. It’s important to highlight that the overall Global Fund financial support has been reduced by 43% for the 2019–2021 allocation period, which includes its final TB allocation. Thus, the country has completed and submitted its GF Transition Funding Request for HIV/AIDS and TB, which was approved by the Technical Review Panel of the Global Fund for grant-making and implementation, to commence in 2019.

Though classified as an Upper Middle-Income country by the World Bank, Belize is still confronted with the realities of widespread poverty. This contributes to poor health conditions, unemployment, gender-based violence, low education and other socioeconomic inequities, which increase susceptibility to HIV and TB especially for the most marginalized groups. Although Belize has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest per capita income in Central America, this average income figure masks a huge income disparity between the rich and poor, and a key government objective remains reducing poverty and inequality with the help of international donors. In 2018, the Prime Minister of Belize announced a total debt of 3.5 billion dollars accounting for approximately 93% of the country’s GDP, marking a grave economic crisis.<sup>2</sup> This remains a critical macroeconomic challenge to sustaining the response to HIV and TB in Belize.

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<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister Dean Barrow Budget Speech 2018

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

GATE is an international organization working on gender identity, gender expression and bodily diversity issues. It was founded and registered in 2009 in New York, USA. GATE's programmatic work is organized around four areas: depathologization and legal reforms, transgender issues in the international HIV response, Movement building and Development and United Nations. GATE's mission is to work internationally on gender identity, gender expression, and bodily issues by defending human rights, making available critical knowledge, and supporting political organizing worldwide. In accordance with its aim of building capacity and supporting regional and country-based constituencies to more effectively engage in and contribute to the development, implementation and oversight of Global Fund grants, GATE has embarked on a project to improve the meaningful involvement of transgender people in Global Fund processes.

Trans in Action (TIA Belize) is the recognized network representing transgender persons in Belize. The network was legally established in December 2014. It is the first and only NGO by and for transgender persons living in Belize. TIA Belize was established as the voice of all transgender persons in Belize and is constituted as a group of persons that seek to improve the quality of life of their peers through advocacy; information/education and communication activities using a human rights-based approach. These initiatives seek to enhance their individual and institutional capacities and promote respect for their human rights and dignity as transgender persons. Since its inception, TIA Belize has been collaborating with various organizations such as USAID/PASCA LMG, the National AIDS Commission, UNIBAM, UNDP, and REDLACTRANS among others. These programs have assisted TIA Belize in formalizing itself as an organization, capacity building, strategic planning for joint advocacy on particular issues and capacity building for its members in different areas such as human rights, advocacy, sensitization training etc. This was the first joint initiative with GATE.

### **Project Goal**

The goal of this project is to improve understanding and ensure meaningful engagement of transgender persons in providing monitoring and oversight of Global Fund activities at the national level; strengthen capacity of national transgender organizations and build peer-to-peer knowledge sharing; encourage evidence-based programmatic interventions and policies based on needs of the transgender community; and inform funding transition preserving investments made in strengthening transgender communities. The project is also intended to focus on strengthening local capacity in supporting transgender people.



## **OBJECTIVES**

### **General Objective**

To implement the GATE Monitoring and Oversight Tool for Transgender communities in Belize to strengthen their capacity to play a more effective role in the Global Fund processes in country.

### **Specific Objectives**

By the end of the 2-day training session the following objectives will be met:

1. Increased awareness of transgender persons and HIV/TB, the Global Fund and in-country and regional processes which should include transgender persons;
2. Increased knowledge of the transgender persons on the key elements of meaningful involvement in the CCM and other Global Fund processes throughout the grant cycle so to effectively carry out the role of monitoring and oversight;
3. Greater understanding of the concept of monitoring and evaluation including the Global Fund's approach to monitoring and evaluation and steps in monitoring meaningful involvement of trans communities;
4. Increased knowledge of key thematic guidelines to address gender, community and human rights in the planning and implementation of Global Fund grants according to the principles of the New Funding Model to ensure greater and more meaningful involvement of transgender persons and other key populations;
5. Identification of key interventions to develop a technical assistance request to support effective implementation of plan of action;

## **METHODOLOGY**

This process was conducting using a didactic, interactive and evidence-based approach. Key topics that were covered successfully included: Global Fund 101, Meaningful Involvement throughout the Grant Process, Monitoring and Evaluation and Communities, Rights and Gender Thematic Guidelines of the Global Fund. The process was highly interactive and participant-centered. The methodology included the opportunity to learn through the sharing of relevant and critical information, small group sharing, role-playing and discussions, as well as plenary sessions.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE MONITORING AND OVERSIGHT TOOL APPLIED**

### **Purpose**

This Monitoring Tool and accompanying Training Guide has been created to facilitate the process in which transgender communities and organizations play a pivotal role in the monitoring and oversight of Global Fund processes throughout the grant cycle. By equipping the community with the necessary knowledge and skills, transgender people are able to keep national, regional and global mechanisms accountable to ensure that the populations that need most are benefitting from this financial mechanism.

### **Audience**

The primary targets for this tool are transgender people including organizations that work with and for transgender communities. Trained facilitators within the transgender community can also use it. This tool and the lessons learnt through this process will serve to inform regional and national coordinating mechanisms, stakeholders and other key decision-makers on how to engage transgender communities and other key populations in all global fund processes throughout the grant cycle to ensure that their unique challenges and needs are being addressed.

### **Application of the Tool and Training Guide**

The Monitoring and Oversight tool seeks to increase awareness and knowledge on the Global Fund including the important role that communities should play throughout all its processes.

The tool comprises of 4 modules:

- 1) Global Fund 101;
- 2) Meaningful Involvement;
- 3) Monitoring and Evaluation and
- 4) Global Fund Thematic Guidance.

Each module complements the other to ensure that persons learning about the tool and applying it have the knowledge and the skills necessary to carry out the important role.

The objective of the training guide is to prepare participants for the application of the tool. Guided by the activities outlined in the agenda, the facilitator makes presentations, describes the objectives of each small group discussion and guides the participants in the application of the lessons learnt. The methodology will include important information via power point, small and large group discussions based on experiences providing an opportunity for participants to practice through role-play and mock sessions.

## **SYNOPSIS OF THE PROCESS & FINDINGS**

### **Participants**

The session started at 9:30am at the Ramada Princess Hotel in Belize City. The session was attended by 15 representatives of the transgender community as well as the UNIBAM representative, Caleb Orozco, who sits on the CCM representing the key population constituency and another CCM member, Diego Grajalez of the Collaborative Network of Persons living with HIV. Among the transgender persons participating, there were 2 transgender men and 13 transgender women. Participants were from two organizations: Trans in Action Belize (TIA Belize) and Belize Trans Colors (BTC).



### **Activities**

#### **Activity 1: Overview of the session**

##### **Official Welcome**

The GATE representative, Erika Castellanos, and the TIA Belize Director, Zahnia Canul, both provided welcome remarks to the participants. Erika shared about the work of GATE and how important the process of monitoring and oversight of Global Fund processes is for the trans community. Zahnia Canul spoke about the importance of working as a united community. She thanked the participants for attending and thanked GATE for the initiative.

##### **Objectives of the Project and the Monitoring and Oversight Tool**

The facilitator proceeded with the session by introducing themselves to the group and inviting each participant to share a bit about themselves to the group. Participants were asked to share: preferred name, preferred pronoun and one aspect about themselves that they would want the other participants to know and respect. This set the tone for a safe and comfortable space.

## **Agenda and Participants expectations**

The facilitator then proceeded to share the objectives of the GATE project, agenda and reviewed participants' expectations to ensure that they were in synergy with the overall objectives for the 2-day session. The Facilitator also provided an overview of the objective and the process of developing the Global Fund Monitoring and Evaluation Tool for Transgender communities.

### **Activity 2: The National Situation and Response to HIV and TB and Transgender persons and involvement in Global Fund Processes**

This section included a discussion on the statistics of the situation of HIV and TB in Belize, the situation of HIV and how it is affecting key populations including transgender persons, as well as an overview of the Global Fund in Belize.

This provided the basic background for the participants to be able to engage in the discussions as proposed on the agenda. Even though a few participants were familiar with the regional situation, the majority were not.

### **Activity 3: Regional and National Global Fund projects, which include transgender communities**

The facilitator shared information on the following:

- a. History of the Global Fund and Belize
- b. Present Global Fund processes in Belize
- c. Global Fund projects highlighting interventions addressing the needs of transgender persons

The facilitator also took the opportunity to share this information from her own experience, having been at the UN Special Session when the Global Fund was proposed and having provided technical support for the elaboration of the 4 Global Fund grants including the most recent grant for 2019-2021. This was beneficial as it gave relevant and realistic accounts of the Global Fund in Belize

The participants were then divided into small groups and provided with a checklist where they had the opportunity to discuss the involvement of the transgender community with Global Fund processes at country level and assess how meaningful this involvement has been.

Participants indicated that, overall, the transgender community's involvement is at 50% of what it should be. This meant that there has been some involvement but that there is a lot more that could still be done to ensure meaningful involvement. This is primarily due to lack of information and knowledge of the Global Fund processes and the opportunities that are provided for the transgender community in Belize.

#### **Activity 4: Module 1 – Global Fund 101**

The facilitator presented PowerPoint slides with key information from the Monitoring and Oversight Tool to the participants, encouraging discussion and addressing of issues. The following topics were covered:

- What is the Global Fund?
- Understanding Important Acronyms?
- What is a Country Coordinating Mechanism?
- What are CCM eligibility requirements and minimum standards?
- What is the role of CCM representatives?
- Who are civil society CCM representatives?

The facilitator engaged the participants in an interactive discussion on these topics and asked them to base their contributions on their own experiences or the experiences of their peers that have been involved in Global Fund processes representing the transgender community. In addition, the participants were familiarized with key acronyms that many of them had not previously known. They shared that they often feel lost at the CCM meetings because acronyms and the lingo that are used are unfamiliar. Some stated that they are embarrassed to ask because they feel that they will be told that they should already know these if they want to be a part of the discussions.

Overall, the activities provided an opportunity for the participants to engage in some deep discussions as relating to the actual situation in the community, some challenges being faced and areas for improvement. In particular, it provided an opportunity for the present Constituency representative, who was in attendance, to share his concerns and recommendations. The outcome was highlighting the need to strengthen communication channels between the CCM and trans community representatives.

**A key activity to be highlighted was the “Mock CCM Meeting” in which the participants were asked to assume the role of the members of the CCM and make decisions regarding the Chair and Vice Chair as well as whether the CSO Hub would be removed from the request to allow for a 1 million dollars cut in the budget.**

### **Activity 5: Module 2 – Meaningful Involvement of transgender persons throughout the Grant Cycle**

The facilitator once again shared information from PowerPoint slides with key information from the Monitoring and Oversight Tool with the participants, encouraging discussion and addressing of issues. In particular, the following topics were discussed:

- Understanding the Grant Cycle and being an important part of the Country Dialogues
- Transparency and Accountability – Effectively Representing your transgender community and key populations constituency
- Active participation – Making sure that you are heard
- Dealing with difficult situations and challenges

During this session the facilitator asked participants to discuss these topics based on their own experiences or the experiences of their peers that have been involved in Global Fund processes representing the transgender community.

This session was helpful as it once again provided an opportunity for the participants to learn, to discuss their concerns and experiences, as well as to reach a consensus among themselves on solutions to the present challenges.

### **Activity 6: Module 3 - Monitoring and Oversight**

This was an important session as it served to show that many of the participants were not aware of what Monitoring and Oversight means, they did not understand what their role is in monitoring and oversight of the Global Fund processes and how their meaningful engagement in this process is a critical part of the success of these programs in their countries.

The facilitator shared PowerPoint slides with key information from the Monitoring and Oversight Tool with the participants, encouraging discussion and addressing issues. The following topics were covered:

- The Global Fund's approach to monitoring and evaluation
- Monitoring meaningful involvement of transgender persons
- Key Steps in Monitoring Programs for transgender persons and other key populations (hand-outs 7 & 8)

At the end of this session, participants had an opportunity for discussion in small groups. They were able to share their own experiences or the experiences of their peers that have been involved in Global Fund processes representing the transgender community. Overall, the sentiment was that there is need for more capacity-building and information sharing on these

topics, as they realized how critical their role is in monitoring and providing oversight for the processes in country.

They also noted that they now realize that many of the complaints that have been made about the CCM and the PR is actually because they have not had adequate information and were not aware of the processes that they needed to follow in monitoring and providing oversight to Global Fund processes in Belize.

#### **Activity 7: Module 4 – Global Fund Thematic Guidelines: Community, Rights and Gender**

At this point, the facilitator shared with the participants that in the tool, which they all received, they would be able to find specific Thematic Guidelines on Communities, Rights and Gender which can assist them in building their knowledge based on Global Fund processes, advocacy and how, as members of communities, they can have a greater impact on processes in their country.

#### **Activity 8: CRG Technical Assistance Request**

Upon conclusion of the discussions, the facilitator made a presentation on the Communities, Rights and Gender Special Initiative and shared with the participants how they could apply for technical assistance to strengthen the community's capacity to play a more meaningful role in the Global Fund processes.

Thus, a draft of a technical request for submission to the CRG was developed among the participants. (See Annex)

#### **Summarizing and Closing**

The session concluded with a summary of the two days session focusing on accomplishments and the way forward. Participants were asked to share their feelings regarding the session and if and how the information gained would be helpful. All the feedback received was positive.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need for sessions with other members of the transgender community to ensure that as many persons as possible have the information and can work together to accomplish their roles as a community.
2. The community is in need of cohesion and joint vision building, especially at this time when there are new organizations coming on board. Support in the area of coordination, communication and planning is needed.
3. A training of trainers' session can be helpful in preparing the persons that participated in this training to be able to replicate the sessions or portions of it to other members of their organizations and communities.
4. It is recommended that a session be held by the Community's representative on the CCM to update the community on the present Global Fund processes as well as engage them in discussions on how to improve their representation and participation.
5. There is an opportunity to support trans men initiatives. There is one trans man interested in working with Global Fund processes, but he needs the support of the other trans communities that currently focus on trans women's issues. GATE can provide some much-needed support to help him create his organization, formalize its legal status and develop key documents such as the Articles of Association and Strategic Plan.



## ANNEXES

### Workshop Agenda/Timetable

Time	Day 1	Activity
8:00 – 8:15	<b>ARRIVAL AND SIGN-IN</b>	
8:15 - 8:30	Overview of session: Agenda, goals and objectives of the GATE Project and the M & E Tool	Presentation
8:30 – 9:30	The national situation, the response to HIV, tuberculosis, transgender people and their participation in the processes of the Global Fund	Group activity
9:30 – 10:15	National and Regional Global Fund projects that include trans communities	Large group discussions
10:15 – 10:30	<b>BREAK</b>	
10:30 – 11:30	Module 1: Global Fund 101 What is the Global Fund? Understanding important acronyms	Presentation and plenary discussions.
11:30 – 12:15	Module 1: Global Fund 101 What is a Country Coordination Mechanism? What are CCM eligibility requirements and minimum standards? What is the role of the CCM representatives? Who are CCM civil society representatives?	Presentation and plenary discussions.
12:15 – 1:15	<b>LUNCH</b>	
1:15 – 1:30	TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITY	Energizer
1:30 - 3:30	Module 2: Meaningful participation of trans people throughout the grant cycle. Understand the grant cycle and being an important part of the country dialogues. Transparency and accountability - Effectively representing the trans community and your key populations constituency Active participation - Making sure you are listened to. Dealing with difficult situations and challenges.	Presentations Small group discussions
3:30 – 4:30	Acting out specific scenarios – Mock CCM session	Small group discussions and role play
4:30	<b>SUMMARY AND CLOSING</b>	

Time	Day 2	Activity
8:00 – 8:15	<b>ARRIVAL AND SIGN-IN</b>	
8:15 - 8:30	Review of day 1 - Participants	Icebreaker activity
8:30 – 9:00	Module 3: Monitoring and Oversight The Global Fund's approach to monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring meaningful involvement of transgender people	Presentation
9:00 – 10:15	Module 3: Key steps in monitoring programs for transgender people and other key populations	Presentation Small Group Work
10:15 – 10:30	<b>BREAK</b>	
10:30 – 11:15	Module 3: Monitoring and Evaluation. The Global Fund's approach to monitoring and evaluation. How to monitor meaningful involvement	Plenary - Presentation and discussion
11:15 – 12:15	How to use M & E results for advocacy and change for transgender communities inside and outside of Global Fund processes. The Office of the Inspector General - You can speak out!	Presentation and small group discussion
12:15 – 1:15	<b>LUNCH</b>	
1:15 – 2:30	Global Fund Thematic Guidelines: Community, Rights and Gender	Plenary - Presentation and discussion
2:30 - 4:00	Using the thematic guidelines for monitoring and advocacy	Small Group Presentations
4:00 – 4:30	Review and summary	
	<b>SUMMARY AND CLOSING</b>	