



Communities Delegation
to the Board of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

Putting Communities at the Center of Global Fund Set-Asides

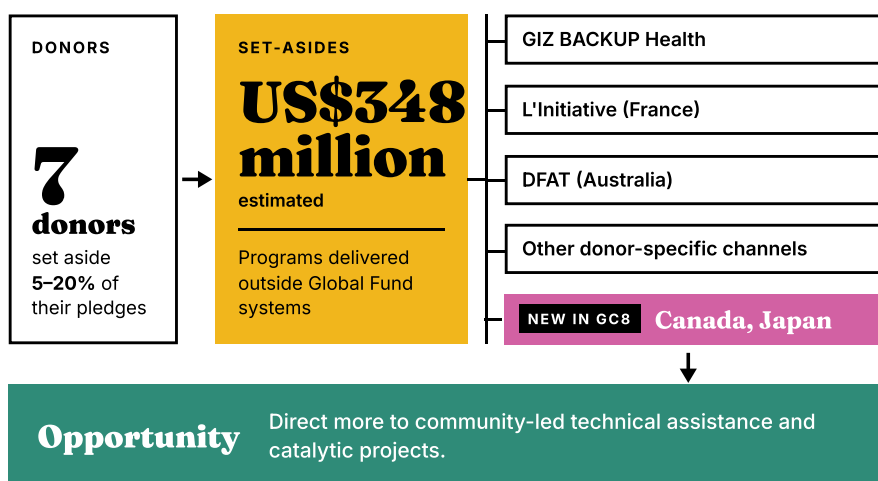
**Direct contracting and catalytic funding for
community-led networks and organizations in
Grant Cycle 8**

Executive Summary

In Grant Cycle 8, seven donors have set aside an estimated US\$348 million (typically 5–20% of their pledges) for programs delivered outside Global Fund systems, including new set-asides from Canada and Japan. Existing mechanisms include GIZ BACKUP Health, France's L'Initiative, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and other donor-specific channels. Donors can increase the impact of these funds by directing more to community-led technical assistance and catalytic projects.

GLOBAL FUND · GRANT CYCLE 8

How Donor Set-Asides Work



This brief follows the Global Fund definition: community-led networks and organizations are formal or informal bodies in which people from the communities served comprise most governance, leadership and staff and represent community experience and perspectives. Community leadership requires organizational control and substantive representation.

Grant Cycle 8 prioritizes sharper investment choices, predictable transitions, integrated health systems and service delivery, stronger community systems and financing, and improved domestic resource mobilization and co-financing. Community-led networks and organizations can advance these priorities through their expertise, trust, reach and accountability to affected communities.

This brief proposes two complementary reforms: directly contracting qualified community-led networks and organizations as technical assistance providers and establishing catalytic funding opportunities for community-identified priorities, innovation and durable organizational capacity. Together, these reforms would give communities a funded role in improving Global Fund grants and sustaining community-led responses.

Bridging Priorities and Communities



Grant Cycle 8 priorities

Sharper investment choices
 Predictable transitions
 Integrated health systems and service delivery
 Stronger community systems and financing
 Domestic resource mobilization and co-financing

SET-ASIDES

Fund this contribution outside the constraints of Global Fund grants.

What community-led networks bring

Expertise

Trust

Reach

Accountability to affected communities

1. Contract community-led networks and organizations as technical assistance providers

Direct contracting would bring community expertise into grant design and implementation, making grants more responsive to human rights- and gender-related barriers to service access. Community-led technical assistance can strengthen community engagement and community systems, promote equitable access to services and innovations, support programs for key, criminalized and marginalized communities, and help ensure that integration preserves safety, confidentiality and accountability to affected communities.

2. Create catalytic, project-based funding windows

Catalytic project funding would complement technical assistance by financing community-identified priorities and organizational development that short-term assignments cannot readily support. Drawing on L'Initiative's model, donors could offer competitive, multi-year funding directly to community-led networks and organizations, with consortium or fiscal-host arrangements available where needed.

Together, these reforms would expand access to community-led expertise and finance priorities beyond the reach of conventional technical assistance, improving the effectiveness, equity and strategic alignment of existing set-aside mechanisms.

TWO COMPLEMENTARY REFORMS

Two Asks, One Outcome



ASK 1

Contract community-led technical assistance providers

Brings community expertise into grant design and implementation, making grants more responsive to human rights and gender-related barriers.

ASK 2 · MODELED ON L'INITIATIVE

Create catalytic, project-based funding windows

Finances community-identified priorities and organizational development that short-term assignments can't support.

SHARED OUTCOME

Communities get a funded role in improving Global Fund grants and sustaining community-led responses.

Community-Led Networks and Organizations Are Essential to Delivering Strategic Shifts

Grant Cycle 8's shifts toward integration, stronger community systems and financing, health-system development, effective transitions and sustainability must be reflected in grant design and implementation. Community-led networks and organizations provide the trusted relationships, contextual knowledge, expertise and accountability needed to make these shifts work for affected communities. Set-asides can finance this contribution outside the constraints of Global Fund grants.

Community-led networks and organizations can support change in service design and delivery while preserving safety, confidentiality, peer-led approaches, and equitable access, particularly for key and criminalized populations.

Set-asides can help turn community expertise into results by funding community-led networks and organizations to shape and strengthen grant investments.

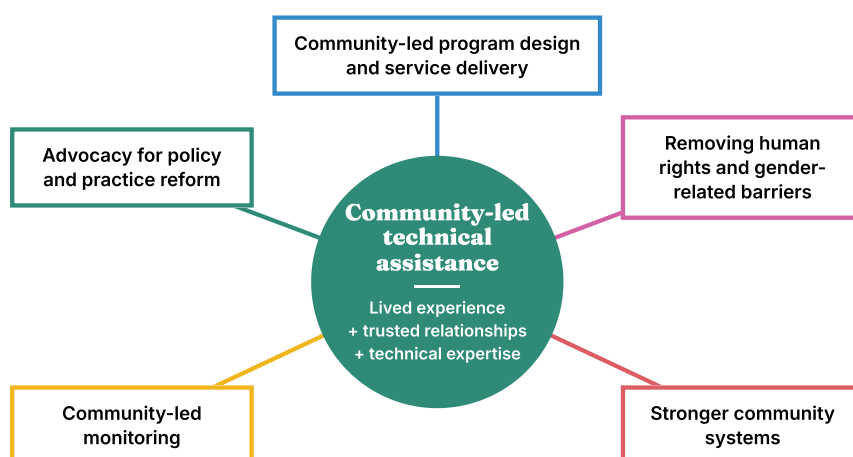
Advocacy Ask 1: Contract Community-Led Technical Assistance Providers

Set-asides should include qualified community-led networks and organizations among their technical assistance providers. Their relationships and expertise can improve grant design, implementation, integration and equitable access, particularly through community-led program design and service delivery, removal of human rights- and gender-related barriers, stronger community systems, community-led monitoring and advocacy for policy and practice reform.

Community-led networks and organizations combine lived experience with trusted relationships and specialized technical expertise. This enables them to identify barriers, design workable solutions and support implementation, including in settings where other providers may have less access, trust or contextual knowledge.

Many community-led networks and organizations already have the governance, fiduciary, safeguarding, grant-management, monitoring and evaluation capacity to manage funding and deliver support. Where further development is needed, set-asides should combine direct contracting with tailored investment in priorities such as governance, financial management, safeguarding and donor assurance. This would expand the pool of qualified, sustainable community-led technical assistance providers.

What Community-Led TA Strengthens



What this looks like in practice

- ▶ Use needs assessments and transparent procurement to identify assignments best delivered by qualified community-led networks and organizations. Design solicitation, contracting, payment and reporting arrangements that allow them to compete and perform on equitable terms.
- ▶ Use the definition set out in the Executive Summary as the starting point for verifying community-led networks and organizations, alongside proportionate checks on governance, safeguarding, financial management and technical capacity.
- ▶ Fund technical assistance that strengthens community systems and contributes to measurable grant outcomes, including stronger leadership, advocacy, monitoring, service quality, access and accountability.
- ▶ Include qualified community-led networks and organizations in the design, governance and monitoring of set-aside technical assistance through transparent roles, conflict-of-interest safeguards and feedback mechanisms.
- ▶ Publish set-aside priorities, funding envelopes, eligibility requirements, selection processes, awards and results in accessible formats.

Advocacy Ask 2: Create Catalytic Funding Windows

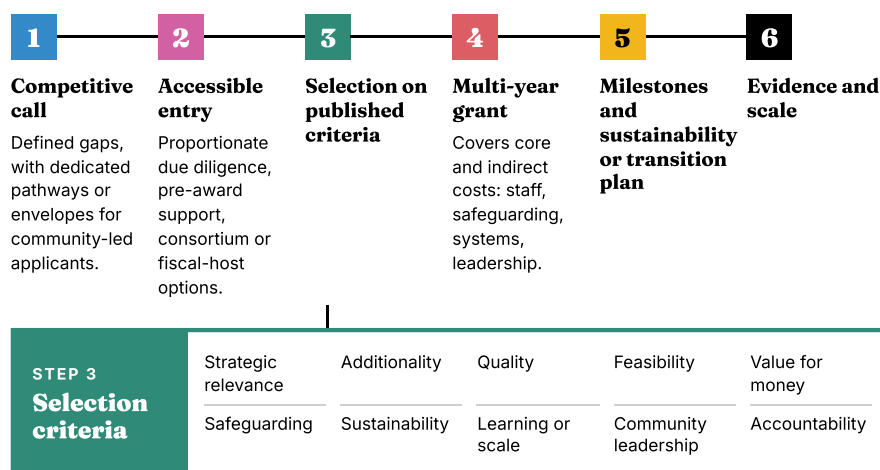
Drawing on L'Initiative's experience, catalytic project-based funding can address financing gaps that conventional technical assistance cannot readily fill. It can finance community-identified priorities, strengthen community-led networks and organizations as durable institutions, test and scale innovative approaches, generate evidence for wider adoption, support key, criminalized and marginalized communities, and mobilize expertise across communities, national programs, research institutions, civil society and the private sector while preserving community leadership and decision-making authority.

What this looks like in practice

Set-asides should create transparent, competitive, multi-year funding windows for qualified community-led networks and organizations to address priorities, strengthen sustainability, test innovation and generate evidence beyond conventional technical assistance.

- ▶ Issue competitive calls for defined gaps, including community priorities, with dedicated pathways, funding envelopes or selection incentives that secure awards for qualified community-led applicants.
- ▶ Prioritize scalable, sustainable projects with measurable community and health-system benefits, including integration, key and vulnerable populations, and operational research, with human rights and gender equality embedded throughout.
- ▶ Provide grants of sufficient scale and duration to deliver results and strengthen organizations, covering core and indirect costs, staff, safeguarding, systems and leadership, with realistic milestones and sustainability or transition plans.
- ▶ Publish criteria covering strategic relevance, additionality, quality, feasibility, value for money, safeguarding, sustainability and learning or scale, alongside community leadership, accountability and the distribution of funding and decision-making.
- ▶ Use proportionate eligibility and due diligence, accessible materials and pre-award support. Permit consortium or fiscal-host arrangements so qualified local and community-led organizations can compete without weakening fiduciary standards.

The Grant Lifecycle



Across both reforms, donors should define expected results and publish funding decisions, including the value and proportion awarded directly and indirectly to community-led networks and organizations. Monitoring should track effects on grant development and implementation, equitable access, community leadership, organizational sustainability and learning. Proportionate reporting and shared evidence should guide future set-aside priorities and demonstrate effectiveness, equity and value for money.

Why These Reforms Improve Set-Aside Performance

Enhance the performance of set-aside mechanisms

These reforms would improve set-aside performance by combining technical and institutional support with investment in community systems. Community-led technical assistance can make health-system development more responsive to gender, equity and the needs of key, criminalized and marginalized communities, while helping grants reduce stigma, discrimination and other barriers to access.

Complement L'Initiative's project-based model

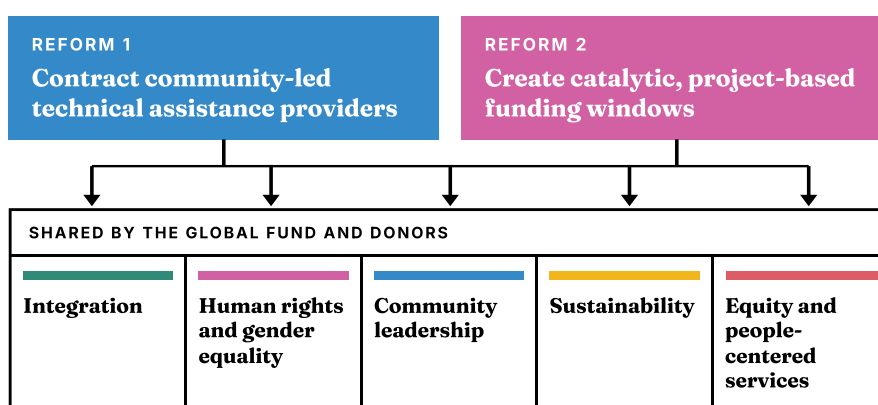
Adapting L'Initiative's model could expand direct, equitable funding for community-led networks and organizations while supporting community and health systems, marginalized communities and operational research.

Align with Global Fund strategy and donor priorities

The reforms reinforce commitments to:

- ▶ Integration;
- ▶ Human rights and gender equality;
- ▶ Community leadership;
- ▶ Sustainability; and
- ▶ Equity and people-centered services.

Delivering on Shared Commitments



Conclusion

Grant Cycle 8 is an opportunity to build on mechanisms such as BACKUP, L'Initiative and DFAT by directly contracting community-led technical assistance providers, funding community-identified projects, and investing in community-led organizational capacity. These reforms would improve grant quality, equitable access, transition and sustainability while enabling communities to shape and lead the responses that affect their lives.

Donors should use set-asides to fund community-led networks and organizations as technical assistance providers, project leads and accountable partners. Direct contracting, catalytic funding and organizational investment would improve effectiveness, value for money, equity and sustainability while enabling communities to shape the responses that affect their lives.

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