



YKP AND CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN THE GLOBAL FUND COVID-19 RESPONSE MECHANISM IN MONGOLIA

CASE STUDY
2021



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Glossary

AIDS- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
C19RM- the COVID-19 Response Mechanism
CCM- Country Coordinating Mechanism
CSO- Civil Society Organization
GF- The Global Fund
HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDU- Injecting Drug User
KAP- Key Affected Population
MDR- Multidrug resistant
MOH- Ministry of Health
MSM- Men Who Have Sex with Men
NGO- Non- Governmental Organization
PLHIV- People Who Live With HIV
PPE- Personal Protective Equipment
PrEP- Pre-exposure prophylaxis
SW- Sex Worker
SARS-CoV-2- Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
TB- Tuberculosis
TG- Transgender
WHO- World Health Organization
YKP- Young Key Population
YOUTH LEAD - Youth Leadership, Education, Advocacy, Development
YPLHIV- Young People Who Live With HIV
YLM- Youth LEAD Mongolia

Introduction

The Global Fund COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM) supports countries to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on programs to fight HIV, TB and Malaria and initiates urgent improvements in health and community systems. In 2021, The Global Fund invests for actions to reinforce the response to COVID-19; COVID-19 related adaptations of programs to fight HIV, TB and malaria; strengthening health and community systems.

Youth LEAD (YL), the Asia-Pacific network for young key populations (YKPs), was granted to support young people's meaningful engagement in the C19RM funding request development process and involve YKPs at the country-level discussions of C19RM across the region. Youth LEAD Mongolia (YLM) is one of the sub-grantees that has received support. The Global Fund processes are complex, especially for young people. However, YLM managed to conduct a community consultation for C19RM, assessment amongst 103 YKPs, and successfully include community priorities in the C19RM funding request of Mongolia in just four weeks. Mongolia's approved full funding request to the C19RM met (mostly) the needs of YKP focused civil society organizations and stakeholders. This was the only community engagement for C19RM and served community priorities to the CCM by involving diverse stakeholders. It was also the first-time young people led all national-level organizations, hosted and submitted the consultation report, and presented it to the CCM.

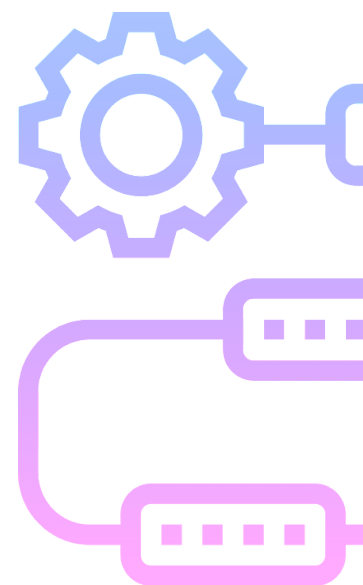
This case study reflects documentation on how C19RM involves young key populations in Mongolia and other KAP networks in the funding request process and how to ensure effective participation in the future. The case study will meet the following objectives:

- Discussion between CSOs and YKPs on critical issues regarding the pandemic and HIV programs, how they were reflected in the C19RM funding request and how to meaningfully engage YKPs and KPs in the future.
- Deeper insight and understanding of the critical issues and their inclusion in the C19RM.
- Contribution to the future involvement of the YKPs and CSOs.
- Formulate recommendations to the decision-making bodies for ensuring the meaningful engagement of YKPs and youth-led CSOs.

[1] <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/covid-19/response-mechanism/>

Methodology

This case study has narrated the events and actions towards the engagement, at the Global Fund COVID-19 Response Mechanism, in chronological order from the 11th of September, 2021 to the 1st of November, 2021, employing qualitative design. The supportive processes were documented retrospectively to provide the basis of the engagement. The data was collected through literature review and key informant interviews. A total of seven stakeholders were interviewed as key informants. They included the Technical Working Group secretary on the C19RM funding request, Secretariat Coordinator of the CCM, a CCM member, the director of the MSM Community NGO, an outreach worker, and young key population representatives.



The case study presents a thread of actions starting from the engagement of YLM in the C19RM, preparation, contacting stakeholders, advocacy work and support from partners, and the outcomes. The interviews were transcribed for analysis, and key information was extracted based on selected themes. The results are presented using quotations from the interviews to substantiate the argument and the description.



Overview

HIV and Tuberculosis Epidemic and programs in Mongolia

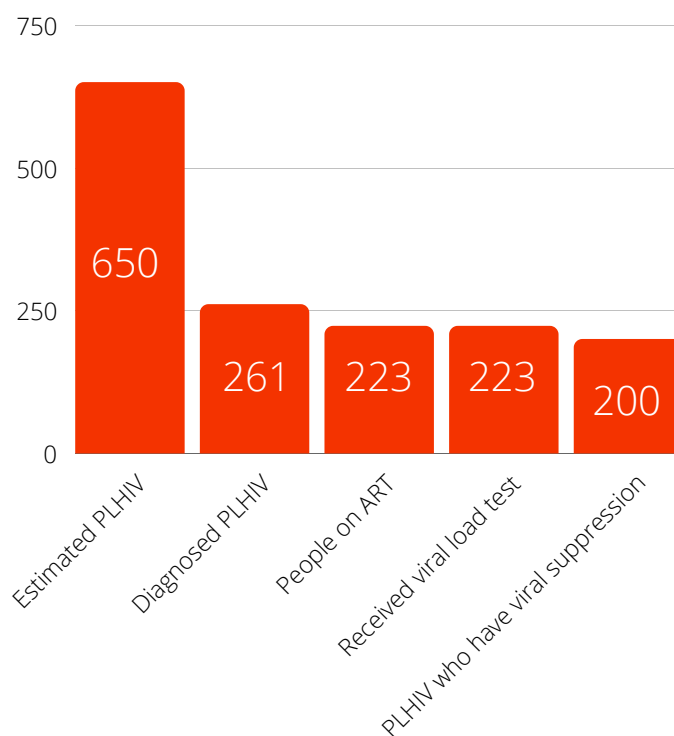
The 2021 renewed statistics in the AIDS data hub revealed an estimated 650 PLHIV and <100 new HIV infections. HIV prevalence among the MSM population is 7.7% nationally and in the Darkhan area, 16.7%. The testing figures are as follows: MSM (81%) and FSW (69%).

Mongolia is one of the seven countries in the WHO Western Pacific Region with the highest TB prevalence and mortality of 37 member countries. TB is the third most common infectious disease in Mongolia and the number one cause of death. As of 2020, the total population of Mongolia is 3,357,542, more than 20% are in the age group 15-29. . In addition, 70% of new TB cases are among young people aged 16-44, which is alarming.

The Global Fund in Mongolia

Since 2003, the Global Fund has been supporting Mongolia's national strategic plans, including HIV / AIDS, TB prevention, and access to treatment and care, as well as monitoring. Currently, the Ministry of Health manages GF-supported HIV and TB projects as the Principal Recipient, implemented by 12 sub-recipients and two sub-sub-recipients. The national HIV response fund comprises 54% international (The Global Fund) and 46% domestic sources.

Cumulative cross-sectional cascade for HIV treatment and care, Mongolia, 2020



HIV/AIDS project

Program title: Maintaining HIV low prevalence in Mongolia through the National Prevention, Care, Treatment and Support Program on HIV/AIDS.

Goals: To diminish the HIV prevalence among Key Affected Populations (KAP) and prevent the spread of the epidemics among the general population by scaling up KAP friendly STI, HIV and AIDS treatment, care, and services.

The main direction of activities:

- Prevention programs for Men Who have Sex with Men (MSM), Transgender, Female Sex Workers (FSW), Injecting Drug Users (IDU)
- Programs for the general population and vulnerable groups (adolescents, youth, prisoners, soldiers, police)
- Improving the quality and accessibility of HIV and AIDS care
- Ensure multi-sectoral participation in HIV and AIDS response and create a legal environment
- Research, monitoring, assessment
- Program management

TB project

Program title: Improving quality and access to TB services by supporting early case detection; integrated patient care and prevention; addressing the threats DR-TB

Goals: To improve the treatment success rate up to 90% and TB related mortality by 30% compared to 2015 by the end of 2020.

The main direction of activities: .

- Module TB care and prevention
- Module TB/HIV
- Module MDR-TB
- Program management
- Policy and governance

[2]<https://www.aidsdatahub.org/country-profiles/mongolia>

[3]https://www.1212.mn/tables.aspx?tbl_id=DT_NSO_0300_003V1&SEX_select_all=0&SEXSingleSelect=&AGE_GROUP5_select_all=0&AGE_GROUP5SingleSelect=_5_6_7&YearY_select_all=0&YearYSingleSelect=&viewtype=table

The Global Fund COVID-19 Response Mechanism in Mongolia

As of the 15th of November, 2021, 372,000 coronavirus infections have been reported in Mongolia since the first case reported on the 10th of March, 2020. Since the first outbreak, thousands of people have lost their jobs, incomes, and livelihoods. Due to the pandemic, 1,869 lives were lost, which is high for a small population like Mongolia. In addition, COVID's adverse effects have affected the health sector as a whole, including the loss of access to and normal functioning of HIV care.

Concerning the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide in 2019-2020, HIV and TB programs have been disrupted, and public health systems, including HIV and TB care, have been under immense stress. In response to the global pandemic, the Global Fund initiated the COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM) to support countries to mitigate the COVID impact on HIV, TB and Malaria programs and strengthen health and community systems.

C19RM fund the following areas:

- (1) COVID-19 Response;
 - (2) COVID-19 related adaptation of programs to fight HIV, tuberculosis and malaria;
 - (3) Strengthening health and community systems.
- In 2020, Mongolia was granted approximately 762,822 USD for C19RM, primarily dedicated to purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE), masks, respirators, and rapid diagnostics of COVID-19 for medical professionals.

“ Providing food and health packages to the community has a real positive impact on those in need during these challenging times. ”
- Outreach worker

Furthermore, the 2021 funding request to the Global Fund amounted to 2,085,273 USD as base allocation, which is equivalent to 15% of the total funding of the Global Fund National grant in 2021-2023.

This year, the CCM of Mongolia submitted the C19RM funding request with a base allocation of 2,085,273 USD and an above base allocation of 2,085,273 USD. After the review process, the GF fully approved the request and granted Mongolia 4,170,546 USD for C19RM.

The CCM emphasized that to qualify for full funding, it was crucial to ensure a high quality, evidence-based funding request with meaningful KP and YKP engagement elements. The CCM encouraged CSOs and human rights activists to develop the funding request actively and, if necessary, invite representatives of non-CCM members and KP or YKP from selected organizations.

The lack of engagement of YKPs in the application and decision-making process for the 2020 C19RM is partly because of time constraints and the urgent necessity to purchase PPE in preparation for the pandemic. Moreover, the regional mechanism could not cooperate or assist in 2020 as quickly as in 2021.

[4] <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/covid-19/response-mechanism/>

The C19RM Full Funding Request needed to preferably include requests for funding for three priority areas according to the Grant Management division of the GF:

- COVID-19 control and containment interventions, including personal protective equipment (PPE), diagnostics, treatment, communications and other public measures as specified in WHO guidance;
- COVID-19-related risk mitigation measures for programs to fight HIV and TB including, but not limited to, support for COVID-19 interventions needed to implement campaigns safely, community and health facility-level HIV, TB and malaria programs;
- Expanded reinforcement of crucial aspects of health and community systems, such as national laboratory networks, supply chains, and community-led responses, to address advocacy, services, accountability, and human-rights based approaches.

“

There is a need to increase activities and funding for KPs. In addition to preventing COVID-19 infection, The Global Fund should also consider the socio-economic needs of YKPs at risk.

- YKP representative

”

Recognizing the CCM's encouragement, YLM held a YKP, CSO consultation on the C19RM funding request with financial and technical assistance from their regional partner, Youth LEAD. This was YLM's first consultation leading other adult and more experienced organizations, SRs and other stakeholders working with KP and KP.

In the overall endeavor of developing a full funding request, relevant staff from the Mongolian Ministry of Health, the technical working group, HIV and TB specialists, and CSO stakeholders worked hard to formulate and apply for funding in a short period. The request for funding from Mongolia was well-rounded, high-quality, and most importantly, it involved young key populations and KPs in a meaningful way. Eventually, The Global Fund approved a comprehensive funding request thanks to the various parties involved.

“

At the national level, there is a community-based approach to HIV, and NGOs are an essential part of it. It is noteworthy that the C19RM in Mongolia has been approved with additional funding on top of the allocated amount. The C19RM makes up for the shortcomings in the national response caused by the pandemic. The CCM is pleased to collaborate with youth organizations such as YLM.

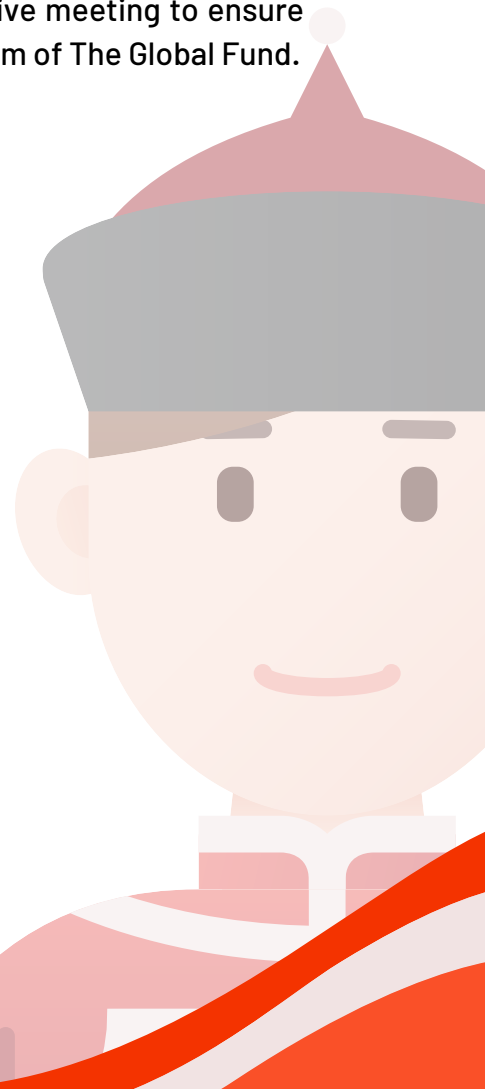
- CCM Secretariat coordinator

”

Young Key Populations and Civil Society participation in C19RM

Youth LEAD Mongolia (YLM), the only national YKP network in Mongolia, spearheaded the YKP engagement in the C19RM proposal process. As soon as YLM was informed about the C19RM, the youth organization quickly took action. Youth LEAD financial and technical support was crucial to have tangible activities for meaningful engagement. Youth LEAD Mongolia contacted various stakeholders about holding a consultative meeting to ensure the meaningful engagement of YKP and CSOs in the C19RM mechanism of The Global Fund.

For the last few years, Mongolia's CCM has been increasingly accessible and open to collaboration, especially with youth NGOs such as YLM. Following the trend, in May 2021, the CCM responded positively to the YLM initiative to engage communities, including YKPs, in the C19RM process. After reaching out to all stakeholders and the CCM, YLM organized activities to identify the KP and YKP key priorities and issues. Firstly, YLM organized a C19RM joint consultation with YKPs and CSOs on the 5th of May, 2021, through online platforms such as Zoom due to the COVID lockdown. The consultation was crucial in ensuring the meaningful participation of civil society, key affected communities, and YKPs before the C19RM project proposal finalization. To include YKP priorities in C19RM, YLM accomplished communicating and coordinating the consultation, conducting in-depth interviews and developing YKP infographics.



“

Mental health is a big issue among PLHIV, and it was not possible to talk to doctors and social workers like normal times. We cannot disclose our status to just anyone, so we need a specially trained psychologist.

- PLHIV representative

”

“

During the pandemic, NGOs working with KAPs lacked the necessary strategy and guidelines to follow in emergencies. Therefore, a strategic policy document needs to be developed.

CCM member

”

Secondly, YLM conducted five interviews with community members (YPLHIV, YTG) in a private setting due to the specific need and requests from those individuals. Secondly, YLM interviewed two TB sector experts about the current COVID-19 and TB programs and their recommendations for the funding request. Consequently, a cross-sectional survey was conducted reaching out to 103 respondents from the MSM and TG communities. The survey asked about the COVID effects on their livelihood and healthcare. YLM sent all the findings, infographics and reports to the NGOs, Mongolia's technical working group on C19RM and CCM.



Community priorities were determined in six different areas, of which five were fully reflected in the funding of C19RM in Mongolia:

01 Food and health packages including PPE (fully included in the approved funding)

Reach out to KAP vulnerable to HIV and distribute IEC materials with livelihood support for key populations who lost their jobs and facing economic difficulties during the restrictions of COVID-19, Provide livelihood support for PLHIV, including nutrition and food package, Procurement of Covid-19 rapid test kits for MSM and TG, Personal protection equipment for PLHIV (PSM)

02 Shelters (not included)

Contracting with local hostels and dormitories to establish separate temporary shelters for each KAP, such as YTG, YFSW, and YMSM; allocating shelter spots to each YKP in need.

03 Human rights advocacies (included in the approved funding)

An advocacy meeting on PrEP and self-testing/MOH, Ulaanbaatar City health department and other relevant stakeholders/, Development of digital contents for scale-up HIV testing and boost via social networks, Development of digital content (e.g., podcasts, social media, YouTube) to provide health-related information and promote general wellbeing, safe sex, HIV and other common sexually transmitted infections among KAP communities.

“

I would like to thank YLM and the CCM for organizing the consultative meeting, ensuring that the community recommendations reach the Global Fund.

YFHC NGO Executive Director

”

04 Transition to online forms of work (fully included in the approved funding)

Development of interactive training program /general population, adolescent, mobile population, pregnant women and prisoner/, Digital monitoring for PLHIV, Mobile service for HIV patients /home delivery drugs and mobile service on routine testing/, Creating a mobile application to share information among MSM including young MSM and TG, Development of a mobile PrEP app to provide virtual support (information, adherence, linkages to care) for PrEP clients, Development of interactive training program FSWs and ORWs, case managers, Improving the organization's infection control regime and service quality for FSWs community centre, Sustaining implementation of Community Based Testing/HIVST among MSM and TGW in Ulaanbaatar (Training of outreach workers and peer workers on Community based testing and HIV self -testing).

05 Psychological help (fully included in the approved funding)

Scale-up psychosocial and mental counselling for PLHIV.

As a young person, I found it extremely useful that the Global Fund approved activities such as awareness-raising content and media advocacy. That's how we can reach more YKP these days.

YLM Advisor

06 Policy documents (fully included in the approved funding)

Researching Covid-19 impacts on households among MSM, TG and PLHIV including stigma and, Improving the organization's infection control regime and service quality for MSM community centre.

”

I hope the C19RM project will help the national HIV and TB response and leave nobody behind.

“

CCM Secretariat coordinator

Youth LEAD Mongolia

SURVEY REPORT FOR COVID-19 PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON YOUNG MSM & TG

103

103 persons aged 15-34 from MSM and transgender populations participated in the survey.



77.7% of the participants identified as gay, while the figure was 17.5% for bisexual men, and 4.8% for trans women.

Have you been tested for coronavirus since January 2020?



Have you been vaccinated against coronavirus?



Has anyone around you, who is gay or bisexual, been infected by coronavirus?



If yes, how many people?

28.2% of the total participants answered yes, with most of them saying 1-3 persons (on average 2) around them got coronavirus.

— YES

— NO

Please mention the 3 major issues in your life that have emerged after COVID-19.

Finances

Mental Health Issues

WORK



Have you been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic financially in any way?



Has there ever been an instance, where a healthcare worker has refused to provide services to you based on your sexual orientation, gender identity and expression?

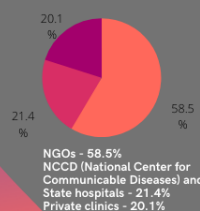


Has there been a situation, caused by the COVID-19 crisis, where you were forced to leave, got kicked out, or had to reside separately from your family home?

— YES

— NO

Out of all participants, 75% have been tested for STIs and HIV since January, 2020 and the locations include:



Is the current COVID-19 situation causing any difficulties for you to access sexual health services?



— YES

— NO

The responses from the young key populations were yes (78.6%) and no (21.4%) for the question "Is the current circumstance making it hard for you to receive services from NGOs that focus on STI and HIV?"

Infographic "Survey report for COVID-19 pandemic's impact on young MSM & TG"

- Expanding the influence of non-governmental organizations

Working in a coalition helped NGOs establish strategic long-lasting partnerships and synergy. In Mongolia, for example, it has helped various NGOs focusing on different KAPs or YKPs to collectively communicate with the Government, the Ministry of Health and the National Center for Communicable Diseases.

- Enabling efficiency regarding financial and human resources while avoiding duplication of activities

By establishing the consortium or coalition, YKP, MSM, TG, and the FSW community organizations have been able to focus and specialize on their activities, synergize their vision and goals, and have a unified voice on major projects such as C19RM. In addition, the government and the technical working group of the Ministry of Health were easily accessible with the help of the CCM. The C19RM Project allocated funding for SRs such as YFHC NGO and Perfect Ladies, partially due to the organization of the consultative meeting by YLM.

- Accessing more significant amounts of key populations and engaging them in decision-making processes

The collaboration of civil society organizations provided an opportunity to introduce the organizations to each key population, increase the scope of the joint activities, and provide realistic community input to the Global Fund through specific projects or the technical working group.

- Reaching consensus to produce a comprehensive recommendation document and monitoring the implementation

Alongside the working group, the CCM and NGOs worked closely and intensively in a short amount of time. They reflected the community recommendations in the funding proposal, which made the C19RM in 2021 special.

“

Secretary of the Ministry of Health working group on C19RM

”

The Importance of Civil Society Coalitions

During the consultation meeting, all parties reached a consensus, and YLM took all stakeholder inputs into account. The community members reviewed the draft report of the consultation meeting and expressed their satisfaction thanks to the participation of all KP-focused NGOs.

Generally, it is easier for decision-making bodies to consider multiple civil society actors as one party than to decide with whom to engage in a dialogue regarding issues concerning their communities. For example, Youth for Health Centre - YLM - Perfect ladies prepared a unified, comprehensive report to the CCM and the working group on C19RM, which saved time for all parties.

Several behavioural and other HIV/AIDS and TB surveillance surveys have been conducted in Mongolia, and based on these surveys, MSM and FSWs are considered high-risk groups. Community-based organizations focusing on MSM and FSWs have extensive scope and funding. However, the scope of other organizations working with YKPs, IDU, PLHIV (at NGO level), adolescents and youths are limited and underfunded. Therefore, since 2018, YLM has been working closely with YHFC NGO and Perfect Ladies, the largest SRs of GF, to actively involve YKP in GF activities and ensure youth are project beneficiaries.

As part of C19RM's Funding request development, holding a consultative meeting with the two organizations mentioned above and others focusing on TG, IDU, and PLHIV made the report more comprehensive and detailed to meet the needs of the KPs and YKPs. It is noteworthy that since the NGOs made the consultation report and recommendations together, there is an opportunity to participate in the implementation together as well. It is also possible to monitor the activities' performance according to the submitted recommendations and demand action, advocating for more YKPs to benefit from the project. The same CSO coalition can work as a monitoring body.

The Importance of Civil Society Coalitions

Challenges and Lessons Learned



Time constraints

After being informed about the C19RM by Youth LEAD and the need to reflect community priorities in the funding request, YLM contacted the stakeholders and organized the dialogue within a week. YLM organized the consultation, and the report was finished in the first week of May 2021. Then, YLM presented the finalized report of community priorities at the meeting of the working group on the 11th of May, 2021. Plenty of time needs to be provided for YKP and other stakeholders to meaningfully engage in the decision-making processes not limited to the C19RM. Notifying the stakeholders in advance without the time pressure would help involve everyone and leave nobody behind.

Reaching YKPs during the pandemic circumstances



During the periods of country-wide lockdown in Mongolia, community organizations were working remotely, and the community members were unable to visit their NGOs or gather in person. While there was an ongoing lockdown during the time of funding request development, collecting data and community feedback or comments in a short period and receiving feedback on the final draft of the recommendation was a challenge.



Seeing the C19RM approved funding was quite empowering because we have successfully reflected the community priorities as a CSO collective. The activities are now making a beneficial impact on YKPs and KAPs.


YLM NGO National Coordinator



Lockdowns and online consultative meeting

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Sustainable monitoring system and the engagement of YKP in the activities of the Global Fund



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Joining forces as CSOs

Partner organizations of YLM, such as Youth for Health Center, Perfect Ladies NGO, promptly responded to YLM's invitation despite the short notice and actively participated in the dialogue with their staff members. Having recommendations from different KP organizations and community members was essential to address the needs of all stakeholders. A civil society coalition led by a youth organization made a more substantial impact and allowed for greater inclusiveness. Furthermore, communicating with the CCM and the MOH working group on C19RM on behalf of the civil society organizations as a collective had more influence on the funding request development process.

Conclusion

Recommendations

1 Mongolia is considered to be a country with low HIV prevalence. However, there is a need to listen to the real needs and opinions of the key populations, especially YKPs, to involve them in the decision-making process and implementing projects and programs. YLM was well engaged in the 2021 proposal development of C19RM through consultative meetings thanks to prompt notification by the regional partner, Youth LEAD. There is a need to establish a particular mechanism to involve YKPs and other civil society organizations in future activities intended to ensure meaningful participation in GF projects and programs. The CCM, GF, can be tasked with providing funds to ensure engagement and allow for sufficient preparation time.

2 It is crucial to create a comfortable, safe environment to discuss the actual situation of the community members and stakeholders when organizing a community consultative meeting. Avoid inviting government/state officials or those who might hinder the community members' ability to discuss their issues openly. Delegate organizing and moderating the consultative meeting to YKPs, CSOs, community members or stakeholders.

3 Present recommendations and reports from community consultation meetings to as many decision-making meetings as possible.

Recommendations

4

The CCM and the team responsible for the work need to frequently inform the community members, YKPs and civil society organizations about the project results and the proportion of community priorities in the final approved funding.

The CCM, CSOs and YLM worked hard, which allowed our community priorities to be included (in the proposal) in a detailed way. As we advance, we need to ensure the participation of KPs from rural areas in Mongolia.

CCM member

5

In the future, the requests and feedback of the community need to be directly and indirectly (through youth-led CSOs) conveyed without any difficulty.

6

Support youth-led CSOs to influence decision making not limited to the GF but local public health policies or transition plans.

This will help ensure that the actual need of various stakeholders is reflected in the policies of the government and the ministry in charge of the future HIV response, making it easier to meet the criteria for international donors.



For more information

