

## SEVENTEENTH INVESTORS GROUP MEETING REPORT

The Investors Group (IG) of the Global Financing Facility (GFF) Secretariat convened a meeting November 29–30, 2023, in Nairobi, Kenya. This report presents key points of discussion and outcomes.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND DECISION POINTS

- The Investors Group (IG) approved the sixteenth Investors Group (IG16) meeting report.
- Representatives from the government on Kenya presented the country’s progress with RMNCAH-N interventions and resulting declines in child mortality rates. They discussed the second-round financing from the GFF which will complement ongoing GFF investments, helping to strengthen social protection and economic empowerment efforts for girls and young women.

Key decisions taken:

- Endorsement of an annual review of the GFF’s KPIs following the first baseline presentation since their adoption in July 2023.
- Agreement to have a standing agenda item on the global alignment agenda including follow up to the Lusaka agenda.
- Update on the GFF evaluation including the objectives and composition of the dedicated Steering Committee. Endorsement for the IG to serve as a reference group for the GFF evaluation process.
- Stock tacking on SRHR and endorsement of the approach paper with a request to have SRHR as a standing agenda item.
- Endorsement of a proposed review process for updating the GFF’s engagement with the private sector.
- Endorsement of a proposal to develop a climate and health approach for the GFF, to be integrated into the GFF strategy under the guidance of the IG.

### DAY 1

#### OPENING

Civil society representatives Maziko Matemba and Oyeyemi Pitan presented a read out from the pre-IG Civil Society Coordinating Group (CSCG) workshop that had taken place over the previous two days. The workshop featured rich discussions among CSCG partners, and civil society organization (CSO) and youth-led organization (YLO) constituencies co-developed and endorsed key principles for meaningful civil society engagements and action plans. They shared the ambition that by the end of 2024 all countries' multistakeholder platforms will have meaningful and consistent CSO/YLO engagement, that all new investment cases (ICs) and those under revision mainstream gender and gender equity, that communities and civil society are represented in governance and decision-making structures with a permanent role and equal voting, and lastly, that the Global Youth Platform become a data-driven advocacy unit with representatives in the 36 GFF countries. Civil society also acknowledged the GFF host project, which to date has awarded 51 CSOs and youth partners with grants up to US\$ 2.7 million in 28 GFF countries. They also noted that the GFF partnership has supported CSOs and youth in 20 countries in fulfilling the GFF global strategy on health financing through the Joint Learning Agenda (JLA).

## KENYA SPOTLIGHT

The honorable Cabinet Secretary (CS) for Health, Dr. Susan Nakhumicha provided opening remarks and was joined by the director general (DG) from the Ministry of Health, Dr. Patrick Amoth. They shared the progress Kenya has made as a front-runner country since joining the GFF in 2015. The GFF and World Bank co-financed the Transforming Health Systems for Universal Coverage (THS-UC) project, with US\$150 million IDA and US\$40 million from the GFF multi-donor trust fund (MDTF). The project supported the financing of county level plans using a performance-oriented approach, including eligibility criteria of minimum and increasing allocations from county budgets to health. Since 2014, Kenya has made substantial progress in increasing the coverage of high-priority RMNCAH-N interventions and resulting declines in child mortality rates, as well as in closing gaps in modern contraceptive use between urban and rural areas. However, regional disparities have persisted in some areas—and are particularly acute for childhood immunization, where up to 45,000 zero-dose children are missed annually. Similarly, newborn and maternal mortality remain pressing issues—with no significant decrease between 2014 and 2022—calling for a strengthened focus on quality in the years ahead.

Going forward, a continued focus on the coverage and quality of critical RMNCAH-N interventions, on primary health care (PHC) systems, including community health promoters, is needed to manage the growing burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), close socioeconomic inequities, and close infrastructure gaps, while strengthening human resources for health (HRH) and essential health supplies. This is supported by recent legislation aimed at strengthening the financing architecture for PHC. Additionally, discussions are underway on second-round financing from the GFF alongside International Development Association (IDA) funding, which will complement ongoing investments by the GFF, helping to strengthen social protection and economic empowerment efforts for girls and young women.

### **The Investors Group expressed the following feedback:**

- IG members applauded the government of Kenya for its efforts, including its success navigating the devolution process in the health sector and maintaining momentum on RMNCAH-N.
- Members also acknowledged the disconnect between positive changes in intervention coverage and the slow progress in the maternal mortality rate (MMR) and newborn mortality rate (NMR) and supported Kenya’s forward-looking focus on improving quality of care and further strengthening preventative and promotive health at the community level.
- The group encouraged countries to share experiences and lessons learned given the collective challenge of delivering high-quality services at scale.
- Members also expressed a particular interest in Kenya further sharing its experience navigating the fiscal and governance decentralization in the health sector, a process that some other countries are also undertaking.
- Finally, members acknowledged that many residual challenges are closely linked to resource availability, and here the group applauded the support of the government of Kenya to the health sector and to ongoing health financing reforms.

**Decision:** This session was for discussion; no decision taken.

## STOCKTAKING ON THE GFF STRATEGY

Secretariat update since the last IG:

Mr. Luc Laviolette, Head of the GFF Secretariat, spoke about the governance road map, plans for upcoming meetings, timelines for alternates and principals' meetings, and opportunities to identify topics for upcoming meetings. He shared reflections on the pre-IG Civil Society Workshop, highlighting the positive progress in GFF's collaboration with civil society, including through financing and interventions, which is a critical component of the GFF model. He also acknowledged the need to expand and further structure CSO engagement in the GFF-supported process. And he shared second round financing approval for five countries.

Mr. Laviolette provided updates on the following staffing changes within the Secretariat, with the goal to strengthen RMNCH expertise as well as to deepen collaboration with partners through secondee options, as follows:

- Announcement of a new lead for resource mapping and expenditure tracking (RMET).
- Introduction of a secondee from the German government focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
- A new member will join to enhance capacity for rapid-cycle monitoring through the FASTR program.
- A lawyer specializing in gender-related legal reforms is joining to strengthen the gender team.
- Other new appointments include a nutrition lead, specialists in SRHR, maternal and neonatal health, financial management and budget, HRH, and supply chain.
- The Secretariat is funding 6 out of 12 gender fellows focusing on SRHR to enhance capacity within World Bank country teams, and technical support to develop the gender strategy for the World Bank (there is no expected growth in staffing besides the usual rotations within the World Bank).

On partnership, Mr. Laviolette updated on a number of ongoing technical and strategic collaborations, including with: the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the private sector on innovation; the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on CRVS and commodities; Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund through the FGHI process, Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH) on adolescents' advocacy; and the World Bank on service delivery and HF, among others.

## **PORTFOLIO RESULTS**

The GFF Secretariat, provided an update on the GFF portfolio results as follows:

- GFF countries are showing stronger results compared to non-GFF countries.
- Two-thirds of maternal deaths still occur in GFF supported countries, with seven countries in the top 10 for worst MMR ratio.
- There has been a positive trend in institutional deliveries, although challenges remain with the quality, comprehensiveness, and continuity of care.
- Stillbirths and neonatal deaths continue to be a significant challenge, reflecting a need for increased efforts in these areas.
- Adolescent well-being remains a major issue, with persistent challenges that need to be addressed.
- The adolescent birth rate has seen a median reduction in GFF countries, but the rates are still very high in many areas, underscoring the critical need to address gender barriers and improve SRHR services for youth.

Mr. Laviolette presented progress for the first time against the new KPIs, and shared some of the early analyses. Positive results emerged including in country platform management, CSO engagement and the reform agenda. He also outlined areas for improvement related to recent engagements, including on gender and equity. And he highlighted the need to refine some cascade-related topics such as domestic resource mobilization (DRM),

private sector engagement, and to unpack the KPI for specific country groupings including countries facing fragility, conflict and violence (FCV), with a tailored approach in collaboration with the World Bank. These will help to monitor the GFF strategy's effectiveness rather than country-level results, refine its approach over the next two years and inform the next strategy.

**The Investors Group expressed the following feedback:**

- IG members emphasized the need for a more comprehensive analysis of the KPIs.
- Partners suggested a deeper dive into country results to better understand the impact of GFF's funding, as questions remain around the GFF's "contribution" versus "attribution."
- Partners voiced implementation challenges at the country level and the importance of strengthening alignment and working across sectors. Several opportunities for collaboration were highlighted at the PHC level on zero-dose and human papillomavirus (HPV) initiatives, as was the added value of the GFF in facilitating these collaborations.
- Partners stressed the importance of differentiated approaches in countries affected by FCV, and in humanitarian contexts.
- They underlined the need to improve and mainstream gender indicators across all strategic directions, and to be more deliberate about including country voices, particularly civil society, youth and women-led organizations. This should be reflected in the country platforms, and throughout the entire process, from planning to implementation.
- Partners voiced the need for more clarity on the GFF's co-financing, technical support, and analytical work in each country to be able to support a greater partnership effort through complementary activities.
- Partners requested more data on DRM, further clarity and explanation on the IDA leverage effect for additional RMNCAH-N funding, and the relationship between the increase of IDA funding in countries and domestic investments in health. This would help partners better explain the GFF value-add.

**SECRETARIAT RESPONSE**

- The results presented entail baseline data / aggregation of country outputs, resulting from support of GFF TA and co-financing inputs.
- The intention is to accelerate investments in gender, using the gender action plan as a basis as well as enhanced collaboration with Gavi and the Global Fund (especially around the zero-dose agenda) and the integration of social protection measures, particularly cash transfer programs, in collaboration with the World Bank.
- Recognizing the previous gap in CSO engagement, ongoing progress was noted in the GFF collaboration with youth and exploring opportunities and thematic analysis on youth involvement. Lessons learned from country platforms will inform broader analyses.
- A deep dive into FCV contexts is planned, to help shape differentiated approaches and effective resource allocation in these settings.
- The Secretariat aims to use co-financing as a catalyst, with plans to increase technical assistance (TA) over time and link the TA portfolio to KPIs for more effective outcomes.
- Work on health financing continues, with more time required to finalize the indicators.
- Finally, work is ongoing on implementation research to understand causal pathways, with the upcoming independent evaluation expected to provide insights for better support allocation.

**Decision:** The IG endorsed the KPIs and suggested an annual review of their implementation.

**Action:**

The GFF will share an updated note to present the latest data on IDA analyses and results, with additional information about financing volumes. The following items will be discussed at the next IG as part of GFF strategy update:

- Gender KPIs—including segmentation
- Civil society involvement
- DRM and health financing

## GLOBAL ALIGNMENT AGENDA AND COUNTRY IMPACT

Anna Seymour, senior health advisor at the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), and cochair of the Commitments Task Team for the Future for Global Health Initiatives (FGHI), presented the FGHI process and the Lusaka Agenda document, signed by the FGHI co-chairs (Kenya and Norway) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day on December 12. Consensus between the six targeted GHIs—the Global Fund, Gavi, the GFF, Unitaid, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), and the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) as well as partner and donor countries—was reached with a focus on five key shifts for the long-term evolution of global health initiatives (GHIs). This should lead to One Plan, One Budget, One Report in the end—and putting countries in the driver’s seat. The whole FGHI process aims to provide a foundation for coordinated action and to build on existing work, to ensure a path towards a long-term vision of domestically financing health systems and UHC.

The five key shifts rely on the following:

- Making a stronger contribution to primary health care by effectively strengthening systems for health.
- Playing a transformative role towards sustainable, domestically financed health services and public health functions.
- Strengthening joint approaches for achieving equity in health outcomes.
- Achieving strategic and operational coherence across GHIs.
- Coordinating approaches to products, research and development (R&D) and regional manufacturing to address market and policy failures in global health.

The GFF, GF and Gavi also updated the IG on the recent leadership discussion to develop a joint roadmap in support of the FGHI process, building on existing collaboration. They highlighted that alignment and collaboration have been ongoing across agencies at country level, providing important lessons and a way forward to strengthen this alignment agenda further.

**The Investors Group expressed the following feedback:**

- The IG highlighted the importance of country ownership/leadership and accountability—and welcomed the ongoing alignment process supported by the GFF in countries, as well as the updated collaboration agenda.
- IG members acknowledged the impact of the three main GHIs (Global Fund, Gavi and the GFF) as the key enablers for the alignment agenda in countries and stressed the need to further accelerate joint approaches in countries.
- Partners welcomed the update from the GFF Secretariat about the demand from additional countries to implement the GFF supported alignment framework and leverage existing tools such as RMET.
- Partners called for strengthening the existing collaborations between GHIs, ensuring a granular approach in countries with different contexts, and to ensure better strategic and operational coherence.

- All members acknowledged that additional support to implement the alignment agenda and avoid fragmentations is needed across all stakeholders.
- Some members also shared community feedback on the potential risk of using only government systems and that direct support to CSO/CBOs is needed to ensure that key populations are reaching services. It was also noted that while GHI should collaborate further, the specific focus and mission of each organization should not be diluted.
- Partners also agreed that the process should go beyond the targeted GHIs and include other essential health stakeholders such as the United Nations, WB and bilateral agencies.
- Finally, they stressed the importance of alignment at country and global levels as well as within GHIs processes to be more efficient; and acknowledged that the IG could be a good platform to further discuss the alignment agenda and the follow up to the Lusaka agenda.

**Decision:** This session was for guidance; no decision taken.

**Action:**

- The GFF will continue to work with the other GHIs to advance the alignment agenda.
- The IG requested that the GHIs alignment subject remains a standing IG agenda item.

## GFF EVALUATION

At the fifteenth IG meeting (IG15) held in Accra, Ghana, in 2022, the IG endorsed the creation of a dedicated Steering Committee to guide the Trust Fund Committee (TFC) commissioned GFF evaluation process. As a follow up, the GFF Secretariat delivered a presentation on the launch of the GFF evaluation with the kickoff of the steering committee meeting. The Secretariat explained that the Steering Committee for the evaluation is made up of TFC donors and country partners, including civil society and a results advisory group member. The goal of the steering committee is to ensure quality, relevance and independence with multistakeholder representation, prioritize subtopics to explore, review and approve terms of reference (TORs), inception and draft reports, provide oversight of the evaluation, and recommend to the TFC acceptance of the final evaluation report. The timeline includes a presentation of the final evaluation report to the IG in November 2024.

As co-chair of the Steering Committee, the representative from Global Affairs Canada noted that being the first independent evaluation of the GFF, this provides a good opportunity to assess progress, impact, and functioning of the partnership. Canada also commented that the Steering Committee should help to shape the evaluation of GFF processes and its value-add and results. Sierra Leone, also co-chair of the Steering Committee, emphasized their commitment to ensure the process is successful.

**Decision:** This session was for information; no decision taken.

## SRHR IN THE GFF STRATEGY

The GFF Secretariat presented the updated SRHR approach paper. This update was based on feedback provided at IG15 and 16, and from a deep-dive consultation undertaken with a Technical Advisory Group. The GFF outlined five investment areas that reflect GFF's comparative advantage to strengthen access to SRHR interventions while supporting countries with broader efforts to achieve UHC. The five areas are: (i) convening GFF partners and civil society organizations to advance global alignment efforts and joint agenda on SRHR; (ii) legal and policy reforms; (iii) availability and quality of SRHR services; (iv) result-linked financing instruments for SRHR; (v) strengthen monitoring and data use for improved learning and accountability for SRHR.

Partners expressed the following feedback:

- While the updated paper clarifies that the GFF, at the global level, recognizes the Lancet–Guttmacher Commission definition of SRHR, it is key to also recognize that support remains responsive to country contexts and priorities.
- Representatives supported the effort to expand the focus to improve maternal and newborn health outcomes and broaden the scope of work on improving availability of high-quality products.
- The approach on SRHR received strong endorsement from various government representatives, given the critical role that improved SRHR outcomes play in the broader human capital agenda.
- The representative from UNFPA provided an overview of the complementarity of the GFF SRHR agenda with UNFPA’s work in this area, and the increased collaboration with the UNFPA Supplies Program.
- IG members supported that the approach paper would act as the operational plan for delivering on the targets set during the development of the SRHR Acceleration Plan. They further requested that such targets be reflected into the KPIs.
- Members also requested to continue engaging through deep dive discussions as well as by making SRHR a standing item of the IG agenda.

**Decision:** The IG endorsed the SRHR approach paper.

**Action:**

- Conduct future deep dives based on countries’ experiences of leveraging the GFF engagement to advance SRHR.
- GFF commits to further develop KPIs to ensure appropriate reporting on the approach paper and the Acceleration Plan.
- A standing agenda on SRHR will be established for future IG meetings, to keep the IG updated on partnerships and progress in this area.

## DAY TWO

### GFF PRIVATE SECTOR STRATEGY

The GFF Secretariat presented an update on the private sector as part of the current GFF strategy. The session included a discussion on stocktaking and lessons learned and the forward look for the GFF partnership approach to private sector engagement. IG members were asked to provide feedback on the proposed process for refining the GFF approach to private sector engagement, and to reflect on the priorities areas, current gaps and opportunities for strengthening support to countries, and lastly on challenges.

**The Investors Group expressed the following feedback:**

- IG members offered their full support to the consultative sessions for strengthening private sector engagements as part of the current strategy, and looked forward to being part of those discussions.
- The CSO constituency appreciated that the GFF is taking a cautious approach, recognizing the benefits and risks of engaging with the private sector in health, and the need to consider specific country contexts. CSOs agreed private sector engagement should be strategic and expressed their full commitment to help strengthen private sector engagements.
- The private sector constituency appreciated the comprehensive paper and recognized all the work to enhance engagement with the private sector.

- IG members further noted that the GFF has supported private sector assessments and private/public sector dialogue for ICs, as requested by countries. They suggested it would be helpful to understand any changes resulting from these dialogues and potential impact on women’s and children’s health. The Côte d’Ivoire case study offers a good illustration of impact.
- Members recommended a strategic decision be made whether the GFF private sector engagement should be “broad and shallow” or more focused (smaller set of countries supported, fewer priority areas within RMNCAH-N) to achieve greater results. It was suggested that the future strategy could “double down” to drive more impact and showcase the importance and need for private and public sector integration.
- It was suggested that the GFF identify low hanging fruit, for example to look at government policies for outsourcing to the private sector. Here, market dynamics must be examined and how interventions can impact the private sector’s effectiveness. Guidance for governments on how to engage with the private sector would be helpful, to facilitate the private sector’s support to national plans and help leverage the private sector’s potential to support the entire network of care.
- The IG stressed that equity and quality will always be challenging within private sector engagement activities, and that a realistic approach is needed. They agreed on a targeted country approach, and called for greater understanding of what other partners are doing to ensure the GFF is adding value.
- IG members also noted that equitable access to high quality commodities, and how they are reaching patients, is key to guiding government reforms. Commodity mapping in all GFF countries will be important, while political factors also need to be closely examined.
- The discussion also highlighted the fact that high out-of-pocket payment in the face of low government spending on health continues to be a challenge, and the need to highlight key examples addressing this that could be scaled/replicated in other countries
- Members also requested the GFF draw on the consultative process to further define the role of innovative financing and entry points for private investors going forward, building on lessons learnt.

#### **SECRETARIAT RESPONSE**

- The GFF Secretariat agreed on the need for prioritization and that the country examples highlight what is going well and what needs adjustment.
- Thinking has evolved from the initial launch of the GFF on how to engage the private sector, and it will be important to continue that reflection into the consultative process to refine the approach moving forward.
- The Secretariat agreed on the need for a country specific/targeted approach to the private sector, and noted that new partnerships require a deliberate approach, with closer integration with governments being key.
- The consultation process will help to define whether the GFF should go broad or go deeper into a smaller subset of countries, and specific priority areas. Similarly, identification of the low hanging fruits where the GFF is optimally placed to support will be helpful.
- This work needs to consider the landscape of all partners to ensure the GFF is engaged where it is best positioned.
- A clear articulation of how the GFF support to private sector can deliver on equity goals for women, children and adolescents is needed; this can inform the targeted approach.

**Decision:** The IG endorsed the proposed review process for updating the GFF’s engagement with the private sector.



**Action:** The Secretariat will follow up on the formation of a working group, and an update on the consultative process for refining the GFF approach on private sector engagement.

## GFF CLIMATE AND HEALTH AGENDA

The GFF Secretariat shared a proposal to develop a climate and health approach for the GFF, given that climate change poses significant risks for women’s, children’s and adolescent health, and considering new entry points for collaborations and scope for leveraging GFF investments. Climate change is increasing health burdens, directly and indirectly, and affecting the delivery of and demand for health systems and services, particularly for women, children and adolescents. This, in turn, affects the delivery of GFF programs and results.

The Secretariat suggested the development of initial concepts for a climate and health approach that would be integrated into the GFF current strategy for 2021–2025. This approach will be co-developed in collaboration with investors and partners through a dedicated technical working group, with a view to presenting a first draft of the climate strategy at the IG18 meeting.

### The Investors Group expressed the following feedback:

- All IG members strongly welcomed the proposal to integrate a climate and health approach specifically for women, children and adolescents into the existing GFF strategy.
- All partners around the table acknowledged it provided a great opportunity to ensure stakeholder alignment and to develop tools bought-in by everyone from the onset (high risk of fragmentation).
- To support resilient health systems, the need to focus on an adaptation strategy and mitigation within countries was emphasized.
- The IG recognized the strategic role the GFF could play in bringing partners together, leveraging additional financing, and supporting countries to strengthen existing structures (for example, PHC) for inclusive and gender-focused approaches to address climate change consequences (for instance, through data tracking).
- IG members stressed the need to leverage the knowledge and potential for new collaborations of key IG UN and multilateral partners, as well as ensuring complementarity and joint work with the WB climate and health program.

### SECRETARIAT RESPONSE

- The Secretariat specified that the climate and health agenda for women, children and adolescents will be included as a key building block in the next strategy. As such, it will be essential to focus on the GFF comparative advantage, which lies in the systematic RMNCAH-N and SRHR focus within climate and health efforts.

**Decision:** The IG endorsed the GFF proposal to develop a climate and health strategy to be integrated into its strategy, under the guidance of the IG.

### Action:

- A dedicated working group will be created to focus on climate change adaptation with a strong gender dimension.
- A GFF approach on climate and health will be presented at the next IG for endorsement, to be part of the existing GFF strategy and serving as a basis for the development of the next GFF strategy.

### KEY CLOSING MESSAGES AND CONFIRMATION OF DECISION POINTS

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all partners including the government of Kenya for graciously hosting the meeting. Finally, the Chair summarized the key outcomes and decision points from the two-day IG meeting, as outlined in this report.

All IG meeting materials including minutes will be made available in French and English on the GFF website: <https://www.globalfinancingfacility.org/resource/seventeenth-investors-group-meeting>.