

TWELFTH INVESTORS GROUP MEETING REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND DECISION POINTS

- The Investors Group (IG) approved the Eleventh Investors Group (IG11) Meeting Report after reviewing a table of follow-up action items that had been successfully addressed and completed.
- The Investors Group endorsed the operational plan for the GFF Strategy 2021-2025 including the launch of the alignment working group pending the following:
 - GFF Secretariat will take the suggestions raised during the meeting and incorporate the amendments into the Strategic plan.
 - IG Partners will provide written comments on the TOR for the alignment working group.
 - GFF Secretariat will refine and recirculate the TOR for the alignment working group to clearly identify
 the main objective and scope of work to ensure complementarity, reduce duplication, and maximize
 impact.
- The GFF director presented an update on the GFF response to COVID-19, key milestones of the partnership, and challenges ahead.
- GFF partner countries shared their insights and experiences regarding the GFF impact on the continuity of essential healthcare services during COVID-19.
- The Investors Group discussed the GFF's resource mobilization (RM) campaign and how the GFF is engaging with stakeholders and the broader partnership to build and roll out the campaign.
- The Investors Group discussed the Generation Equality Forum and the opportunity for partners to come together to advance SRHR and gender equity as key components of the GFF agenda.

COCHAIRS' OPENING AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Global Financing Facility (GFF) Investors Group (IG)¹ held its twelfth meeting (IG12) virtually in March 2021. The Honorable Lia Tadesse, minister of health for Ethiopia, along with Josh Tabah, director general for Global Affairs Canada, opened the meeting as cochairs. Dr. Tadesse, as the newly selected country partner cochair, spoke to her vision for the role at this critical time for the GFF partnership and for the reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child, and adolescent health and nutrition (RNMCAH-N) agenda as well as the importance, opportunities, and urgency for the Investors Group to double down on commitments to the partnership, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic jeopardizing progress. The chairs emphasized the importance of gender equality and women's leadership as a key component to the success of the GFF. The cochairs welcomed all partners, new members, and

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¹ The GFF is a diverse, inclusive and results-oriented partnership encompassing a range of stakeholders and experts with varying perspectives. As such, the views expressed and language used in the report do not necessarily reflect those of some members of the partnership.

special guests, reviewed the agenda for the day, and addressed follow-up items from the previous IG meeting. The **meeting agenda (GFF-IG12-1)** was approved. The follow-up action items and meeting agenda are provided in the appendices at the end of this meeting report. These documents and additional presentations are available online at **www.globalfinancingfacility.org**.

DAY 1

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Muhammad Pate, director of the GFF Secretariat, provided an update on the GFF partnership and key milestones achieved over the past year. He explained how the GFF is helping partner countries respond to COVID-19 and how the GFF's priority is to support countries track and target disruptions to essential health services. He provided examples on how the GFF contributed to the COVID-19 response, working in close partnership with the World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), and other partners, joining the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) health systems connector, and how the GFF is preparing the first tranche of financing for COVID-19 essential services grants linked to the International Development Association (IDA). He provided examples on how the GFF is supporting partner countries, such as developing integrated country plans for COVID-19 response, supporting vaccines readiness assessments; monitoring essential health services monitoring and data analysis; utilizing resource mapping and expenditure tracking tools to help target and optimize both domestic and external financing; and identifying and removing system bottlenecks to facilitate delivery of COVID-19 vaccines and tools. Muhammad discussed the accomplishments of the GFF Secretariat to operationalize the GFF's five-year strategy endorsed last October 2020, and in response to the current health crisis and to achieve the objectives of the GFF strategy, he announced the GFF launch of the case for investing in the GFF 2021–25, geared toward the resource mobilization target of US\$2.5 billion to support GFF's work in the next five years. He urged partners to support the call for US\$1.2 billion to the GFF, which will contribute to saving 18 million lives and leverage a total of US\$52.7 billion to improve health outcomes for women, children, and adolescents by 2030.

Monique Vledder, head of Secretariat, highlighted the GFF's progress since the endorsement of the GFF strategy refresh last October. She explained that the GFF launched the Country Leadership Program, designed to support the government priorities, creating inclusive platforms on country level and ensure strong prioritized well financed country investment cases. She also announced the TFC will be discussing this week the initial allocation of six country grants for essential health services (EHS), which is linked to IDA financing to ensure financing and support for countries hit the hardest by the pandemic. Monique explained the GFF has been able to complete and finance the first co-investment with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) for primary care services in Eastern Africa, and that since the last IG meeting, the Results Advisory Group had been launched. Finally, she provided an update on senior appointments in the GFF Secretariat: Jean Paul Clark, leading country operations, Peter Hansen, leading the results group, and Dr. Amir Hagos as senior advisor supporting the Secretariat on issues around alignment and quality of country investment cases.

HOW COVID-19 IS RESHAPING HEALTH FINANCING PRIORITIES (GFF-1G12-2)

The first session of the meeting was an opportunity for the Investors Group to discuss recent analytical work on health financing and options for how GFF partner countries can adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and response. A corresponding background paper was circulated in advance of the meeting (GFF-IG12-2). Ellen van de Poel, health financing lead for the Secretariat, presented an overview of how COVID-19 is reshaping health financing priorities for GFF partner countries. She explained that when facing the double shock of the pandemic and a global recession, countries need to increase spending in order to respond to pandemic and its consequences. However,

because lower revenue and higher spending generates debt, government spending levels are projected to fall sharply in 2021. She explained that economic crisis causes both governments and households to spend less on health, and policy options have implications on the efficiency agenda along with spending on vulnerable populations and equity. GFF country representatives from the ministries of finance in Indonesia, Liberia, and Tajikistan spoke to their own experiences. They discussed that due to COVID-19, they have witnessed a loss in progress since GFF started investing, emphasizing routine child and maternal health services must continue to be prioritized. They also stressed the importance of monitoring flows in the health sector, linking payments to results, and increasing the share of resources going to health.

The Investors Group expressed the following feedback:

- Partners agreed that due to COVID-19 response and recovery, RMNCAH-N services have been largely disrupted, producing a need for renewed political commitment.
- Partners commented on safeguarding domestic investments, how a major funding gap existed pre-COVID, and how the pandemic is exacerbating these investment inequalities even further.
- Partners agreed the need for more discussion on efficiency and that more money is needed; however, the
 IG partners should push for improvements at the global level and guide countries in getting the best value.
- Partners agreed on key issues that need to be strengthened in regards to health financing, including the need to incorporate human resources for health; the opportunity to look at infection prevention and control; improving quality of care, including water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); and equity—with a focus on the most remote areas.
- Health equity in health system financing: We learned from COVID-19 that investing in health should be seen as investments, not just spending, in the future of health sectors.
- Partners agreed health budgets must be protected and expanded where possible to address vulnerable populations.

Decision: Guidance session only; no decision taken.

ONE YEAR INTO THE PANDEMIC: PROTECTING AND PROMOTING ESSENTIAL HEALTH SERVICES AS PART OF THE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY (GFF-IG12-3)

The second session of the day focused on GFF partner country efforts in promoting EHS as part of their COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. A corresponding background paper was circulated in advance of the meeting (GFF-IG12-3). Petra Vergeer, knowledge and learning lead for the Secretariat, provided an analysis of the current available data related to the impact of COVID-19 on EHS in GFF partner countries, as well as lessons learned and next steps for the GFF to support partner countries to protect and promote EHS as part of their COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Dr. Pierre Somse, minister of health of the Central African Republic (CAR), discussed how the pandemic provided an opportunity for his country to identify areas of investment in the health system to address the crisis and build resilience. He explained CAR is monitoring resources to understand how funding has been spent. CAR is also promoting health financing approaches to increase government budget for health and mobilize funding from other sources such as the private sector. Professor Charlemagne Ouédraogo, the minister of health of Burkina Faso, and Dr. Salif Sankara, director general for the Ministry of Health in Burkina Faso, shared each country's experience, highlighting the challenges in protecting essential services as part of the COVID-19 response and recovery. In addition, he outlined actions taken such as monitoring disruptions, working with partners to increase domestic and donor resources, and strengthening services in communities. Dr. Amos Mwale, civil society representative and the executive director at the Center for Reproductive Health and Education in Zambia,

discussed the important role civil society organizations (CSOs) play in partnering with the government and other stakeholders to ensure continuation of essential services, sharing challenges and opportunities for CSOs in Zambia. The Investors Group expressed the following feedback:

- Partners highlighted the importance of equity and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and welcomed the GFF's comprehensive agenda on SRHR in its new strategy, asking for amendments to make the SRHR agenda even more explicit in the strategy.
- Partners expressed the need for continuous monitoring of service disruptions and funding and suggested the SRHR agenda also include additional parameters, such as digital technology to provide services.
 Partners also inquired whether rapid monitoring has led to concrete actions to address challenges.
- Partners reiterated the importance and effectiveness of coming together under government leadership.
- Partners also inquired of how countries can strengthen engagement with the private sector and CSOs to respond to COVID-19 and strengthen health systems in the longer run.
- Partners flagged the need to address financial barriers to health services and the GFF to continue to work with the World Bank on social protection approaches.
- Partners stressed the global health community needs to invest in routine health information systems to capture disruptions, including those in SRHR services.

Decision: Guidance session only; no decision taken.

OPERATIONALIZING THE GFF STRATEGIC PLAN 2021–25 (PART 1 OF 2; GFF-IG12-4)

The objective of the last session of day one was to discuss the operationalization of the GFF strategic plan and for the Investors Group to endorse the approach. The draft operational plan was circulated in advance of the meeting (GFF-IG12-4). Muhammad Pate opened the discussion and spoke to how the strategic plan should be centered around the issue of country leadership, country ownership, and the foundation for making progress in GFF partner countries to implement their mission to achieve their outcomes for RMNCAH. He expressed his appreciation to Dr. Lia Tadesse, minister of health for Ethiopia, for agreeing to chair the alignment working group, which will examine challenges ministers of health are facing, develop and finance co-priorities for the health sector including support from key financiers and technical contributors, which is a core objective of the strategy refresh. He asked IG members to provide feedback and suggestions on how to work together to operationalize the GFF strategy and provide feedback on the terms of reference (TOR) of the alignment working group. Monique Vledder presented the key pillars of the GFF strategic plan, which had been adopted by the Investors Group during the most recent IG meeting in October 2020. Monique described the focus areas under each of the five strategic directions and how to implement the strategic direction. Josh Tabah requested members to provide feedback in terms of the operational approach the Secretariat will take on the implementation of the approved strategic plan. Members were also asked to provide feedback on the alignment working group TOR (GFF-IG12-5), which had been circulated to IG partners for consultation ahead of the meeting. The second discussion focused on the launch of the alignment working group, which, once endorsed, will be chaired by Minister Tadesse, who shared details on the working group's scope of work.

The Investors Group expressed the following feedback:

- Partners endorsed the operational plan with the caveat that the Secretariat make a few small updates as discussed during the meeting.
- Partners recognized the key role of the GFF in the alignment agenda and welcomed the leadership of Minister
 Tadesse for the working group.
- Partners expressed the importance of the language pertaining to SRHR and commitment to comprehensive in-country rollouts of SRHR services.

- Partners emphasized the importance of strategic direction 1, making sure discussions at the global level have local level implications.
- Partners raised the issue of being inclusive and reaching the most marginalized and hardest to reach communities, including representatives from the LGBTI community.
- Partners wanted to see how innovation can better reflect the strategy and private sector participation.
- Partners asked to clarify whether different scenarios depend on funding levels and the balance between capacity building and direct involvement in service delivery.
- Partners asked to clarify the role of the alignment at the GAP and ACT-A, as well as the role of the working group in ensuring alignment to the wider Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda, particularly in a phase of COVID recovery.
- Several partners raised the need to ensure the TOR disaggregates from the ACT-A and the GAP, to identify the complementary relationship between them, and ensure countries are the center of this process.
- Partners also raised the issue of technical alignment vis-a-vis financial alignment. The IG should ensure the
 investments supported are the best interventions—noting the financial cycles from different countries, in
 particular how countries, donors, and banks can align behind national financing cycles.

Decision: The Investors Group endorsed the operational plan for the GFF Strategy 2021-2025 including the launch of the alignment working group pending the below action items.

Action items:

- GFF Secretariat will take the suggestions raised during the meeting and incorporate the amendments into the Strategic plan.
- IG Partners will provide written comments on the TOR for the alignment working group.
- GFF Secretariat will refine and recirculate the TOR of the alignment working group to clearly identify the main objective and scope of work to ensure complementarity, reduce duplication, and maximize impact.

DAY 2

OPERATIONALIZING THE GFF STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-25 (PART 2 OF 2; GFF-IG12-5)

The first session of day two was a follow-on discussion from the strategy operationalization session held the previous day. Monique Vledder gave a presentation on the five-year GFF strategy with a strong focus on the country-led model and the importance of engaging partners, specifically private sector and civil society. Peter Hansen presented an overview of the GFF results strategy and how it fully integrates into the comprehensive GFF model and approach. He explained the strategy refresh process has resulted in the clear need to focus on the results agenda and the importance of monitoring data and reporting. He discussed the recent creation of the GFF results advisory group to engage GFF partners in the results agenda and serve as a sounding board to provide advice on monitoring, evaluation, research, and implementation, and also support the GFF in tracking progress. Peter introduced a panel of partners from Gavi, the Global Fund, the Minister of Health of CAR, and a member of the results advisory group, Asha George, to speak to the importance of engaging in the results agenda. Gavi's Anuradha Gupta, spoke to the importance of equity and collaboration. Marijke Wijnroks, of the Global Fund, spoke to the importance of gender responsive monitoring and the integration of resource mapping and expenditure tracking with EHS. Dr. Pierre Somse, Minister of Health from CAR, spoke to the importance of partner alignment, coordination, and allowing countries to really own the GFF operational plan to implement based on their country priorities.

After the panel of speakers, Mary-Ann Etiebet, from Merck for Mothers and representing the private sector, and Pauline Irungu, representing civil society, provided remarks on the importance of partner engagement in the GFF operational plan. Mary-Ann explained how the GFF's operational plan outlines several ways the GFF will support country governments in leveraging private sector resources, capacity, and expertise for improving the health and nutrition of women, children, and adolescents, and how innovative financing is one of the important pathways for tapping into private sector resources. She explained that to shift the focus of private investment toward reaching women and children who need it the most, partners need to deploy grant capital in smart and resultsfocused ways, using GFF grants to provide a "derisking" effect for private investors to more easily put their financing to work where it is needed. She highlighted the GFF is well placed to do this, with its flexible grant financing and strong partnerships with IFC, the World Bank Treasury, and other funding organizations, where it can draw on their global expertise, financing platforms, and investor relationships for innovative financing and concessional or "blended" finance instruments. Afterwards, Pauline discussed how the GFF strategy refresh has further highlighted the urgency of meaningful CSO and youth engagement in implementing the five-year vision and delivering across the strategic directions, along with the impact on partners on the multi-stakeholder platforms. She explained the role of civil society is important in bringing community experiences forward to inform government decision making. She lastly explained the joint learning agenda, a partnership between the Global Fund, Gavi, Universal Health Care (UHC) 2030, and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH), along with local CSO constituencies.

Decision: Guidance session only; no decision taken.

RECLAIM THE GAINS—DON'T LET COVID-19 TURN BACK PROGRESS ON THE HEALTH OF WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND ADOLESCENTS: THE GFF CASE FOR INVESTMENT 2021-2025 AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION PLAN (GFF-IG12-6)

The objective of this session to discuss the GFF's resource mobilization (RM) campaign and how the GFF is engaging with stakeholders and the broader partnership to build and roll out the campaign. The case for investment (GFF-IG12-6) was circulated in advance of the meeting. Minister Tadesse opened the session, framing the urgency and opportunity of the GFF RM campaign. The World Bank and the government of Canada were introduced as cohosts of the campaign in 2021 (with a third cohost, a GFF partner country, to be announced soon). Amit Dar represented the World Bank as cohost and underscored the complementary relationship between the GFF and the World Bank, and the Bank's strong support for the RM campaign. Representing Canada as cohost, Josh Tabah emphasized the positive evolution and value-add of the GFF and the need for collective action in 2021. Monique Vledder provided an overview of the just-launched case for investment and the RM roadmap for 2021. She reinforced that GFF is a solid model that was making good progress before the pandemic; however, COVID-19 seriously threatens that progress. The frontloading of US\$1.2 billion in new commitments in 2021 is imperative to maintaining EHS and laying the foundation for implementing the new strategy. Dr. Daniel Ngamije, minister of health for Rwanda, shared the difficulties of managing the health and economic crises in his country over the past year, noting the importance of GFF in protecting EHS and health systems strengthening (HSS). In a video message, Minister Ouédraogo strongly endorsed the RM campaign on behalf of Burkina Faso, which served as an RM cohost in 2018. Flavia Bustreo outlined how PMNCH will advocate at the global and country levels for the RM campaign.

The Investors Group expressed the following feedback:

 Partners expressed support for both the case for investment and the RM roadmap, and they welcomed the World Bank and Canada as cohosts.

- Partners agreed the COVID-19 pandemic has created an urgent secondary crisis and that the GFF is in a strong position to respond in the near-term to maintain EHS for women, children, and adolescents and, in the longer-term, reaccelerate progress toward achieving RMNCAH-N, SRHR, and other shared goals by 2030.
- Some partners noted the challenging funding environment this year, with donor budgets under unprecedented stress. Approaching RM in this environment will require innovation, alignment, efficiency, and creativity. Galvanizing political will in each GFF partner country will be key. One member enquired about engaging donor parliamentarians, given constrained budgets. Another member suggested exploring opportunities with the private sector to broaden engagement beyond the health sector to leverage additional resources through the blended financing window.
- One member suggested framing RM around GFF as a facility, not only as a trust fund. This entails donors
 contributing through mobilization of aligned financing, technical cooperation and other modalities.

Decision: Guidance session only; no decision taken.

GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GFF PARTNERSHIP TO ADVANCE SRHR AND GENDER EQUITY

Josh Tabah opened this session, expressing how access to SRHR is essential and that Canada is excited to be part of the action coalitions and views the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) as an opportunity to advance the country's feminist policy. Frederic Depertrie, representing the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, was invited to the IG session to explain France's objectives with the GEF. He explained France and Mexico are cohosting the GEF, which is coordinated by UN Women and serves as a multi-stakeholder partnership for gender equality. The first part of the GEF will be kicked off virtually from March 29–31, 2021, hosted by Mexico, where the blueprint for the six action coalitions and their action statements will be released. The second part is hosted in Paris from June 30 to July 2, 2021. It is comprised of six coalitions: (i) gender-based violence (GBV); (ii) economic rights; (iii) SRHR and bodily autonomy; (iv) feminist action and climate justice; (v) technology and digital; and (vi) feminist leadership and movements. Frederic explained the aim is to obtain concrete engagements by catalyzing collective action through three to four operational and measurable actions for gender equality within the timeframe of 2021 to 2026. France is a coleader of the Third Action Coalition on SRHR with 14 other organizations, including GFF. The past six months has allowed to identity key priorities with three specific subthemes:

- 1. Expand access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).
- 2. Increase the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of SRHR services.
- 3. Increase decision making and bodily autonomy.

Diene Keita, the IG representative from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) expressed her strong commitment as a coleader of this coalition to the continued cooperation and alignment of priorities around SRHR, adolescents' rights, promotion of CSE, and women's decision making, welcoming future collaboration with GFF. Monique Vledder closed the session by expressing how the GFF looks forward to joining forces to advance SRHR. GEF will be a key forum and GFF wants to ensure the conference translates into catalytic financing of SRHR and works toward removal of policy and legal reforms, to bring measurable changes on the ground as a collective promise.

Decision: Informational session only; no decision taken.

CONCLUSION

The cochairs thanked the Investors Group for highly productive discussions and their continued dedication to GFF and its mission. The IG12 meeting follow-up actions are outlined in annex 1. A statement including an overview of the decision points from the meeting was published publicly on the GFF website along with all the meeting materials including presentations and documents.

APPENDIX A: FOLLOW-UP ACTION ITEMS FOR IG12

Topic	Actions		
Operationalizing the GFF Strategic Plan 2021–25 (Part 1 of 2; GFF-IG12-4)	 GFF Secretariat will take the suggestions raised during the meeting and incorporate the amendments into the strategic plan. IG members to provide written comments on the TOR for the alignment working group. GFF Secretariat to refine and recirculate the TOR of the alignment working group to clearly identify the main objective and scope of work to ensure complementarity, reduce duplication, and maximize impact. 		

APPENDIX B: TWELFTH INVESTORS GROUP AGENDA

Twelfth Investors Group Meeting Day 1: March 23, 2021							
Time	Agenda Item	Objective	Action	Presenter			
9:00-9:45 a.m.	Welcome, Opening, and Director's Report	 Approval of IG11 meeting report Approval of IG12 agenda Report from GFF director on key milestones and progress of the GFF partnership agenda, and update on action items 	For endorsement	IG Cochairs and GFF Director			
9:45–10:45 a.m.	How COVID-19 Is Reshaping Health Financing Priorities (GFF-IG12-2)	Discuss the economic impact and health financing implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and ways the GFF will support partner countries in the new health financing landscape to ensure essential services are prioritized.	For discussion	Country representatives, partners, and GFF Secretariat			
10:45-11:00 a.m.	Break						
11:00–12:30 p.m.	One Year into the Pandemic: Protecting and Promoting Essential Health Services as Part of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery (GFF-IG12-3)	Country representatives share their experiences and efforts to protect essential RMNCAH-N services and mitigate the impacts on women, children, and adolescents.	For discussion	Country representatives, partners, and GFF Secretariat			
12:30–1:30 p.m.	Operationalizing the GFF Strategic Plan 2021–25 (Part 1 of 2; GFF-IG12-4)	Present to Investment Group partners the operationalization plan for the GFF strategy and launch the working group for partner alignment.	For endorsement	Country representatives, partners, GFF Secretariat			
1:30–1:45 p.m.	Chair's Summary and Closure	Conclude day one of meeting.	For discussion	IG Co-Chairs			

Twelfth Investors Group Meeting Day 2: March 24, 2021					
Agenda Item	Objective	Actio			
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Time	Agenda Item	Objective	Action	Presenter
9:00–9:15 a.m.	Opening of Day Two	Summary of day one and overview of agenda for day two.	For information	IG Cochairs
9:15–10:45 a.m.	Operationalizing the GFF Strategic Plan 2021–25 (Part 2 of 2; GFF-IG12-5)	Discuss opportunities for strengthening partner engagement as part of the GFF strategic plan with a focus on the role of civil society, private sector, and the results agenda.	For endorsement	Country representatives, partners and GFF Secretariat
10:45-11:00 a.m.	Break			
11:00–12:00 p.m.	Reclaim the Gains— Don't Let COVID-19 Turn Back Progress on the Health of Women, Children, and Adolescents: The GFF Case for Investment 2021–25 and Resource Mobilization Plan 2021 (GFF-IG12-6)	 Discuss GFF plans for Resource Mobilization Present the roadmap to finance the GFF and discuss opportunities for partner engagement in 2021 	For guidance	Country representatives, partners and GFF Secretariat
12:00–12:30 p.m.	Generation Equality Forum: An Opportunity for the GFF Partnership to Advance SRHR and Gender Equity	Discuss with partners the importance of engaging in the upcoming Generation Equality Forum and joining action coalitions to achieving progress toward gender equality and SRHR.	For discussion	Guest speaker from France, partners, and GFF Secretariat
12:30–12:45 p.m.	Meeting Summary and Closure	Conclude meeting	For discussion	IG Cochairs