

21st GLOBAL FINANCING FACILITY INVESTORS GROUP MEETING

GFF Investors Group Review

Overview

At the 20th Global Financing Facility (GFF) Investors Group (IG) meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, held in November 2024, IG members recommended a review to take stock of opportunities to further maximize the impact of the IG. A previous review of the IG was conducted in 2019 and since that time there have been significant changes in the global health landscape. In fact, even since the recommendation was made in Abuja there have been seismic shifts. In light of this, the GFF Secretariat changed its approach from a technical level working group to a more in-depth research and consultation process to present findings at the 21st IG meeting for further discussion.

The GFF commissioned Ethicore¹ to conduct research and consultations to gather stakeholder perspectives from across the IG and conduct comparative analysis of peer organizations. Based on this research, the GFF Secretariat has collated the data and insights into this report.

Action Requested

The IG is requested to provide guidance on the recommendations in this report.

Methodology

This IG review—built on stakeholder engagement, including interviews, consultations, and a survey—draws on lessons learned from comparator organizations through desk research. This paper captures insights on the value, mandate, functions, operations and structure of the IG to identify opportunities to increase its impact and effectiveness. Insights were collected through:

- 21 semi-structured **interviews** (English and French) conducted between July and September 2025 with key constituencies: donors (sovereign and philanthropic); GFF partner countries; civil society organizations (CSOs); youth-led organizations; multilateral institutions— including global health initiatives (GHIs); private sector; GFF Secretariat.
- A **qualitative survey** conducted between July and August 2025 (English and French) completed by IG members.
- Insights from a **Ministerial Network meeting** convened by its chair, Honorable Minister Austin Demby, Minister of Health and Sanitation for Sierra Leone, on the sidelines of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa (RC75) in August 2025, with participation of 25 ministers and/or representatives of ministries.

¹ <https://www.ethicore.com/>

- A meeting with the **GFF Results Advisory Group (RAG)** in May 2025; and **a TFC retreat** in April 2025.
- Finally, **desk research** on the IG structure and approach informed this review, including a comparator review of the governance approaches of six global health organizations and five World Bank-hosted entities to identify best practices and lessons learned.²

Key Findings

Overall, the partnership is seen as a unique space to tackle the opportunities and challenges to improve the health of women, children and adolescents. There is scope for even greater impact with a more aligned and strategic approach. Key emerging findings are presented below.

Value and mandate of the IG

The GFF IG is seen as a unique global partnership to advance reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and nutrition (RMNCAH-N). It is valued for convening key stakeholders including ministers, donors, GHIs, United Nations (UN) agencies, civil society, and youth. It provides a safe space for frank and generative discussions about the challenges and opportunities to improve RMNCAH-N outcomes in GFF partner countries. The Ministerial Network is highly valued for strengthening the collective voice of ministers in the IG, and stakeholders encourage continued strengthening of its convening power.

Areas that have emerged for further strengthening:

- Scope to more clearly set out the mandate of the IG. Specifically, IG members are seeking greater clarity around the purpose and mandate, particularly in relation to the GFF Trust Fund Committee (TFC) and the World Bank.
- Stakeholders perceive the IG's two most important roles as engagement (e.g., alignment) and governance functions (e.g., advising the GFF and TFC).
- In practice, the IG experience is heavily weighted towards the governance agenda, and they would appreciate a greater role in the IG in alignment, accountability, and providing advice more broadly.

Functions of the IG

The GFF IG fulfills an advisory function to the TFC and the GFF Secretariat, and as a key platform for driving RMNCAH-N outcomes. To deliver on this dual purpose, the IG was set up to carry out five functions:

alignment, financing, monitoring, strategic advice, and learning.

- Many see the primary purpose of the GFF IG as being a mechanism for **alignment** and coordination across the broader ecosystem; this was a particularly strong and consistent finding among the Ministerial Network. Given the unique membership of GHIs, ministers, donors and other key stakeholders, the IG is seen as having great potential to contribute to alignment in country.
- Developing accountability for health **financing** is also seen as a strategic priority, given the influence on World Bank/International Development Association (IDA) grants through joint GFF-WB financing. Some respondents indicated they would like tools to support this accountability role of health financing and performance.

² Climate Investment Fund, Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action, ESMAP, GAVI, Global Fund, Global Innovation Fund, Global Partnership for Education Fund, PMNCH, Pandemic Fund, UNTAID, and Uniting to Combat NTDs

- **Monitoring** is not seen as key area of focus for the IG, with both financing and monitoring seen as the responsibility of the TFC given its oversight and decision-making authority. However, members have expressed interest in having more strategic discussions that strengthen accountability and results, including a country-led agenda on bottlenecks, innovations, success stories and alignment gaps.
- Providing **strategic advice** to the GFF Secretariat and TFC is a high priority for stakeholders. The IG could be used more strategically to provide advice to the GFF Secretariat and the TFC, with scope to improve line of sight of how the IG has influenced the TFC's decision making. Stakeholders highlighted the need to balance strategic advice to the GFF and TFC versus to the broader partnership—with the IG well placed as a forum for problem-solving for global health bottlenecks and challenges.
- **Learning** is seen as an essential function of the IG. The multistakeholder platform is a unique space to share lessons learned and best practices. Ministers value the Ministerial Network to create a community of practice and peer support. Stakeholders seek more intentional learning formats, e.g., around country case-studies/real-world experience. Here, the IG can help to collectively tackle challenges in national health systems based on what has worked. Members acknowledged that the introduction of knowledge cafes and country-led sessions are a good format, but additional efforts are needed to ensure this is more than an annual exercise and can also be done in real-time, particularly given how fast the ecosystem has been shifting. In this context, the RAG suggests an approach to “institutionalize learning.”
- Finally, **resource development** for women's, children's and adolescent health is seen as critical in the current financing context. While this is not generally seen as a priority function of the IG, it is a positive outcome of its work to build engagement and accountability. As ambassadors of the GFF, IG members bring credibility and strengthen the profile and positioning of the GFF outside of IG meetings, thus supporting resource development.

Representation and engagement

The diversity of the IG's membership is valued by stakeholders, especially country leadership (ministers, CSOs and youth representatives) and multilateral agencies' perspectives. Many note that ministers are increasingly frank in their contributions, in contrast to other meetings; the Ministerial Network is credited in supporting this shift toward more open engagement. A more institutionalized process and rotation of ministers could be introduced to broaden participation; greater support to engage ministers ahead of and during IG, and facilitation of Ministerial Network meetings, is encouraged. Many appreciate the quality of engagement from IG members, while several called for even more senior-level representatives across all constituencies. Beyond the IG, investing in GFF side events at formal events, for example, the G20, World Bank Annual and Spring Meetings, World Health Summit and other major global events, is encouraged.

Operations

In-person IG meetings are highly valued. There is scope for meetings to feature deeper and more interactive discussion on strategic issues. Thematic discussions with expert and high-profile guests could also encourage more “outside-the-box” thinking and help ensure the IG is a space to incubate new ideas. GFF side-events (rather than IG meetings themselves) can engage the IG as advocates to raise the profile and resource for the GFF and health financing generally. Overall, the requests to IG members (including preparations ahead of meetings and level of engagement throughout the year) are seen as reasonable,

but there could be more structured engagement between meetings through working groups and periodic updates. And while the in-person meeting is highly valued, the value of the virtual meeting was less clear across respondents and a request to revisit on purpose, length and format.

Having a strategic agenda for IG meetings is a key priority. Discussions on alignment, for example, were considered truly unique to the IG forum and to be continued. Stakeholders are interested in meaningful engagement in the IG agenda setting and a longer-term set of priorities. There is a desire for the agenda to be structured and more action oriented, to focus on outputs and advice, and for the IG to serve as a forum for debate, with working groups to further develop specific topics. More explicit guidance from the IG and Ministerial Network to the TFC is recommended, and more transparent and visible feedback loops between the IG and TFC would help to clarify how the IG's advice is considered.

Participants appreciate the format of the meetings, which are seen as less bureaucratic than other forums with fewer pre-prepared statements and more discussion. Nonetheless, there is appetite for even stronger engagement during meetings through interactive peer learning, country-led sessions, ministerial papers, partner presentations, and working groups sessions to progress strategic agendas.

Structure

The governance role of the IG and its relationship with the TFC, the Ministerial Network, and working groups could be streamlined to better clarify roles, remove duplication and ensure distinct contributions to the GFF. Members expressed interest in clarifying the GFF's relationship with the World Bank and the scope of a World Bank multi-donor trust fund, in relation to GFF governance. The Bank's engagement is considered critical for the IG. In terms of the IG representation on the TFC, the two ministerial representatives of the IG on the TFC (observer seats) are welcome additions.

IG stakeholders appreciate the standing and temporary working groups, however, request greater visibility of such groups and clearer links to the IG. There is a desire to formalize the standing working groups around key governance (e.g., strategy, policy) and other issues (e.g., innovative financing, alignment), and to have oversight of technical working groups to see their work implemented and reported on. The Alignment Working Group was especially recognized, and members would like to see this working group reinstated. IG members also saw the potential for IG as a platform for cross-learning, and a more formal RAG mandate and connection to the IG could be considered.

There was broad consensus that resourcing should be heavily weighted towards the Ministerial Network to provide capacity support for alignment and coordination, strategic direction to the GFF and peer support. Suggestions include setting out key elements for a thriving Ministerial Network (more frequent and at least 2-3 yearly Ministerial Network meetings, more structural support for peer-to-peer learning and facilitated knowledge exchange to build a community of practice; a virtual learning platform for continuous engagement and support; broader participation of ministers of finance and ministers of health, including all GFF partner countries; greater Ministerial Network advisory to the GFF Secretariat; strategic alignment of the agenda, with a more formal steer to the IG and the TFC; a mechanism for tracking progress and institutionalizing learning. Finally, stakeholders suggested linking IG discussions to the country platforms to better reflect realities on the ground.

Recommendations

IG members see potential to leverage the unique value of the IG partnership and increase its impact within its current mandate. The overall recommendation is to clarify and communicate that mandate and intentionally shape the IG agenda to strengthen alignment and accountability as well as provide strategic advice, while also developing a more ambitious agenda.

Recommendations emerging from the 2025 IG review for discussion include the following (also see table 1):

1. Develop a **shared IG agenda for alignment**, and the mechanisms to support it, including the Alignment Working Group, an oversight mechanism, and a learning agenda (e.g., case studies). More specifically:
 - a. Revisit the previous alignment working group as a standing group.
 - b. Further develop oversight mechanisms to support alignment in countries.
 - c. Enable country-led sessions and case-studies that identify learning and best practice.
2. **Strengthen conditions for knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning**, including continuing to revitalize the Ministerial Network, formalizing participation, and enabling meaningful engagement and oversight. More specifically:
 - a. Invest in facilitation, preparation and support for meaningful engagement in the network and the IG.
 - b. Formalize representation and rotation on the IG, including of the Ministerial Network, RAG, and other "guests" or "observers."
 - c. Create space and tools for peer learning and mutual accountability, including case study reviews, an "accountability framework," and member-led sessions.
 - d. Create learning opportunities for the Ministerial Network and the broader IG beyond the two scheduled meetings per year and as part of an institutionalized learning agenda.
 - e. Set out a regular schedule for Ministerial Network meetings, broaden participation to include more GFF partner countries, provide facilitation support, enable continuous exchange and learning through a dedicated virtual platform.
3. **Develop a shared strategic agenda for the IG**, streamlined with the wider GFF governance, including space for generative discussion, strong feedback loops with working groups and TFC, and structured engagement of IG members at global events. More specifically:
 - a. Engage IG in agenda setting and creating space/formats for more generative discussion.
 - b. Formalize links between the IG, working groups and TFC, with collectively agreed advice and strong feedback loops.
 - c. Identify opportunities for members of the IG to engage senior representatives at the IG meetings with a strategic and intentional agenda, mobilizing them with more formalized GFF global events, and the involvement of high-profile leaders as chair of IG, speakers/guests, and/or special envoys.
 - d. Suggestions to maintain focus include tackling a set of priority issues and using the IG as a "thinking board" for the GFF; provide structured updates on priority issues, bottleneck analysis, progress, and results tracking; deep dives on key strategic issues through working groups.
 - e. Position IG members as ambassadors/advocates at global events and GFF side meetings; showcase country success stories to attract donor interest and support.

Table 1. Recommendations Emerging from the 2025 IG Review

	Maintain	Clarify	Shift/strengthen
Value and mandate	Unique partnership to advance RMNCAH-N; a safe space for frank discussions to advance this agenda.	Simplify IG terms of reference	More clearly set out mandate of IG; clarify relation to mandate of TFC and the World Bank.
Functions of the IG	Focus on: alignment, strategic advice, and learning.	Define the role in alignment and advice to TFC	Greater focus on alignment—translating from global to country
Representation and engagement	Wide range of stakeholders represented that are critical to this agenda	Rotation process for all seats	IG reps seen as ambassadors for the partnership and strong engagement in between meetings (ie a network of influence)
Operations	In-person meeting grounded in country lessons	Ongoing GFF opportunities and ways to engage between meetings	Management of virtual meetings
Structure	Standing groups such as Ministerial Network	Relationship with World Bank and governance requirements	Formalize standing and timebound working groups, and strengthen support to Ministerial Network further.

Conclusion

The recommendations emerging from this report support looking at the IG not as only two meetings a year but rather building on those two meetings as key convenings as part of a broader agenda. This would require identifying what it would take to move beyond the meetings to transforming the IG into a network of influence on the agenda for women's, children's and adolescent health. Further thinking would also be needed to define the measures of success and how to track progress and adapt over time.

Discussion questions:

1. Are these the right areas to focus on maximizing the impact of the IG?
2. Is there anything not here that should be included?
3. What is one “outside-the-box” idea we should consider collectively?
4. How would we measure our success as the Investors Group?