

## INVESTORS GROUP MEETING REPORT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND DECISION POINTS

- The Investors Group (IG) approved the Ninth Investors Group (IG9) Meeting Report after reviewing a table of follow-up action items that had been successfully addressed and completed.
- The Director of the GFF gave an update on the GFF response to COVID-19, key milestones of the partnership, and announced a request for nominations for the next IG Chair.
- The IG endorsed a joint statement from GFF IG partners in response to COVID-19. The statement calls for rapid action by the GFF to protect essential health and nutrition services in GFF partner countries as part of the COVID-19 response.
- The Netherlands announced a 10 million Euro contribution to the GFF Trust Fund in support of the GFF response to COVID-19.
- There was strong endorsement for the GFF approach to gender equality as outlined in the paper circulated to the IG in advance of the meeting.
- The IG provided feedback on the GFF Strategy Refresh Issues Paper with consensus for the process to date and direction of the next phase.

### CHAIR'S OPENING AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The GFF Investors Group held its tenth meeting on April 20, 2020 by virtual meeting. Chris Elias, President of Global Development for the Gates Foundation and Chair of the Investors Group, welcomed partners including Ministers of Health from Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, and Cote d'Ivoire and Minister of Finance from Zimbabwe, as well as government officials from Afghanistan and Rwanda. The Chair also welcomed new partners including civil society representatives who had recently rotated, and the new youth representative.

The Chair reviewed the agenda for the day and addressed follow up items from the previous IG meeting. **The agenda (GFF-IG10-1)** for the meeting was approved. The follow-up table (Annex 1) and meeting agenda (Annex 2) are attached. The documents and presentations are available at [www.globalfinancingfacility.org](http://www.globalfinancingfacility.org).

### DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Muhammad Pate, GFF Director, provided an update on the GFF partnership and key milestones achieved since the last IG meeting. He began by addressing the recent changes in global health due to COVID-19 and the emerging negative impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable women, children and adolescents in GFF partner countries. He explained that the GFF conducted a pulse survey which showed that more than half of partner countries were experiencing disruption of primary health services, including access to contraceptives, ante-natal care, attended births, and child vaccinations. The surveys show how already fragile health systems are being stretched and would likely have long-lasting impacts on health and rights of women, children and adolescents.

Muhammad emphasized the importance of the GFF during the pandemic and explained the GFF's plan to further leverage its flexible financing, technical assistance, country platforms and knowledge and learning infrastructure to support partner countries to protect these essential services during the pandemic. He noted that the GFF would continue to monitor the situation in partner countries.

In addition to COVID-19 response, Muhammad gave an overview of GFF progress over the previous months, including the completion of 20 out of 36 GFF-supported countries' investment cases and the introduction of the GFF Logic Model. Additionally, Muhammad explained that the GFF is enhancing its collaboration and alignment with the Global Fund and Gavi, including through the SDG3 Global Action Plan Health Financing accelerator, with a focus on promoting more efficient and sustainable domestic financing. He thanked Paul Fife for his leadership as Task Team Chair of the IG Review, which had been successfully completed. Muhammad then highlighted the key themes and changes as a result of the review, including stronger emphasis on the country-led approach and inclusiveness, increased efficiency through clearer roles and division of labor between the IG and TFC, and a strengthened focus on prioritizing GFF results. Lastly, Muhammad provided a brief update on the Chair rotation process, noting that due to a reorganization within the government of Norway, they are unable to take on the role of Chair and the nomination process will be re-opened and facilitated by the Secretariat for TFC decision and IG endorsement.

**Action items:** Partners to submit their nominations for the next IG Chair by April 30, 2020.

## COUNTRY UPDATE: GFF RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Chair explained that given the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing reports of disruptions in access to primary health and nutrition services, the regular country update session (**GFF-IG10-2**) was repurposed to provide an update on the GFF response to the pandemic and to hear from Ministers about the challenges they are facing to ensure continuation of essential RNMCAH-N services in their countries. The Chair explained that as an Investors Group, there is a critical role to play in being vocal and united in the message to leaders around the world on the urgent need to protect these services. The Chair then announced the proposal for the GFF Investors Group to issue a joint call to action, which the Secretariat had drafted to convey the IG's shared commitment to this response and agenda. The IG statement would embody the commitments of GFF partners to the RMNCAH-N agenda and would include supporting quotes from prominent GFF partner leaders. Monique Vledder, Manager for the GFF Secretariat, then provided an update on the latest work the Secretariat had done around the GFF response to COVID-19. She described the knowledge and learning webinars which included GFF-supported countries and Liaison Officers, as well as the GFF's support to address the growing supply chain issues, including a pending partnership with IFC to support countries in Africa to scale up local production of personal protection equipment.

The Chair then invited the country representatives to discuss the challenges they are facing in continuing delivery of essential health services for women, children and adolescents in light of the pandemic. **The Minister of Health for Zimbabwe, H.E. Professor Mthuli Ncube** reported that the pandemic had caused a large disruption of the supply chain and exporting of essential goods and thanked the GFF for allocating \$5M in response. **The Minister of Health from Cote d'Ivoire, H.E. Eugene Aka- Aouele**, explained that his government has a national plan for response to respiratory infection, including coordination with civil society, and despite the pandemic, the country is still planning to continue providing medical care to women, children and adolescents. **The Minister of Health from Central African Republic, Dr. Pierre Somse**, explained that parameters to combat COVID-19 would incorporate continued care for mothers and children, and but that the country needs support from partners to coordinate a response to help fight the pandemic. The Minister stressed that the GFF is uniquely and strategically placed to do this. **The Minister of Health from Burkina Faso, H.E. Pr Léonie Claudine Lougué Sorgho** explained

one of the major elements of the country's COVID-19 response was the protection of health care workers as well as ensuring continuity in basic health care services for women, children and adolescents. She explained that the Ministry planned to provide better training services for frontline workers and wanted to seize the opportunity to develop innovative ways to protect them. She explained that despite the challenges, the country seeks to provide universal coverage to patients in all levels of services.

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

- To help ensure continuation of essential health services during COVID-19, the Netherlands announced a new 10 million Euro contribution to the GFF Trust Fund.
- There was consensus around the need to protect the delivery of essential health services for women, children and adolescents during the pandemic and strong support for the GFF role in the crisis, in line with its core mandate.
- Partners will look to the GFF to enhance in-country coordination and align platforms and TA during the pandemic.
- The role of the GFF to strengthen health systems is vital, and the partnership should work with countries to provide support not only to women and children, but also for other vulnerable groups.
- There was consensus that the GFF is well-positioned to help communicate and collaborate across sectors to address the impact of the pandemic and ensure continuity of basic health care coverage.
- Partners stressed the need to increase focus on innovations which could be impactful to inform health systems strengthening post COVID-19.
- Partners sought clarification from the GFF Secretariat regarding how the pandemic has affected the capacity for the team on the ground, and how government counterparts been affected.
- Partners requested clarification on the role of GFF-IFC partnership.
- Partners highlighted the importance of ensuring that the call to action for continuation of services included a focus on SRHR, Nutrition and WASH.

**Decision:** The Investors Group endorsed the draft press release with the call to action for joint support in protecting essential health services for women, children and adolescents in response to COVID-19.

**Action items:** An operational call with IG members will be scheduled to discuss the potential partnership with IFC.

The Investors Group discussed the [GFF Approach to Gender Equality \(GFF-IG10-4\)](#) as a follow up to the session that took place during the ninth IG meeting in November 2019. The session was championed by Canada and Netherlands. The Chair emphasized the timeliness of the session as 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, making this an opportune moment to review the status of efforts to advance gender equality within the global health and development agenda. Muhammad provided an overview of the draft paper, which outlined eight core principles driving the GFF's commitment and contributions to gender equality and proposed six action areas for increased efforts for GFF to advance gender equality for better RMNCAH-N outcomes. Muhammad reiterated the GFF's strong commitment to advancing gender equality through improving health outcomes for women, children and adolescents. He explained that the ongoing strategy refresh was an opportunity to reflect and learn from what the GFF was already doing to promote gender equality and ways to improve. The IG was asked to discuss and endorse the approach laid out in the paper.

The Minister of Health from Burkina Faso, H.E. Léonie Claudine Lougué Sorgho provided an update on how Burkina Faso was responding to the reproductive and sexual health needs of adolescent girls and young people. She gave an overview of recent reforms to promote reproductive health, which expanded guidelines for acknowledging

gender in national policies, projects and programs. Additionally, she explained that the government was implementing reforms including a 50% reduction in the price of contraceptives, a budget line of 500 million CFA francs for the purchase of contraceptive products, and free family planning services. She thanked the GFF for the work they had been doing in this area and expressed support for the steps laid out in the paper to further advance the gender equality agenda.

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

- There was consensus that the paper provided solid analysis of the opportunities and barriers women face, and the action areas laid out in the paper were endorsed.
- There was a suggestion to deepen the evidence to enhance the case for why investing in these types of services is important, which requires more analysis and gender data.
- Partners highlighted the need to ensure a coordinated impact with other key players and available resources, and that partners are accountable at the country level.
- Partners expressed support for exploring ways for the GFF to amplify the voices of women's movements in partner countries.
- There was a suggestion to explore how the GFF can work more closely with the World Bank Human Capital Project to promote gender equality.
- Partners stressed the importance to assess the development and application of digital tools to help identify where there is gender bias.
- There was a suggestion to cost the actions in the paper so that partners can advocate for more resources for the GFF.
- There was a suggestion to reference men and boys in the paper and show how the GFF will approach other multisectoral aspects such as education.
- Partners stress the need for a plan on how the GFF will operationalize the principles and actions laid out in the paper, and the need for clarity on how principles will be monitored.
- The suggestion was made to have a clearer differentiation in the analysis between gender equality and gender equity in the paper.
- Partners said it would be important to understand the challenges to access SRHR services as well as legal reforms that could facilitate access to SRHR interventions for women and girls.
- There was interest in nominating a woman for IG Chair to reinforce the GFF commitment to gender equity.

**Decision:** The IG endorsed the gender equality framework with consensus on the principles and the importance of the GFF's work to advance gender equality.

**Action item:** Partners were asked to email the GFF Secretariat, [GFFSecretariat@worldbank.org](mailto:GFFSecretariat@worldbank.org) by May 8 to provide additional feedback on the paper.

For the final session, Muhammad Pate updated the IG on the progress to date on the **GFF Strategy Refresh (GFF-IG10-3)**. He explained that the shifting global health landscape and impact of COVID-19 on essential health services has expedited the need for the GFF to step up support to partner countries. Muhammad noted that the GFF has a unique role to play in the global health architecture and that the Strategy Refresh aims to clarify and reaffirm this role and ensure the GFF is fit for purpose for the next five years. Monique Vledder, Head of the GFF Secretariat, then presented the outcomes of the diagnostic report which contributed to the development of the Issues Paper. She addressed a few of the challenges identified in the paper, including the importance of clarifying the role of GFF in promoting more sustainable health financing, clarifying the role of GFF-private sector engagement, strengthening country Investment Case implementation, and enabling greater involvement of civil society. The

Chair then emphasized the impact of the Strategy Refresh not only on GFF operations, but also on future resource mobilization. The IG was asked to provide feedback on the following:

1. Do you concur with the overall analysis of the GFF experience to date and the six cross-cutting issues identified for further exploration? If not, why not?
2. Are there any other priority areas which you feel warrant further exploration in the GFF strategy refresh?

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

- There was consensus around the inclusive and consultative nature of the process to date as well as the direction of the next phase for developing the Strategy Refresh.
- There was a suggestion to strengthen the focus on partner alignment to better coordinate existing resources and increase financing.
- There was a suggestion to clarify the purpose and mission statement of the GFF with a stronger link to health systems strengthening, country leadership, and sharper focus on RMNCAH outcomes.
- There was a suggestion to make the GFF's value-proposition explicit to be able to communicate the GFF model and portray the comparative advantage and what strategic changes are proposed in the Strategy Refresh.
- There was a suggestion that the Strategy Refresh should address the GFF role in the COVID-19 response and promoting the continuation of RMNCAH services, addressing DRM despite economic impact, and strengthening systems to be more resilient in the face of future health emergencies.
- It was suggested that the GFF be fit for purpose with a governance and procurement mechanism that allows the GFF to procure TA rapidly.
- It was suggested that the GFF should explore the pros and cons of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund structure versus a Financial Intermediary Fund.
- There was a suggestion to make a clear linkage between the GFF Strategy Refresh and the HNP Strategy.
- Partners suggested the refresh should emphasize the need for more transparent and inclusive CSO engagement, especially on implementation and accountability on investment cases.
- There was a suggestion for more emphasis on collaboration of global institutions and partners, especially on health systems strengthening, domestic resource mobilization (DRM) and technical assistance.
- There was a suggestion to emphasize the relationship with the Private Sector as a key service delivery partner and as a valuable contributor to countries' UHC goals, as well as ways innovation work can be highlighted.
- There was a suggestion to focus on institutionalizing capacity building in-country through the GFF's knowledge and learning platform.
- There was a suggestion on the need for more emphasis on stakeholder mapping and engagement in the country platforms.

**Action items:**

- Investors Group to send any written comments on the Strategy Refresh Issues Paper to the GFF Secretariat, [GFFSecretariat@worldbank.org](mailto:GFFSecretariat@worldbank.org) by May 8.
- There will be additional partner consultations during the next phase of the Strategy Refresh process.

## CONCLUSION

The Chair thanked the Investors Group for a highly productive discussion and their continued dedication to GFF and its mission. The follow-up actions from the Investors Group are outlined in Annex 1. The GFF Secretariat will continue to facilitate the process of approving a new chair virtually and the next Investors Group meeting will take place on May 6, 2020 to provide an update on CRVS.

## ANNEX 1: FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS ITEMS, IG10

Topic	Action
Director's Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The GFF Secretariat will provide an update on the status of the Independent Results Advisory Group, along with the updated Monitoring and Evaluation framework at a subsequent meeting later this Spring.</li> <li>IG Chair nomination to be completed by the end of April 2020.</li> </ul>
GFF Response to COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GFF IG members will submit quotes and will issue a joint press release on GFF's response to COVID-19 and the importance of protecting and promoting the continuation of essential health services.</li> <li>An operational call with IG members will be scheduled to discuss next steps and potential partnership with IFC.</li> </ul>
GFF Approach to Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners to submit additional written feedback on the approach described in the paper by May 8, 2020.</li> </ul>
GFF Strategy Refresh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TFC will have a follow up discussion on April 21.</li> <li>The GFF will draft a strategy refresh paper based on the feedback and will consult partners again before the process is finalized.</li> </ul>

## ANNEX 2: TENTH INVESTORS GROUP AGENDA

Investors Group Meeting Monday, April 20, 2020				
Time	Agenda Item	Objective	Action	Presenter
10.00-10.30 am	<b>Welcome, Opening, and Director's Report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval of IG9 Meeting Report</li> <li>Update on action items</li> <li>Approval of IG10 Agenda</li> <li>Report from GFF Director on key milestones and progress of the GFF partnership agenda</li> </ul>	<u>For approval</u>	IG Chair and GFF Director
10.30-11.30 am	<b>Responding to COVID-19 and the role of the GFF (GFF-IG10-2)</b>	Country partners to update on COVID-19 impact and importance of continuing delivery of essential RNMCAH-services	<u>For discussion</u>	Partners
11.30-11.45 am	<b>Break</b>			
11.45-12.15 pm	<b>Gender Equality (GFF-IG10-4)</b>	Discuss and agree on the opportunities for strengthening the gender equality focus in GFF-supported countries	<u>For decision</u>	Partners
12.15-1.15 pm	<b>GFF Strategy Refresh Consultation (GFF-IG10-3)</b>	Seek feedback from the IG on the progress of the GFF Strategy Refresh and next steps	<u>For discussion</u>	GFF Director
1.15-1.30 pm	<b>Chair's Summary and Closure</b>	Conclude meeting	<u>For discussion</u>	IG Chair