

# Working together to strengthen the foundations of GFAN AP

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## Introduction

2023 has been a challenging year for GFAN AP, with the Regional Coordinator facing a number of health issues and the resignations of the GFAN AP Chairperson and the APCASO representative on the GFAN AP Steering Committee (SC), as well as APCASO stepping down as GFAN AP fiscal host. In the meantime, the Steering Committee has continued with only three members, two of whom are also representatives of national partners. While these challenges disrupted the work and led to some delays in reporting, GFAN AP Secretariat and SC committed to reflecting on and strengthening its governance to ensure GFAN AP continues to play a vital role in community-led advocacy around resource mobilisation for the Global Fund in the Asia Pacific region, as well as advocating with the Global Fund on how it could do things better. This report is the outcome of that reflection and seeks to set out recommendations for strengthening the governance of GFAN AP.

While the deliverables for this work focussed on renewing the Terms of References and policies related to governance, it was agreed with the GFAN AP Regional Coordinator that it would be useful to provide a report of the findings from the interviews to share with stakeholders.

## Methodology

Discussions were held with the GFAN AP Coordinator and Advocacy, Programmes and Coordination Officer to gather background information and their assessment of the current situation. The GFAN AP Secretariat also provided background documents that were reviewed prior to identifying stakeholders to be interviewed and drafting the interview questions that would be asked of different stakeholders; additional questions were identified for GFAN AP staff and current and former SC members to explore in more detail what could be done in the future to address such challenges before they impact upon the performance of GFAN AP.

In addition to the interviews with GFAN AP staff, twenty-two interviews were planned with stakeholders, however, one national partner was not available during the interview period. Interviews were arranged with twenty-one stakeholders, however, only twenty interviews took place as the former SC Chair did not reschedule a time for the interview after cancelling the second appointment. Interviews took place with three current and two former SC members, the current SC advisor, four Global Fund Secretariat staff, two national partners, four regional key population-led networks, the new fiscal host, the GFAN Global Coordinator and two staff from the GFAN Africa platforms.

Interviews were scheduled so that GFAN AP staff and SC members were interviewed first, followed by external stakeholders with Global Fund staff being interviewed in the early stage of the interview schedule.

A follow up discussion took place with the GFAN AP Regional Coordinator to discuss the findings and recommendations proposed as a result of the discussions with stakeholders.

The interviews focussed on the five areas listed below:

- i. Structure of GFAN AP
- ii. Roles and responsibilities
- iii. Accountability
- iv. Managing tension and conflict
- v. Understanding boundaries/limitations

No other issues were identified or raised by the stakeholders interviewed.

## Recommendations:

The recommendations below are based upon views expressed by GFAN AP stakeholders and information provided to the consultant during the interviews particularly regarding the composition, roles and responsibilities and selection of the SC; improved communication between the Secretariat and SC; the need for greater transparency and sharing information across the platform; the need for and the importance of ensuring the Terms of Reference for the SC, Secretariat staff and fiscal host are aligned and boundaries are understood by all.

- i. The current SC approve an updated Terms of Reference with detailed clarification of the roles and responsibilities, criteria for selection, term of office, conflict of interest and code of conduct. [deliverable 1]
- ii. The current SC approve the protocol for selection, renewal and removal of SC members, which includes detailed guidelines for the call for expressions of interest; the selection criteria against which expressions of interest will be reviewed; a matrix to track and ensure representation across all 3 diseases, regional key population-led networks, national partners - including from a high-income donor country and recipient countries, and with diversity of age, experience and gender; the maximum number of terms that SC members can serve; and grounds and process for removing SC members. [deliverable 2]
- iii. Given there was not a consensus on the benefits of having permanent advisors on the SC, and the current advisor was not convinced the role was needed, the role of having SC Advisors should be dropped. [deliverable 3]
- iv. The SC approve the declaration of conflict-of-interest policy and a code of conduct, accompanied by protocols for raising grievances and complaints and an investigation procedure – initially for the SC [deliverable 4], but should be further developed to ensure it covers all internal GFAN AP stakeholders as part of an organisational development and operations handbook
- v. The SC approve that the fiscal host will have an ex-officio role in the SC and will be expected to attend all SC meetings and provide financial reports to the SC but not be involved in decision-making.
- vi. The incoming SC should determine in what way observers can participate in SC meetings and whether observers should have permanent observers or observers should be invited on a case-by-case basis. A Terms of Reference should be developed for observers once these decisions have been taken.
- vii. The current or incoming SC should review the Secretariat staff Terms of References to ensure roles and responsibilities are aligned with those of the SC and specifies the distribution of responsibilities should a team member be absent from duty.
- viii. The current or incoming SC should review the fiscal host Terms of Reference to ensure roles and responsibilities are aligned with those of the SC and Secretariat.
- ix. The Secretariat and SC should determine who is responsible for taking minutes of the SC meetings, the timeline for draft minutes to be sent out, and a timeline for approval of the minutes.
- x. GFAN AP develop a comprehensive induction package for incoming SC members, and ensure time is set aside at the beginning of SC meeting for an induction session whenever a new SC member joins. Induction sessions should preferably be facilitated by an experienced SC member, supported by the Secretariat, to ensure ownership.
- xi. While recognising that national partners often self-identify as willing and able to offer resources to partner with GFAN AP on national campaigns and events, the SC should review national partners on an annual basis. Where GFAN AP is able to provide financial support, there is a need for the SC to have and use clear criteria for the selection of partners.

- xii. The Secretariat and SC develop a communication strategy, which includes internal communications within the SC and between the SC and Secretariat; and external communications to ensure the platform is kept informed and updated about GFAN AP activities through the Secretariat organising more regular virtual platform meetings (at least quarterly); as well as the current public facing website and social media.
- xiii. SC meeting minutes, or a summary of SC discussions and decisions, should be shared with the platform for transparency and to increase ownership.
- xiv. GFAN AP should consider developing an organisational development and operations handbook – either by the incoming SC or in collaboration with a consultant.