

GLOBAL FINANCING FACILITY NINETEENTH INVESTORS GROUP MEETING REPORT

The Investors Group (IG) of the Global Financing Facility (GFF) held its annual in-person meeting November 5–6, 2024, in Abuja, Nigeria. The meeting (IG19) was chaired by the Honorable Khumbize Chiponda, Minister of Health for Malawi, and Ms. Johanneke de Hoogh, Head of the Global Health and SRHR Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, who represented Her Excellency Pascalle Grotenhuis, Vice Minister for International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, at this IG meeting. This report presents key points of discussion and outcomes.

KEY ACTION ITEMS

- Honorable Minister Chiponda co-chaired the IG meeting, marking her inaugural IG meeting as co-chair. Honorable Minister Demby joined in his new role as chair of the Ministerial Network.
- The Investors Group (IG) approved the eighteenth Investors Group (IG18) meeting report.
- The Honorable Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate, Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare for Nigeria, opened the IG meeting with a compelling narrative of Nigeria’s achievements to date and future ambition to crash maternal and child mortality. He outlined Nigeria’s plans to translate its vision into concrete results, to accelerate the closing of existing gaps in women’s, children’s and adolescent health.
- The GFF Secretariat will organize a follow-up with a deep-dive session on FCV, as part of the strategy development process.
- A dedicated session on the Innovations to Scale initiative, in collaboration with UNICEF, will be organized during the next IG meeting.
- The GFF Secretariat will follow up with youth constituency to further strengthen active participation of youth in the AdLab initiative.
- The GFF Secretariat will continue to refine the health systems strengthening (HSS) for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health and nutrition (RMNCAH-N) framework, in consultation with relevant partners.
- The Evaluation Steering Committee will hold a meeting with the IG once a full version of the findings is available, for the IG to provide feedback on the evaluation as a reference group.
- The GFF Secretariat will shortly launch a call for nominations for the creation of the working group tasked to help maximize the effectiveness of the IG. Terms of reference for the working group were shared as background material for the IG.
- The IG endorsed the GFF’s approach to private sector engagement.
- The GFF Secretariat will develop a matrix and categorization of countries the GFF engages with in the private sector and clarify the criteria for engagement.
- CSO/YLO will re-engage in 2025 to advise on next steps through the launch of the new mechanism.
- The GFF Secretariat will share next steps in the creation of the Steering Committee for the development of the GFF strategy.

DAY ONE

Opening Remarks

The Honorable Khumbize Chiponda, Minister of Health for Malawi, delivered her acceptance speech for the role of co-chair of the IG. She thanked her predecessor, Dr. Lia Tadesse, former Minister of Health for Ethiopia, for laying the foundations for improving health outcomes for women, children, and adolescents across many countries. She described the GFF partnership as a bold and transformative approach to addressing some of the most pressing health challenges of our time, particularly for women, children and adolescents. She also laid out her vision for her role as IG co-chair, to strengthen the collective efforts of the GFF partnership in supporting countries to build resilient, equitable health systems—driven by a commitment that no woman, no child, and no adolescent is left behind, no matter where they live. She shared with the IG her ambition to drive forward the Lusaka Agenda and make health financing systems more aligned, efficient, and impactful. Finally, she thanked all partners, sharing that this is a unique opportunity to make lasting change for millions of women, children and adolescents.

Ministerial Network Update

The Honorable Dr. Austin Demby, Minister of Health for Sierra Leone and Chair of the GFF Ministerial Network, provided a readout of the key outcomes of the Ministerial Network meeting, which took place on Monday, November 4, 2024, with participation of ministers and high-level representatives from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Central African Republic, Senegal and Tanzania. Minister Demby relayed that the ethos of the GFF aligns with the ministers' views and aspirations of providing high quality services to women, children and adolescents, with a distinct focus on health outcomes. Ministers see the GFF's approach of focusing on country ownership and leadership, along with alignment of financial and technical resources to meet country priorities as holding the greatest potential for success. The notion of co-diagnosis and co-creation of solutions at the core of the GFF approach was commended by the ministers. The ministers also called for bold and audacious actions for the cause of women, children and adolescents.

On the topic of alignment, they stressed the importance of practical actions with metrics to measure progress toward specific goals for partner governments and participating partners (for example, with a transparent and accessible dashboard). Ministers also reaffirmed the Lusaka Agenda is foundational for the GFF approach, and that they intend to actively participate in the development of the new GFF strategy document. They recommended concerted action to make the GFF brand much more visible. Finally, they agreed that the Ministerial Network should have a clearly documented scope of work and a formalized framework, with criteria and timelines for rotations of network members—also to ensure institutional memory and continued sustainability of the network.

GFF Director's Remarks

Juan Pablo Uribe, Global Director for Health Nutrition and Population at the World Bank and Director of the GFF, provided an update to the IG on the GFF's unique role and links with broader World Bank initiatives. For example, the World Bank is committed to the health agenda with a recently announced goal of reaching 1.5 billion people with quality, affordable health services by 2030. To deliver on this goal, work is underway to help design regional health strategies, sustain and expand the World Bank portfolio, scale up technical assistance (TA) and knowledge, and leverage partnerships with the goal to (1) reach more people; (2) increase the scope of quality health services; and (3) improve financial protection. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is an integral part of this effort, and a strength in the model of the GFF. In addition, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) will be accounted for and monitored in the new corporate scorecard under the gender indicator and across all World Bank

operations. The GFF will be instrumental in maintaining a focus on RMNCAH-N as well as on gender and other forms of equity in this ambitious scale-up effort.

He also stressed that we operate in a challenging environment, with spending pressures across institutions and countries. A forthcoming World Bank report highlights trends and outlooks across low-income countries (LICs) and lower middle-income countries (LMICs), exposing serious risks to the sustainability of health investments. Looking ahead, almost 100 countries will experience contracting or stagnating government budgets, where spending for health will fall below the projections based on historical trends. Finally, he recognized the potential in the Ministerial Network to bring a transformative approach, and applauded Nigeria's achievements as an example for others to follow in the context of the Lusaka Agenda.

Spotlight: Nigeria

The Honorable Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate, Minister of Health and Social Welfare for Nigeria, opened the IG meeting by outlining Nigeria's achievements to date and future ambition to crash maternal and child mortality. Noting that most health outcomes in Nigeria are lagging many Sub-Saharan Africa and global medians, Minister Pate expressed his steadfast commitment to the unfinished agenda on the health of women, children and adolescents. The government of Nigeria has taken systematic steps to improve health outcomes, backed by strategic investments in health, with the establishment of the Basic Health Provision Fund, and the Nigeria Health Sector Renewal Investment Program that received support from the president. This program aims to improve health systems and strengthen primary health care, while ensuring access and quality, equity and affordability for patients.

The Maternal Mortality Reduction Investment Initiative (MAMII) is further prioritizing 172 local government areas that account for 50 percent of maternal deaths in the country. Nigeria also has an active sectorwide approach (SWAp), mobilizing US\$3 billion of additional funding (over three years) through the Nigeria Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative (NHSRII) SWAp, with US\$2.178 billion confirmed external funding. Finally, Minister Pate shared a message of hope, stating that crashing maternal and child mortality is possible with targeted interventions, and with deployment of simple, cost-effective RMNCAH-N innovations. He reiterated the need for greater alignment and importance of partnerships anchored in joint planning and data-driven decision making. He thanked stakeholders for their continued support.

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG members applauded the reform efforts in Nigeria, and the coordinating minister's inspiring vision to crash maternal and child mortality.
- They welcomed the call to action around the alignment agenda.
- GFF partner country representatives were interested to draw on lessons learned from Nigeria and adapt it to their country context.
- They asked how civil society organizations (CSOs) can actively engage to ensure continuity in the knowledge gained over the years by civil society.
- They asked about the unique value-add of the GFF and its influence on the reform agenda, gender equality and SRHR, and multisectoral interventions—such as in the education sector.
- Global health initiative (GHI) representatives expressed full commitment to contributing to greater alignment in countries.
- IG members welcomed Nigeria's involvement with climate and vulnerability assessments funded by GFF.
- They expressed interest in capturing progress in maternal nutrition commodities, ahead of 2030.

Stocktaking on the GFF Strategy

Luc Laviolette, Head of the GFF Secretariat, provided an update on the implementation of the GFF strategy, including key milestones, challenges and progress. The GFF model has increasingly evolved to both achieve and show results, and more work is underway to better communicate its value-add in each partner country. Second-round financing was approved for six countries in 2024, taking the number to 11 of the 36 partner countries with second-round funding for a five-year period. With US\$568 million mobilized as part of the *Deliver the Future* campaign, the amount mobilized totals US\$2.6 billion for the GFF Trust Fund, with US\$1.4 billion in already-allocated grants linked to US\$11 billion in World Bank financing. There has been a positive trend after the COVID-19 pandemic, with a stronger rate of disbursement and a healthy implementation portfolio. The GFF's work remains closely linked to the World Bank's mission, with President Ajay Banga announcing this year the ambition to reach 1.5 billion additional people with health services by 2030—with RMNCAH-N, as well as equity, at the heart of this goal. A strong IDA replenishment will also be essential, with GFF co-financing as an excellent avenue to leverage IDA funding. He also updated the IG on the Joint Financing Framework, and the first pilot round of the Challenge Fund (focusing on quality RMNCAH-N commodities) to crowd in innovations to incentivize multisectoral collaboration. He indicated steps to strengthen the secretariat (for instance, a new workstream dedicated to RMNCAH-N; a strengthened liaison officer role; and a new role on GFF governance), and shared about ongoing efforts to strengthen partnerships including with the World Health Organization (WHO); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; the Global Fund; the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH), and others.

To take stock of GFF results over the past year, he presented key data points on maternal, child and adolescent health indicators, including for countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV). Following their introduction in 2023, the first full cycle of tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) was possible this year. A focused approach tailored to specific needs of countries (for example, FCV) or groups (adolescents, for instance) will bring benefits going forward. Results were also presented on early newborn mortality and maternal mortality reduction emerging from the Safer Births collaboration in Tanzania. It was also noted that the June IG meeting would be an opportunity to discuss further, and in collaboration with UNICEF, the Innovation to Scale partnership.

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG members appreciated the overview of trends across the portfolio.
- They expressed interest in understanding potential challenges in implementing the GFF strategy, and lessons learned to inform the next strategy.
- They welcomed the IG paper on FCV (shared as a background document for the meeting), including the references to partnerships in this area.
- IG members inquired about ensuring the sustainability of the GFF's impact, but also about how best to measure this.
- There were calls to ensure availability of adequate resources to advance the GFF mission, to further empower countries to drive down maternal mortality rates—recognizing that the volume of catalytic investments would contribute to the collective good.
- Many appreciated the focus on closing equity gaps—both geographic inequities and within groups.
- They raised interest in opportunities for collaboration on sustainable financing for commodities, but also to strengthen technical support for quality of commodities, and to better address climate considerations in supply chains.
- They recognized the challenge of “attribution” versus “contribution” to better health outcomes facing all global health actors.

- Some members asked for a closer examination of fiscal domestic space for RMNCAH-N in countries and recommended taking a life-course approach to women’s health.

Action:

- The GFF Secretariat will organize a follow-up with a deep-dive session on FCV, as part of the strategy development process.
- A dedicated session on the Innovations to Scale initiative, in collaboration with UNICEF, will be organized during the next IG meeting.

Global Alignment Agenda and Country Impact

Cicely Thomas, Health Financing Lead for the GFF, presented on the GFF’s work on the alignment agenda, starting with an overview of alignment initiatives over the past two decades, such as global development effectiveness initiatives and SWAps in health. The intention of the GFF model has from the start been to support stronger alignment efforts at country level. The GFF has evolved over the years based on what works in enabling greater alignment, for example through shifts in its investment case process, inclusive multistakeholder country platforms, scaled-up resource mapping and expenditure tracking (RMET), and greater focus on leveraging IDA and International Board for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) funding. The Alignment Working Group (AWG) launched in 2021 set out to (1) develop guidance and policy recommendations to optimize country-led processes to enhance and track alignment, and (2) assist partner countries to advance their alignment efforts. Strong country leadership, an enabling environment, and adequate resources must be in place to support countries to steward the alignment agenda. The GFF Ministerial Network is further well positioned to help advocate for this work.

Finally, she shared areas where the GFF can provide particular value-add on the alignment agenda, as follows: (1) direct support to countries (for example, via the Lusaka Agenda and “Lead Collaborating Countries,” civil society and community engagement, and channeling of resources through government systems); (2) contributing to research, learning, and knowledge sharing on country-led alignment experiences; and (3) evolving alignment discussions at the global level.

Bruno Rivalan, World Bank Group HNP Partnership Lead, then provided an update on the ongoing collaboration with the Global Fund and Gavi under the Lusaka Agenda. Three principles guide this work, where: (1) efforts should be country-led and demand driven; (2) differentiation should inform joint action; and (3) efforts are guided by a focus on specific areas of collaboration. The World Bank is also expanding its support for this agenda.

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG members welcomed this topic and engaged in a productive discussion. They recommended that the GFF provide differentiated guidance on alignment depending on the level of progress in each country.
- Country representatives stressed the importance of keeping the country-led model.
- Some members raised the potential limitations of global-level processes, and the need for country leadership. They also noted there could be more country-level collaboration happening than previously thought.
- They inquired about the scope of work on alignment (RMNCAH-N focused, or broader), noting that headquarters-led processes should not get in the way of in-country work.
- Members asked how the GFF could support tracking of health resources from partners.
- Some members shared progress made in respective countries on alignment, including through action plans for alignment, however further efforts are needed with multilaterals, such as WHO and the World Bank. Therefore, this should not be “business as usual” but rather a concrete approach to achieving alignment on the ground.

- Many partners pointed to the willingness to listen and find different ways of working, while also raising the need for practical steps to move this agenda forward.
- Members recognized both the challenges and opportunities in pursuing alignment, such as avoiding duplication of work.
- Members expressed the need for a clear vision for broader alignment implementation, with the ultimate goal to support partner country ministries in their objectives.
- Consensus emerged for the Ministerial Network serving as an effective vehicle to drive forward this discussion and to advance this work.
- Members appreciated the open discussions during this session, along with feedback from ministers on the challenges they face.

GFF Secretariat response:

- GFF Director Juan Pablo Uribe stressed that the principles are bigger than any of the initiatives trying to implement the Lusaka Agenda—and that the principles endure over time, even if single initiatives are challenging to implement. He recognized this agenda has re-emerged over time, and agreed with IG members that the Ministerial Network is a key instrument for implementation of the ambitions of the Lusaka Agenda. Further, he underscored that alignment per se is not the goal, but rather in pursuit of achieving specific health outcomes.
- Head of Secretariat Luc Laviolette agreed on the need to take a differentiated approach in each country, and to identify the specific role of the GFF within the broader Lusaka Agenda and with respect to the RMCNAH-N mandate.

Strengthening Country Data Systems

Peter Hansen, the GFF's Head of Results and Learning, gave an overview of the GFF's logic model, noting that it adopts a contribution perspective, with impact being led by and belonging to countries. The model aims to clarify and refine how the GFF contributes to country results through pathways that vary by country context. It also includes explicit focus on helping strengthen country data systems and analysis capacity. The GFF measurement framework comprises the following: (1) country specific monitoring; (2) activities to strengthen country data sources, systems and capacities; (3) overall performance assessment; and (4) an analysis of cross-cutting thematic areas.

The GFF works through five main levers to help strengthen country data sources, systems and capacities: (1) country investment case process; (2) World Bank/GFF co-financed projects; (3) technical assistance; (4) support for knowledge and learning activities; and (5) collaboration with partners at national, regional and global levels.

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG members welcomed this summary of how the GFF helps to strengthen country data systems as an integral part of its strategy.
- IG members asked about AdLab and relevant indicators for youth, also highlighting the role of youth in data production and the need to strengthen resources and capacities of youth to build evidence base at national level.
- They raised the need for countries to digitize data, in order to make follow up with patients more efficient, requesting that this be integrated in the next GFF strategy.

GFF Secretariat response:

- The secretariat appreciated the commitment of youth to engage in AdLab and welcomed the opportunity work together to find additional ways to engage youth more extensively in the process, including exploration of how data from youth voices could be integrated into the data portal.
- It recognized the need for innovation with digital tools--for example, to generate and use timely feedback from adolescents and other clients to improve programs

Action: The GFF Secretariat will follow up with youth constituency to further strengthen active participation of youth in the AdLab initiative.

Health Systems Strengthening for RMNCAH-N, with a Focus on SRHR

Supriya Madhavan, RMNCAH-N and Gender Lead for the GFF, presented the initial proposal for a framework on HSS for RMNCAH-N. The goal of the framework is to connect systems investments to RMNCAH-N outcomes, and through this link help optimize investments across health systems areas to enhance RMNCAH-N outcomes. It will also deepen understanding of how GFF investments contribute to improved RMNCAH-N outcomes. It encompasses both “broad investments” (wide-reaching benefits across the RMNCAH-N continuum) as well as “targeted investments” (more specific benefits to one part of the RMNCAH-N continuum). The framework is informed by: (1) existing health systems frameworks, especially the primary health care measurement framework and indicators (PHCMFI); (2) the GFF logic model; (3) six pillars of GFF health systems support—governance; health financing; human resources for health (HRH); supply chain; service delivery; and data and health information systems—reflected in the KPIs; and (4) standardized impact and outcome indicators tracked by GFF.

The framework outlines strategic and operational levers to accelerate improvements in specific RMNCAH-N outcomes. Finally, cross-cutting themes for the framework include gender and equity, social determinants of health, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Once completed, the framework will be used by the GFF to enhance prioritization, continuous improvement, and strategic development; and by external partners to foster transparency, collaboration and partnership, and knowledge sharing.

Following the initial presentation of the draft framework during the IG (phase 1) the GFF Secretariat will further develop the framework and engage in additional partner consultations (phase 2, through April 2025), followed by iterative application of framework and embedding of the same into the new strategy (phase 3, from May 2025 onward).

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG members welcomed the framework as an initial draft needing further refinement and clarification.
- They requested that gender and SRHR be further strengthened as key elements.
- Members cautioned the secretariat to ensure complementarity (rather than duplication) of efforts in other agencies, crystalizing the unique value-add of the GFF.
- They inquired about how the right balance would be found between targeted and broad investments, as presented in the framework.
- Members asked how the findings from the independent evaluation would feed into the framework, and how it will be situated in the context of the next GFF strategy.
- They requested that climate and health considerations be reflected.
- Several IG members representing partner countries requested that the framework take a holistic approach to women’s health during pregnancy, and attention to family planning.

- They urged for coordination among agencies on supply chains and commodities, while also stressing the importance of building country capacity for sourcing.

GFF Secretariat response:

- The secretariat confirmed this is the first iteration of the framework as part of a broad consultation process, and that the GFF will continue to work on HSS while considering the broader ecosystem and the GFF’s specific role within it.
- The framework aims to clarify how the GFF works through different pathways for maximum impact for women’s and children’s health.

Action: The GFF Secretariat will continue to refine the HSS for RMNCAH-N framework, in consultation with relevant partners.

DAY TWO

GFF Evaluation

A team from Euro Health Group, which is conducting the independent evaluation of the GFF, presented its approach and methods and highlighted the emerging high-level findings from the data collection and ongoing analysis. They noted that these are subject to refinement based on the ongoing review process led by the Steering Committee, and the finalization of the report by the evaluation team. The evaluation is organized along three areas of investigation: (1) the GFF country engagement model; (2) its operational structure and support modalities; and (3) achievement of results and value-add. High-level findings indicate that the GFF’s country engagement model—comprising the investment case (IC), country platform, and technical expertise—is grounded in a systems approach, and is largely fit for purpose and coherent, effectively enhancing the focus on RMNCAH-N.

While the model emphasizes country leadership, evidence on the effectiveness of certain components, such as the ICs and the country platforms, varies by context. Moreover, evidence indicates mixed effectiveness in how the World Bank and the GFF leverage each other’s strengths. While there are more positive findings related to leveraging RMNCAH -N financing and program improvements, the picture is mixed with regards to TA, advocacy, evidence and learning. The GFF model offers efficiencies by using existing World Bank systems and processes, though findings suggest that GFF investments could be more effective through increasing GFF staff and TA in countries to provide more consistent capacity development and monitoring of implementation. Finally, the GFF has demonstrated added value in contributing to country planning and prioritization of RMNCAH-N, resource mobilization, allocation and efficiency, data availability and use, and support for HSS that underpins improvements in RMNCAH -N service delivery. The evaluators will share the final report with more detailed areas of recommendation once the Steering Committee review process is complete.

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG representatives welcomed these initial evaluation results and looked forward to a presentation and discussion of the full set of findings and recommendations once the evaluation is complete, including suggestions to help demonstrate the value-add of the GFF.
- They appreciated the granular analysis of the ecosystem and how the GFF fits in the system, as this can help with reducing fragmentation. They encouraged the evaluation to focus on partnerships.

- Members expressed interest in the evaluation providing information about the GFF's influence and contribution to results, but also to help identify trends across the portfolio and whether different approaches have enabled change in different contexts.
- They asked whether there could be a way to measure willingness by partners to align and harmonize work as part of the evaluation approach.
- They asked about the potential need for more GFF staff in countries, to help advance alignment and other areas of work.
- Members commented that the GFF has good adaptability to different country contexts but could better communicate this level of adaptability in relevant channels.
- They asked whether the evaluation will provide recommendations on how the GFF can help countries improve quality of care.
- They commended this work as helpful in context of developing the next strategy and mobilizing resources to finance it.

Evaluators response:

- On partnership and the quality of partnerships, the evaluation is surfacing important findings; initial evidence shows the advantages of blended finance for the GFF's positioning within the broader landscape.
- The GFF is designed to support country-led efforts to strengthen health systems and improve RMNCAH-N outcomes with countries placed at the center—hence the visibility of GFF may not always be apparent.
- Access and quality of care were an important part of evaluation, even though there are recognized gaps in availability of data on quality. The GFF works with government institutions to strengthen capacity, address data gaps and use data to inform improvements. The GFF has innovated on quality-of-care measurement—for example, through FASTR.
- Case studies from the evaluation show demand for more GFF presence in country, with appreciation for the GFF model.
- The evaluators found strong evidence that the GFF being housed at the World Bank brings distinct and clear advantages, with World Bank teams helping to design complex multisectoral programs—and GFF specialized staff helping to shape RMNCAH-N interventions.

GFF Secretariat response:

- The secretariat clarified that the scope of the evaluation included strong focus on how the GFF leverages the World Bank. More details on how the GFF can play a stronger role working with the World Bank will be included in the final recommendations.
- They agreed that more evidence is needed on alignment, with more work to be done in this area. More work is also needed on budget tagging related to RMNCAH-N as well as domestic resource mobilization (DRM). The World Bank leads on conversations with governments on many issues related to DRM, with the GFF engaging and influencing the discussions.

Action: The Steering Committee will hold a meeting with the IG once a full version of the findings is available, for the IG to provide feedback on the evaluation as a reference group.

Role of IG Discussion

Sheryl Silverman, External Relations Lead at the GFF, updated the IG on efforts underway to help maximize the role of the IG. The IG serves as an advisory board to the TFC and the GFF Secretariat, as well as a forum for collective action and alignment towards improving RMNCAH-N. Its functions span across: (1) strategic guidance; (2) advocacy and partnership; (3) alignment and coordination; (4) monitoring and mutual accountability; and (5) knowledge sharing. The IG was independently reviewed in 2019, with the aim to increase its effectiveness, improve coordination with the GFF Secretariat and country teams, and enhance transparency, resulting in operational and strategic recommendations incorporated into a revised governance document in February 2020. Subsequent discussions among IG members recognized there is scope to further maximize the impact of the group and better inform the TFC's deliberations and decision making. To this end, a time-bound working group will be created, with a call for nominations to launch in November 2024 and plans for its work to start in January 2025. Consultations will take place until July 2025, with the final expected outcome of the working group to issue recommendations and implementable actions for the IG (as well as the TFC and GFF Secretariat) on maximizing the IG's impact.

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG members expressed appreciation for the space created by the IG, which encourages open and meaningful dialogue between all stakeholders.
- They recognized the unique value of the GFF within the global health architecture, including by operating horizontally.
- They recommended having a stronger feedback mechanism in place, to enable IG members to better understand how their guidance to the TFC was considered. They also advised having greater transparency for the IG to know what is on the TFC agenda.
- Members stressed the importance of mutual accountability, to ensure the IG's discussions have a concrete outcome.
- They suggested that having the opportunity to engage earlier on the topics of the papers would be helpful, especially on topics of common interest such as alignment, gender and equity.
- They suggested reviewing the monitoring role of the GFF, with the question of whether the Results Advisory Group could play a bigger role as input to the IG.
- Members recommended the IG look more intentionally at how the GFF's impact influences policies in partner countries.
- They requested a program of work for the IG, with greater visibility on the topics in the pipeline—also suggesting the possibility for fewer agenda topics while allowing for more in-depth discussions on each.
- Finally, members requested to have formal documents describing IG procedures and governance, to help frame the group's work and mandate.

GFF Secretariat response:

- The secretariat clarified that while the IG is not a decision-making body, it serves to advise and provide valuable guidance to the TFC, which informs the committee's decision making.
- The IG's co-chair and the chair of the Ministerial Network participate in the TFC as observers, and they provide an overview to TFC members on key outcomes of the IG. However, a feedback loop back to the IG from the TFC could also be envisaged.
- There could be greater scope for the Results Advisory Group to inform IG discussions.
- The point on agenda-setting is well noted, to ensure a strategic approach to topics discussed at the IG.

- The secretariat clarified that the two-tiered structure of the IG and TFC is in place to adhere to the mechanisms required for all multidonor trust funds at the World Bank (including the TFC in its decision-making role), and to allow for engagement with the broader partnership (through the IG).
- Finally, the secretariat thanked the ministers for joining the IG in frank and productive discussions.

Action: The GFF Secretariat will shortly launch a call for nominations for the creation of the working group tasked to help maximize the impact of the IG. Terms of reference for the working group were shared as background material for the IG.

GFF Approach to the Private Sector

Mark Allen, Director of Global Programs & Strategic Partnerships at Merck for Mothers, presented the GFF's private sector engagement and proposed a future approach, which was developed following technical reviews and an extensive consultative process. Guiding principles for this work have been identified as follows: (1) narrowing focus of engagement with the private sector; (2) using selected instruments and channels; (3) partner engagement; and (4) equity considerations. The proposed future approach will focus on two pathways, each built around an anchor reform: (1) strategic purchasing; and (2) service delivery quality and commodities supply.

He also raised collaboration opportunities with global partners and civil society, and ways to strengthen the enabling environment to help the GFF support country-level private sector engagement. These include: (1) technical assistance to strengthen governance; (2) innovative financing mechanisms; (3) partnerships with global private sector entities; (4) health financing enablers; and (5) service delivery and commodities enablers.

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG members agreed with the focus areas, stating that private sector engagement is another avenue to advance the GFF's objectives.
- They welcomed the approach for a narrower focus and stressed the need to de-risk innovative financing at the country level, given the potentially high transaction costs.
- They showed support for public-private partnership (PPP) initiatives and asked about the scope for the involvement of the International Finance Corporation (IFC).
- IG members expressed the need to look closely at equity considerations in the context of private sector engagement, and the need for adequate regulation, especially to safeguard access to services for the most vulnerable.
- They also asked to look more closely at private sector supplies in areas affected by security challenges.
- Some members requested to better understand the criteria for GFF's engagement with countries, and the value of having a country matrix to clarify this selection.
- They also raised the need for consistency in engagement with the private sector, for example, through a system in countries of conventions, coherent tariffs and protocols to guide this work.
- Finally, partner government representatives shared experiences in taking a total market approach, while also looking at government initiatives for a full picture of opportunities in engagement with the private sector.

GFF Secretariat response:

- The secretariat took note of the request for a matrix and categorization of countries that the GFF engages with in the private sector and will develop this further.
- Regarding collaboration with IFC, the GFF can still do transfers out to IFC (as done recently in Côte D'Ivoire), with a focus on equity, which is creating a differentiation for this aspect.
- Innovative financing is a part of the GFF toolkit, and it is now anchored more closely to country reforms to ensure more sustainable pathways.

- Head of Secretariat Luc Laviolette shared the ambition to see acceleration and use of innovations—beyond the mobilization of funding possible through PPPs, while also bringing new competencies and expertise to the table through engagement with the private sector.

Decision: The IG endorsed the GFF’s approach to private sector engagement.

Action: The GFF Secretariat will develop a matrix and categorization of countries the GFF engages with in the private sector, and clarify the criteria for engagement.

CSO and Youth Engagement

CSO and youth representatives on the IG, Jackie Katana, Founder & Executive Director of Faith for Family Health initiative (3FHi), Uganda, and Tjedu Moyo, Founder of the Lunia Center for Youths, Zimbabwe, presented an overview of the GFF’s work with CSOs and youth-led organizations (YLOs) to date, progress made, and key lessons learned. They explained how the active engagement of CSOs and YLOs is crucial in supporting the GFF partnership to reach its goals, as they bring grassroots insights, mobilize communities, and drive advocacy and accountability efforts. For example, in Sierra Leone CSOs helped to abolish user fees for maternal health services, while in Uganda and Malawi they successfully advocated for increases in the national budget for health services. Ms. Katana and Ms. Moyo further presented the work of the Taskforce on Civil Society & Youth Engagement, which was tasked with reviewing and updating the GFF–CSO engagement framework and recommend ways to ensure continued funding and support to CSOs and YLOs, and to ensure integration of meaningful CSO engagement as part of the next GFF strategy period. The taskforce developed a proposal for youth engagement to be included in the next strategy, with guiding principles of sustainability, flexibility, alignment and localization. They also proposed a structure for organizing this work, namely, a World Bank-hosted CSO and youth mechanism with an independent Global Civil Society Coordinating Group (CSCG). Finally, they shared with IG members the pressing need for continued support and the risks of having a break in funding.

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG members broadly expressed strong support for the proposals and recommendations made by CSO and youth representatives. They agreed that a gap in funding would be detrimental to the progress achieved so far, and that CSO and youth engagement is a critical aspect of the GFF’s work—including to foster alignment in countries.
- At the same time, they asked for careful consideration of how funding the work of CSOs and YLOs would be integrated in the next GFF strategy starting in 2026.
- They encouraged building alliances with CSO constituencies in other agencies (for example, Gavi and the Global Fund).
- They raised questions on the World Bank’s grant-making mechanism in terms of implementation and coordination, also asking how this would be reported on.
- Members asked to closely examine the GFF’s role in capacity building of CSOs, and to avoid duplication of efforts.
- With shrinking civic space in many countries, they urged for greater alignment on this agenda to ensure impact and a greater momentum.
- Civil society representatives appreciated the fact that GFF is one of the few organizations giving CSOs and YLOs a seat at the table at high-level fora.

GFF Secretariat response:

- The secretariat clarified that the proposed hosting arrangement of the grant-making mechanism within the World Bank is a solution that benefits from the Bank’s reinvigorated mechanism for engaging with

civil society and offers significant expertise in this domain and fits within broader developments in the World Bank.

- This arrangement will greatly benefit from the GFF's ability to influence the design of World Bank projects and ensure accountability for implementation.

Action: CSO/YLO will re-engage in 2025 to advise on next steps through the launch of the new mechanism.

Process for GFF Strategy Development

The GFF Secretariat presented the approach for the development of the next GFF strategy 2026–2030. This process will be crucial given that global health and nutrition outcomes for women, children and adolescents continue to lag in critical areas. As the current GFF strategy moves into its fifth and final year, it is timely to revisit and update the strategy to maximize the GFF's impact. Starting in January and continuing through November 2025, the GFF plans to embark on development of a new five-year strategy that will cover the period from 2026 to 2030. The revised strategy will consider the evolving global and national contexts for RNMCAH-N financing, emerging evidence, the global funding landscape, and what is needed to accelerate progress toward the 2030 deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The development of the new strategy will benefit from the following: (1) findings from the GFF independent evaluation and other analytical work; (2) the outcomes of the initiative to maximize the impact of the IG; (3) the contributions from the revitalized Ministerial Network; and (4) overall lessons from a more mature GFF, looking to its 10th anniversary in 2025.

A key consideration for the new strategy is how the GFF can respond to strong country demand for GFF grants, catalyze new funding sources, and re-elevate and sustain women's and children's health on global and national agendas amid a changing global landscape. In terms of governance arrangements, the nomination and selection of co-chairs and members for the Strategy Steering Group is planned to be completed by December 2024, with the first meeting in January 2025. The IG will play a key role as the reference group for the strategy process. The TFC is expected to endorse the final strategy in November 2025 (TFC21), based on input from the IG and advice from the Steering Group. The process will rely heavily on extensive consultations with partners and experts, to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive process.

The IG expressed the following feedback:

- IG members welcomed the proposed next steps for this process and recommended that the Ministerial Network be heavily involved to ensure that the GFF strategy is anchored in the realities of countries.
- They asked for strong attention to SRHR as well as on partnerships in the next strategy.
- They recommended looking closely at the GFF's theory of change as part of the strategy development process.
- They stressed the need for comprehensive consultations, including in-depth consultations with UN agencies.
- They advised that the GFF also assess and identify areas where it should no longer focus on, in addition to the areas where it could intensify efforts.
- They asked what success would look like and discussed sustainability as a key aspect to consider as we move toward the SDG deadline.

GFF Secretariat response: The secretariat welcomed the feedback provided and will incorporate the guidance and priority areas within the strategy development process.

- The secretariat acknowledged that tradeoffs will need to be carefully considered in the next strategy.

Action: The GFF Secretariat will share next steps in the creation of the Steering Committee for the development of the GFF strategy.