

SUBJECT: CONSENT AGENDA: APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Agenda item: 02e

Category: For Decision

Section A: Introduction

- Building on the flexibilities granted by the Board in December 2016, the Secretariat has tested various review mechanisms over the past year with the aim of improving country dialogue, introducing more flexible timelines, and ensuring that relevant expertise is leveraged at the time of review.
- Based on the lessons learnt from the various review mechanisms tested, the Programme and Policy Committee (PPC) recommended that a differentiated approach to application review be adopted going forward with most reviews taking place at the global level (through the Independent Review Committee mechanism) but maintaining the flexibility to conduct in-country as well as ad hoc reviews, where required.

Section B: Gavi review mechanisms

1. The Board flexibilities approved in December 2016 for a period of 12 months, included:
 - Review of new Gavi support on a country-by-country basis and outside of the existing IRC schedule;
 - Enabling IRC members and other impartial technical experts with local/regional expertise to serve in the capacity as independent reviewers;
 - Leveraging engagement of country stakeholders to provide input during the review process and immediately address issues raised by reviewers;
 - For those countries with relatively smaller Gavi investments, utilise existing review mechanisms such as the HLRP (or the subset of IRC members of the HLRP) to provide funding recommendations on new as well as existing Gavi support.

2. Various review mechanisms were tested in the context of new requests from Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Togo and Comoros. This allowed the Secretariat to draw conclusions on the most appropriate process to review country requests. Key lessons learnt include:
- **In-country reviews by independent experts have received positive feedback from stakeholders but also present some challenges that need to be carefully considered.** This new approach of reviewing applications in-country (as opposed to in Geneva) gave reviewers an increased understanding of the request for new support, and allowed them to address clarifications and issues that may have triggered a 'resubmission' decision by a Geneva-based review. It was also seen to increase the country ownership of the proposal (highlighted by full country evaluations as a major weakness). There are however some limitations to in-country reviews that need to be weighed carefully when deciding to use this review modality. Specifically the impact on resources (additional costs related to travel, and additional time requested from country stakeholders) and independence (the process should ensure that reviewers are not exposed to undue pressure in country) need to be considered as well as the available expertise (a smaller reviewer group limits the expertise available at the time of the review).
 - **Reviews benefited from additional expertise in certain programmatic or geographic areas.** This was the case for certain in-country reviews where adding an independent expert who had in-depth knowledge of the national context enabled a better understanding of the potential bottlenecks in implementing Gavi grants.
 - **Using the 'remote review' modality (i.e. reviewers connecting over the phone without traveling to Geneva or to the countries) decreased the cost of the review, and allowed a more flexible timeline** for reviewing time-sensitive applications (e.g. campaigns). It was however concluded that using this review modality should be limited to very specific cases as it included a number of challenges related to connectivity and decreased the quality of engagement between reviewers and with country stakeholders.
 - Additional review modalities were tested but did not generate any significant improvements:
 - **Leveraging Alliance partner colleagues (mostly from WHO and UNICEF) instead of independent experts from the IRC pool did not prove beneficial** and instead triggered concerns on roles, responsibilities and conflicts of interest. It also raised challenges related to partner staff capacity to engage in a process that required a substantial time commitment beyond their day job.

- **Leveraging the HLRP to review requests from countries limited the ability to leverage a wide range of expertise** that is usually available in the IRC. In particular, senior-level Secretariat and partner members of the HLRP did not have the bandwidth to review the request in the same detail as an independent expert who has set aside several days for the review of each country.
3. Based on the lessons learnt summarised above, Gavi's review and approval mechanism is envisaged to evolve as follows:
- The IRC will be maintained. It will continue to be constituted by a pool of independent experts whose members will be approved by the Board. Members of this pool will continue to undertake reviews and make recommendations on country grants to the Gavi CEO.
 - The list of independent experts comprising the IRC will be reviewed in 2018 to ensure that the appropriate set of skills is available to review any type of support requested and in key programmatic areas.
 - Building on the current review model, most applications will continue to be reviewed by the IRC in Geneva.
 - In exceptional cases, the Secretariat would have the flexibility to organise:
 - In-country reviews based on a list of criteria including the size of the grant, past grant performance, country context, type of support and the magnitude of coverage and equity challenges. The reviews in-country will be carried out by a subset of IRC members with additional technical experts invited to provide their input into discussions;
 - Ad-hoc reviews (e.g. for time-sensitive campaign requests), whereby a subset of IRC members would review an application outside of the Geneva-based review schedule. These reviews would take place either in person in Geneva or remotely.

Section C: Actions requested of the Board

The Gavi Alliance Programme and Policy Committee recommended to the Gavi Alliance Board that it:

- a) **Approve** the flexibilities to include in-country reviews and ad hoc reviews by IRC members as part of the Gavi review mechanism for country applications, as described in Section B.3 of Doc 02e; and
- b) **Request** the Secretariat to update any relevant governance documents to enable the implementation of these flexibilities and present the updated governance documents for review and approval by the appropriate governance bodies.