The Global Fund Prospective Country Evaluation

UGANDA REPORT

Partnership in the Global Fund application cycle: Evidence from Uganda's 2017 application process

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Background

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria was founded in 2002 as a partnership between governments, the private sector, civil society, and populations affected by the three diseases. As a 21st-century partnership organization, the Global Fund invests nearly US$4 billion a year toward its mission of accelerating the end of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria as epidemics. The Global Fund Prospective Country Evaluation (PCE) is being undertaken in eight countries (Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Mozambique, Myanmar, Senegal, Sudan, and Uganda). The PCE was commissioned by the Global Fund's Technical Evaluation Reference Group (TERG) as an independent evaluation to support the assessment of implementation and impact of the Global Fund strategy 2017–2022. As a platform for continuous learning and quality improvement in Global Fund processes, the PCE aims to generate evidence on program implementation to accelerate progress toward strategic objectives of the Global Fund Strategy. The PCE is independent and prospective, meaning it will evaluate Global Fund activities and policies impartially and ensure timely dissemination of findings. The PCE launched in mid-2017 and will run through to early 2020.

Global Fund Prospective Country Evaluation consortium

Three independent research consortia, composed of institutional partners at the global and country levels, are carrying out the PCE in eight countries. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, in partnership with PATH in the United States, collaborate with the Infectious Diseases Research Collaboration (IDRC) to conduct the PCE in Uganda.

PCE approach

The PCE uses a mixed-methods approach, covering the full results framework from inputs to impact, and is centered on key evaluation questions identified by country stakeholders and the TERG. The evaluation covers all phases of Global Fund processes, including the decision to apply, application, approval, preparation and implementation. The evaluation incorporates numerous complementary methods and analytic techniques, such as resource tracking, process evaluation, and impact evaluation.

Partnership as a key principle of the Global Fund

Partnership is a foundational principle of the Global Fund business model and "supporting mutually accountable partnerships" is considered a strategic enabler essential to achieving the objectives of the Global Fund 2017–2022 Strategy.[1] The Global Fund is a financing mechanism, not an in-country implementer, and therefore effective engagement and collaboration with numerous partners is critical to effective operations. These partners include recipient governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, the private sector, technical partners, foundations, civil society, representatives from key affected populations, and researchers, among others – all bringing unique perspectives, knowledge, and local expertise to bear on ending the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Since 2003, the Global Fund has signed investments totaling over US$1.5 billion in Uganda, with disbursement of US$1.05 billion to date[2] – making it among the Global Fund's largest country portfolios. Partnership is critical to ensuring value-for-money, sustainability, and impact of Global Fund investments, yet few evaluations have explored the Global Fund partnership model in depth.

Methods

Using the case of Uganda, the aim of this evaluation was to understand the role, function, and value add (efficiency, effectiveness, and country ownership) of partnerships between the Global Fund, partners, and in-country stakeholders in supporting the development of the 2017 Global Fund grant application.

DESIGN

This is an exploratory case study of a grant development partnership in Uganda. The 2017 Global Fund application phase was chosen as a suitable case due to its timeliness in relation to the planned data collection and the ongoing implementation of Global Fund grants in Uganda. The evaluation approach was driven by our team's existing conceptual framework[3] of how partnerships add value to decision-making processes. Data was collected using

multiple methods embedded within the process evaluation of the Global Fund PCE, including structured surveys, social network analysis, key informant interviews (KIIs), and meeting observations.

Social network analysis posits that processes and their outcomes are highly influenced by the structure and composition of relationships of actors in and around those processes. Social network tools are designed to identify actors and their relationships with each other, and through analysis, how those relationships form network structures.

DATA COLLECTION

We used a structured survey tool that we call a "partnership survey," which was adapted from a similar survey conducted by Kamya et al. regarding Gavi's partnership model.[3] We defined the grant application network members as any actors involved in the Global Fund grant application process. We developed an initial list of network survey respondents through ongoing document review and meeting observation and contacted those stakeholders for an interview about the Global Fund application process. Following the KII we administered the network survey in person, or in some cases, using an online link to an electronic survey. Following typical network data collection methods, other individuals named during the survey were contacted and the link to the network survey was emailed. Additionally, respondents were continually followed up with phone calls, email reminders and a printed tool delivered in person to increase response rates. During the PCE annual dissemination meeting in April 2018, the network survey link and printed tools were also distributed so that any additional respondents involved in the Global Fund application cycle could complete the survey.

The partnership survey began by asking the respondent to identify which Global Fund applications they worked on (HIV, TB, malaria, or any combination), and specifically which aspects of the application the respondent supported, including preparatory activities leading up the grant application; developing the application for funding; grant-making process and negotiations; providing technical assistance; health systems strengthening; key and vulnerable populations considerations; gender considerations; co-financing; sustainability strategy; performance framework/monitoring and evaluation plan; and/or budget. Respondents were then asked to provide the names and organizations of up to 10 individual people he or she personally collaborated with on the Global Fund grant application, and which funding request(s) they collaborated on, and to rate their level of professional trust using a 4-point scale: 1 – Poor relationship (little trust); 2 – Fair relationship (some trust); 3 – Good relationship (trust); 4 – Excellent relationship (high trust), where trust was defined as trusting "the individual or organization to keep their word, do a good job, and respond to your professional needs or your organization's needs." The survey also asked respondents to name the top three most influential individuals, meaning "the person was instrumental in decision-making, had a strong voice, exerted power in steering the conversation and in directing the strategic focus of the funding request and/or grant-making process." To assess perceptions of the effectiveness, efficiency, and country ownership of the partnership, the survey closed by asking respondents to indicate whether a benefit or drawback "occurred" or "did not occur" from working in partnership during the 2017 Global Fund application cycle, using statements describing 14 potential benefits and six potential drawbacks, as adapted from Provan and Milward and Kamya et al.[3,4]

ANALYSIS

We used existing mathematical algorithms to measure common network metrics, including nodes, density, degree, centralization, and centrality (defined below in Table 2). Each node in the network represents one individual collaborator in the 2017 grant application. There is a tie between nodes when a survey respondent has reported collaboration. Though not all collaborators named in the survey responded with their own accounts of collaboration, all ties are assumed to be mutual due to the nature of collaboration. The degree of a single node is the number of ties or connections it has in the network. Networks were visualized according to several subgroup characteristics, including organizational affiliation, funding request type, CCM membership, and gender. All analyses were conducted using the statnet suite network analysis packages in the R statistical programming language and the associated statnetWeb R Shiny application.[5,6]

Findings

As highlighted in the Uganda PCE Annual Report 2018, Uganda submitted two funding requests (one for TB/HIV and the other one for Malaria) during Window 1 of the Global Fund application cycle. Both funding requests, HIV/TB and malaria, underwent full review by Global Fund's Technical Review Panel (TRP). Two Principal Recipients from the public and non-public sectors implement the Global Fund grants in Uganda, including the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) (executing entity) with the Ministry of Health (MOH) (implementing entity), and The AIDS Support Organization (TASO), a local non-governmental organization (NGO). The funding request and grant-making was characterized by country-level processes including country dialogue, priority setting, grant writing, CCM board review, submission to TRP, grant making and grant signing. The overall length of the 2017 application process was 11 months, from mid-December 2016, when the allocation letter was received, to the grant signing in mid-November 2017 (Figure 1) – this was two months faster than the 2014 application process (13 months). The first funding disbursement was released in mid-January 2018.

Figure 1. Process steps and timeline for Uganda's 2017 Global Fund application cycle

From January to May 2018, 30 partnership network surveys were completed, which resulted in 88 additional collaborators named in the survey, for a total network of **118 nodes** (individuals) with **241 collaboration relationships** (ties) supporting the 2017 Global Fund grant application (Table 1). Respondents were based at the national level and represented a variety of organizational affiliations; there were slightly more males than females among the identified actors in the network. Table 2 describes metric definitions, values, and interpretations.

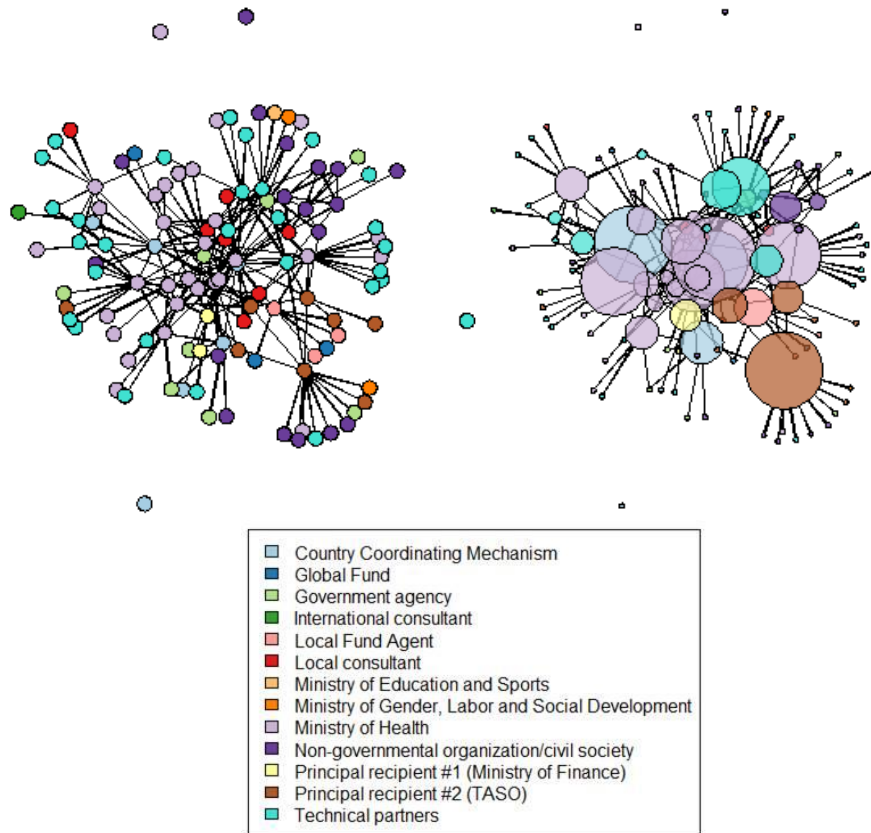**Table 1**. Characteristics of identified actors: type of funding request, gender, and organizational affiliation

Funding request type	Respondents	Named in survey	Total N (% of total)
HIV/TB request only	13	39	52 (44.1%)
Malaria request only	6	24	30 (25.4%)
Both	11	25	36 (30.5%)
Gender	**Respondents**	**Named in survey**	**Total N (% of total)**
Male	17	47	64 (54.2%)
Female	13	41	54 (45.8%)
Organization type	**Respondents**	**Named in survey**	**Total N (% of total)**
Ministry of Health	12	18	30 (25.4%)
Technical partners	4	25	29 (24.6%)
NGO/civil society	5	13	18 (15.3%)
Government agency	1	7	8 (6.8%)
Principal recipient #2 (TASO)	3	5	8 (6.8%)
Local consultant	0	7	7 (5.9%)
Country Coordinating Mechanism	3	3	6 (5.1%)
Global Fund	0	3	3 (2.65%)
Local Fund Agent	1	2	3 (2.65%)
Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development	0	2	2 (1.7%)
Principal recipient #1 (Ministry of Finance)	1	1	2 (1.7%)
International consultant	0	1	1 (0.98%)
Ministry of Education and Sports	0	1	1 (0.98%)
Totals	*30*	*88*	*118 (100.0%)*

Table 2. Network metric definitions, values, and interpretation

Network attribute	Definition	Value	Interpretation	What would this attribute look like in a high-performing network?
Node	An individual actor. Number of nodes denotes the network size.	118	The size of the Global Fund application network in Uganda is large given the number of stakeholders and partners working across the three diseases.	Ideal network size depends on network function: Smaller networks enable coordination, while larger networks enable wider reach for information sharing. A growing network size indicates increasing reach and increasingly complex coordination needs.
Tie	Link (connection) between two nodes.	241	We assume all relationship ties were *undirected* (e.g., mutual; collaborative) during the Global Fund application process.	See *Density* below
Isolate	A node not connected to the rest of the network.	4	Identified isolates were named through the "most influential" question; these may not be true isolates given low survey response rate.	A high-performing network should have no isolates for the main network function. Isolates may exist for functions that don't involve every member.
Density	Number of existing ties divided by the number of possible ties.	0.04	The relatively low density (meaning 4% of potential ties exist) should be interpreted with caution – it is likely an artefact of the low survey response rate.	Dense (cohesive) networks are more likely to resist change, exchange noncomplex information, or act collectively, whereas sparse networks may be more open to new information and actors, and thus innovation.
Average degree	Average number of ties per node.	4	Average node had 4 ties, but average respondent node had 11 ties – suggests density would increase with higher response rate.	Actors with more ties may be relatively advantaged due to having multiple alternative ways to access resources and share information.
Betweenness centralization	Extent to which the network is dominated by one or a few focal actors.	0.15	Medium-to-low centralization score (0.15) is indicative of a decentralized network with multiple collaboration hubs important for information exchange and settings requiring multiple focal actors across intersecting groups.	Centralized networks act more efficiently under the control of one or few focal actors, whereas decentralized networks are better at finding and exchanging new information and ideas. The "ideal" level of centralization depends on the network's intended function.
Betweenness centrality	Extent to which a node is located on the shortest paths between other actors.	See figures	See right-hand column in Figures 2 and 3 for graphic representation of nodes sized according to betweenness centrality scores.	Actors with high betweenness centrality are bridges between others; they are in a structural position to control flow of information and to most efficiently transfer information to the greatest number of other actors in the network. A high-performing network will have some actors with high betweenness centrality (>100) who are able to access other parts of the network.
Mean reported trust	Average trust score in the network.	3.7	The high levels of trust between ties is indicative of strong collaborative relationships.	This survey measured trust between nodes on a scale of 1 to 4. In co-located networks, we frequently observe higher levels of mean trust relative to non-co-located networks.
Subgroups	Groups of nodes sharing a certain characteristic.	NA	Network plots examine subgroups by organization, funding request gender, and CCM membership.	A network with ties both within and across subgroups promotes information transfer across areas of expertise.

The figures below visualize plots of the networks, with nodes colored according to attribute characteristics of interest. The second column of the plot sizes nodes by their betweenness centrality – a measure of how many other nodes the focal node lies between. This metric is an indicator of an individual's strategic position to transfer information or resources.

Figure 2. Plot of Uganda's 2017 Global Fund application network by organizational affiliation of nodes and betweenness centrality of nodes (second column)

Legend:
- Country Coordinating Mechanism
- Global Fund
- Government agency
- International consultant
- Local Fund Agent
- Local consultant
- Ministry of Education and Sports
- Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development
- Ministry of Health
- Non-governmental organization/civil society
- Principal recipient #1 (Ministry of Finance)
- Principal recipient #2 (TASO)
- Technical partners

Main takeaways:
- A plot of the network by organizational affiliation reveals that Ministry of Health (lavender), technical partners (aqua), and the CCM (light blue) *actors were at the center of the network for the application process.* This supports qualitative evidence from KIIs that the funding request development process was highly inclusive in terms of stakeholder representation and participation compared to previous cycles.
- Representation from *NGOs/civil society was notable in the network plots, including those of key and vulnerable populations (purple nodes).* Civil society representatives appear to be clustered together in the network, which could be a result of these actors working within one umbrella organization (Civil Society Network) for representation and coordination purposes.
- Findings from the KIIs highlighted *strong participation of key and vulnerable populations* and *gender and human rights constituencies* in the 2017 funding request development compared to the previous funding cycle.
- Data from KIIs pointed to the increased role of local consultants during the 2017 application phase as an important factor for success, compared to the reliance on international consultants during prior application cycles. The network plots suggest a very *central position of the local consultants (red nodes),* which is consistent with their important contribution to the development and writing of the application and the need to coordinate across numerous types of stakeholder groups providing inputs.
- Based on respondents to the partnership survey, the 2017 application network was characterized by high levels of overall trust, as rated between collaborators and as indicated by the moderate density in the network core.

Further, plots for the Global Fund application network by funding request, gender, and CCM membership were also examined (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Plots of Uganda's 2017 Global Fund application network with nodes represented by funding request type, gender, or CCM membership and betweenness centrality of nodes (second column).
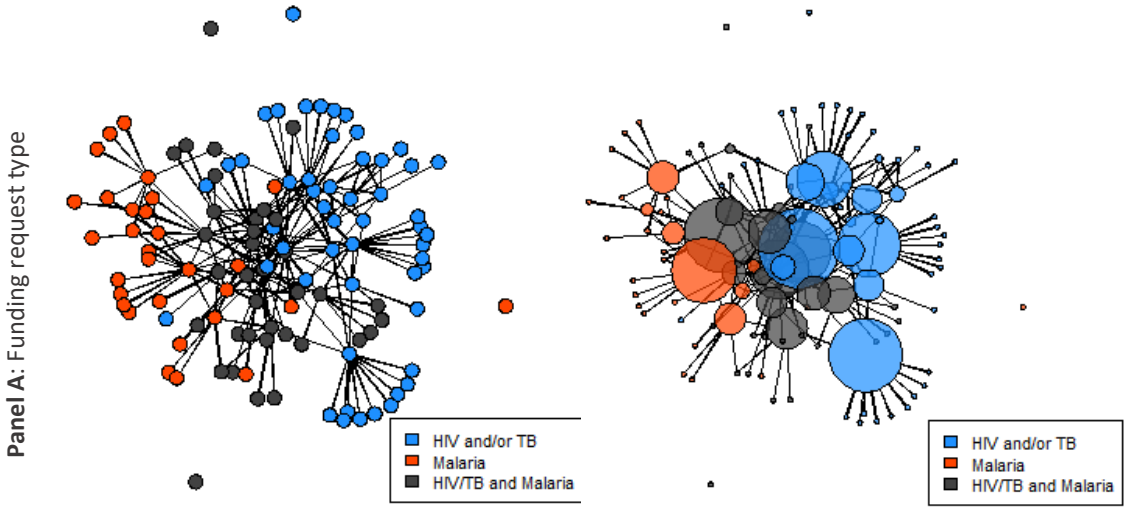

Main takeaway: By funding request, *actors who were involved in either the HIV/TB funding request (blue) or the malaria request (red) were not at the center of the network* when compared to the other actors who were involved in both funding requests (dark grey).
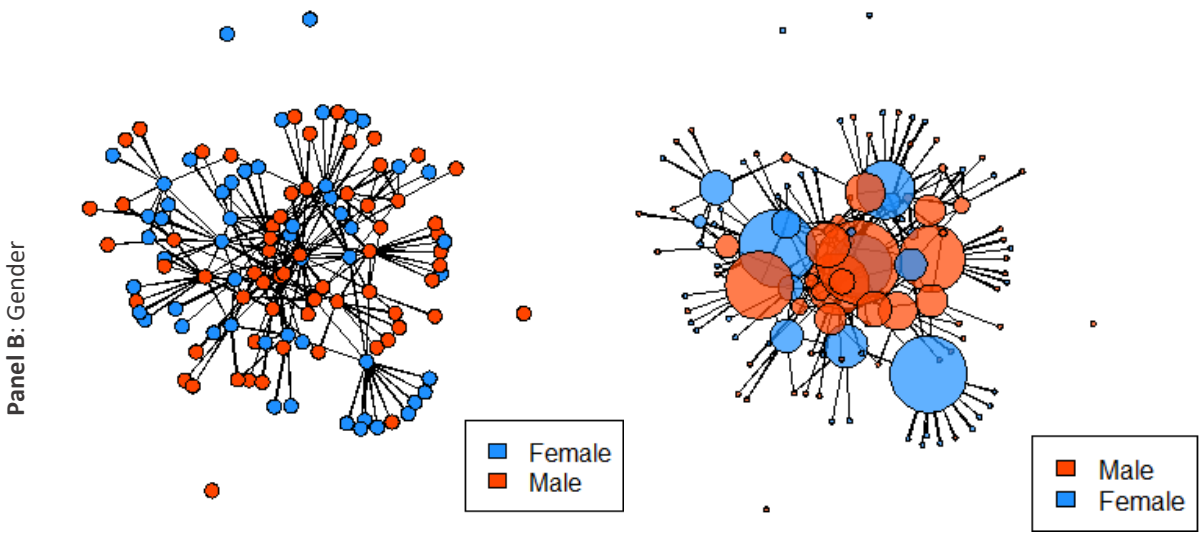
Main takeaway: When the network is plotted by gender, the structure suggests that *males held a slightly more dominant and influential position in the network (red)*. However, when nodes were sized according to how central they were in the network (betweenness scores), findings indicate an equivalent number of nodes (4) from both males and females in the highest tier of scores (largest circles), and a few more males than females with the medium tier of betweenness scores.

Panel C: CCM membership
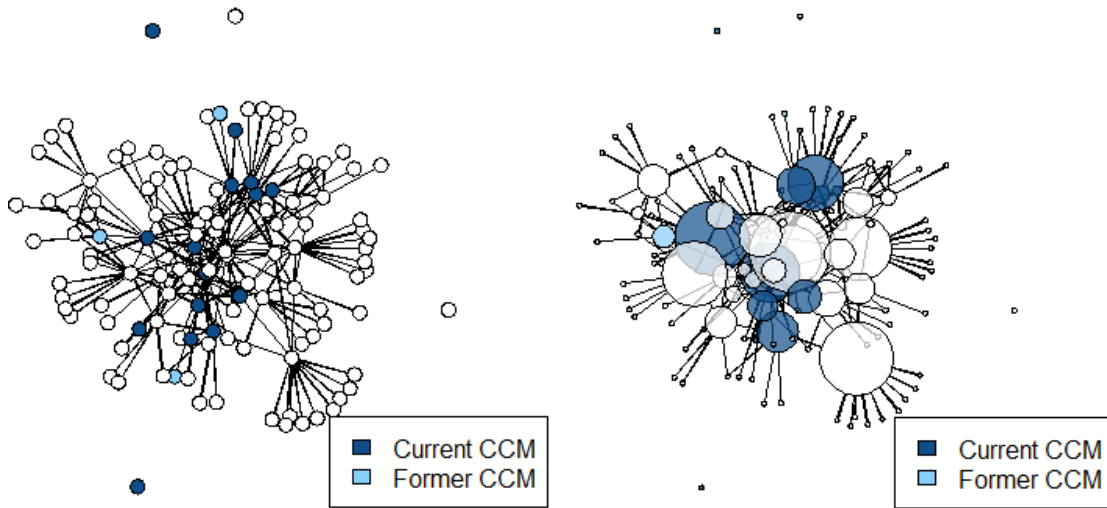
Main takeaway: When the network is plotted by current CCM membership, it highlights that *current CCM members occupied influential network positions as indicated by their placement* and elevated betweenness scores (navy blue).

PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF PARTNERSHIP

Survey respondents were also asked about the benefits and drawbacks of partnership in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and country ownership they perceived to have occurred due to working together with other individuals and organizations in supporting the 2017 Global Fund application process. Table 3 shows the level of agreement with each potential benefit and drawback statement.

Table 3. Perceived benefits and drawbacks of partnership

Perceived benefits	% Agreed "occurred"
Effectiveness	
Increased quality and technical soundness of the approved grants	100%
Better able to execute activities	93%
Better able to respond to challenges and bottlenecks that arose during process	93%
Better able to identify the need for, and to acquire additional technical support	85%
Mean (effectiveness benefits)	*93%*
Efficiency	
More timely execution of planned activities	93%
Leveraged each organization's comparative advantages	85%
Reduced transaction costs (i.e., more streamlined grant application process)	48%
Reduction in financial cost of process	19%
Mean (efficiency benefits)	*61%*
Country ownership	
Approved grants that are more responsive to country needs	93%
Increased inclusiveness of key stakeholders in the process	85%
Increased fairness of decisions made	85%
Increased legitimacy of decisions made	81%
Increased accountability among partners	78%
Increased transparency among partners	78%
Mean (country ownership benefits)	*83%*

Perceived drawbacks	% Agreed "occurred"
Effectiveness	
Created competition and conflict among member organizations	30%
Strained relations within my organization	15%
Mean (effectiveness drawbacks)	*23%*
Efficiency	
Forced to make decisions in a way which was not natural/typical for our organization	27%
Loss of control/autonomy over decisions	15%
Unnecessary management burden on my organization	8%
Mean (efficiency drawbacks)	*17%*
Country ownership	
Not enough credit given to my organization	15%
Total (country ownership drawbacks)	*15%*

Main takeaways:
- *Effectiveness*: All respondents reported that *partnership had improved the quality and technical soundness of the approved Global Fund grants*, which triangulates with evidence that Uganda's grant applications received minimal comments from the TRP and were approved on time. Most respondents were also in agreement that the partnership allowed for better identifying the need for technical support and in acquiring such support (85%) – which can be critical to developing a technically sound application.
- *Efficiency*: There was general agreement that partnership was linked to effectiveness of the grant application process (mean=93%). Most respondents perceived partnership to support more timely execution of planned activities (93%) and to leverage organizational competitive advantages (85%). Fewer respondents perceived reduced transaction costs (e.g., more streamlined grant application process) (48%) and reduced financial cost of the process (19%) because of the partnership – both of which align with qualitative information from KIIs suggesting increased transaction costs associated with a highly inclusive and participatory application process.
- *Country Ownership*: nearly all respondents perceived partnership to have resulted in increased inclusiveness of stakeholders (85%) and approved grants that were more responsive to country needs (93%). In addition, increased accountability (78%) and transparency (78%) among partners, and increased fairness (85%) and legitimacy (81%) of decisions were perceived as benefits by most respondents.
- Perceived drawbacks of the partnership were relatively minimal. Thirty percent of respondents perceived the partnership as linked to creating competition and conflict among partnership members and making decisions in an unnatural or atypical way. Fewer respondents (15%) reported strained relations, loss of control/decision-making autonomy, or lack of credit as perceived drawbacks that occurred.

Limitations
Findings should be interpreted considering several limitations. Only 30 network surveys were administered among this large network of over 100 collaborators. Also, most of the respondents were from the Ministry of Health which could have potentially biased the findings. This was coupled with the low response rate which limits the internal and external validity of the findings. The plots of network structure are likely to be more accurate at the core of the network, where more ties have been identified, than at the periphery of the network, where the density of ties is likely underestimated since we are missing data from identified actors that did not respond to the survey questionnaire. This holds true for betweenness measures, which are compromised by incomplete network data, particularly at the periphery, i.e., betweenness increases as actors are connected to others who were not surveyed (see nodes on network margins).

Conclusions and next steps
The network data offer important insights into the structure of the network of actors involved in the development of Uganda's 2017 Global Fund application – and to our knowledge, this is the first time such a network has been mapped for a Global Fund application process. This information will help in informing the PCE team on further

assessment of partnership during the implementation phase of the 2018–2020 grants, including potential identification of downstream consequences of the partnership.

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KEY MESSAGES

- Network mapping and analysis is a useful tool for health systems evaluation to support exploration of network size and structure, and to understand representation of stakeholder groups and the strength of relationships between actors.
- Uganda's 2017 Global Fund application cycle was a highly inclusive process in terms of stakeholder representation and participation, as mentioned by key informants and shown in the network plots, characterized by:
    - Ministry of Health, technical partners, and the CCM being at the center of the network.
    - Strong participation of gender and human rights constituencies.
    - High levels of trust between ties that can be associated with network performance and sustainability, which is reflection of a true partnership.
    - High betweenness centrality nodes in the middle of the network.
- Among survey respondents, there were many perceived benefits of the partnership, particularly in terms of effectiveness of the 2017 Global Fund grant application cycle.

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