

The Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents

In 2015, in the face of slowing progress toward global health commitments, the World Bank, health leaders, United Nations, and civil society organizations joined to create the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents (GFF). This unique, country-led model of financing has since been critical to accelerating health investments in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and spurring health progress and empowerment for women, children and adolescents.

Background:

From 1990 to 2020, the proportion of children dying before the age of five years more than halved, while maternal mortality dropped by 34 percent over the same period. As COVID-19 stretched and decimated health systems around the world, the health of women, children, and adolescents suffered significantly.

It's now estimated that 4.5 million women and babies are dying every year during pregnancy, childbirth or the first weeks after birth — equivalent to one death every seven seconds — mainly from preventable and treatable causes. Most of the 30 million unsafe abortions that take place each year occur in developing countries, putting already vulnerable women and girls at risk of life-threatening complications. Furthermore, severe underfunding of adolescent health contributes to the loss of one million adolescents' lives annually. Adolescent girls are particularly at risk: approximately one in three girls, in GFF countries, is married as a child, with lifelong negative consequences for their health, rights, and opportunities.

The last three decades showed us that progress is possible for women, children, and adolescents. When these groups are empowered through access to health services, it unlocks their potential, empowers lives and brings enormous benefits for a country's development.

What is the GFF?

Housed at the World Bank, the GFF supports 36 LMICs with the highest maternal, newborn and child mortality burdens with catalytic financing and technical assistance. These enable the development and implementation of national health plans focused on scaling up the most impactful interventions and access to affordable, quality care for women children and adolescents, while remaining within budget for governments. These plans focus on scaling up access to the most impactful interventions and affordable, quality care for women, children, and adolescents, including resilient health systems, sustainable health financing, SRHR, gender equality and nutrition.

Underpinning the GFF's goal of securing stronger, well-financed health systems is a firm belief that the potential of millions of women, children and adolescents can be unlocked through reliable, affordable healthcare. When this happens, the benefits for countries and the world will be enormous.

The GFF's unique value:

Country-led model: The GFF is the only global reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health + nutrition (RMNCAH-N) financing mechanism that is country-led. This model ensures that countries are in the driving seat from the beginning and encourages their longer-term commitment to women, children and adolescent health progress.

What is a country investment case?

- Countries applying for GFF support must establish a country platform for RMNCAH-N, comprising of diverse stakeholders such as health and finance ministries, civil society, and the private sector.
- With inputs from all stakeholders, countries develop a government-led, costed national plan to advance RMNCAH-N through strengthened primary health systems and prioritizing funding to high-impact but underinvested areas.
- Once the plan is completed and costed, countries can apply for GFF grants as part of World Bank-financed projects for improving RMNCAH-N services, making health system reforms, and boosting domestic resource mobilization and use to reduce reliance on future donor funding.

The GFF supports countries to identify national health priorities for women, children and adolescents and helps to convene public and private sector partners through a country-led platform. Governments use this platform initially to oversee the development and implementation of an investment case and national health plan, before evolving it to mobilize financing for the priorities identified, coordinate technical assistance, monitor and evaluate progress and ensure the plan is being delivered within budget.

Catalytic funding: Thanks to its position within the World Bank, the GFF has significantly enhanced additional and better funding to advance the rights and health of women, children, and adolescents.

The GFF utilizes the concept of “smart financing” – allocating small amounts of financing to catalyze funding from other mechanisms, such as the World Bank International Development Association (IDA), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), and the private sector. This helps ensure the GFF country will utilize domestic funds for the national health plan, creating sustainability and less reliance on future donor funding.

To date, **every \$1 of GFF grant financing has brought in an additional \$7 in World Bank funds for country health investments**, due to GFF's ability to link its grants to World Bank IDA/IBRD. In addition, an extra \$6.3 and \$9.3 have been invested by other partners and domestic governments respectively against every GFF \$1 for country-led plans. **Using the US\$2 billion that donors have committed to the facility since 2015, the GFF has unlocked US\$32 billion for women, children, and adolescent health in partner countries.**

The GFF's impact:

Since its launch in 2015, the GFF has supported 36 LMICs in making significant health gains for women, children, and adolescent, including:

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- ✓ **96 million** women receiving four or more antenatal care visits.
 - ✓ **103 million** women delivering their babies safely.
 - ✓ **111 million** newborns benefiting from early initiation of breastfeeding.
 - ✓ **More than 500 million** women receiving access to modern family planning.
 - ✓ **187 million** unintended pregnancies prevented.
 - ✓ **155 million** women and children accessed life savings services in GFF countries, in 2021.
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[\(GFF Investment Opportunity, 2023\)](#)

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, GFF responded quickly with financing and technical assistance to strengthen primary care delivery and ensure the continuation of health services, preventing greater health losses than would have been experienced. During this period, around 70 percent of countries that had received GFF support for at least five years achieved improvements across most essential care service and all GFF-supported countries showed higher annual rates of improvement in family planning and immunization service delivery than countries that are eligible for GFF support but don't currently have it.

Partnering from global to local levels:

The GFF works across multiple platforms to further collaboration with domestic partners—including governments, CSOs, the private sector and others—while playing an active role in the global health architecture alongside Gavi, WHO, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and Global Fund. The GFF Trust Fund Committee is comprised of representatives of the World Bank, governments and foundation donors to the Trust Fund—overseeing the GFF's strategic priorities, approving funding allocations and the main decision-making body. The GFF's Investors Group of 35 members is a key convenor for domestic and global partners in the RMNCAH-N space.

GFF chairs the Joint Learning Agenda (JLA), the first multi-partner initiative to put the Global Action Plan (GAP) Sustainable Health Financing and CSO Engagement Accelerators into action through collaboration between Global Fund, Gavi, PMNCH, UHC2030 and 400 additional orgs across 20 African countries.