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# How the Regional Platforms are Catalyzing Engagement in Global Fund Grants by Enhancing Community Knowledge and Access to Information

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A JOINT CASE STUDY FROM THE SIX REGIONAL PLATFORMS FOR  
COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

DECEMBER 2019

# Background

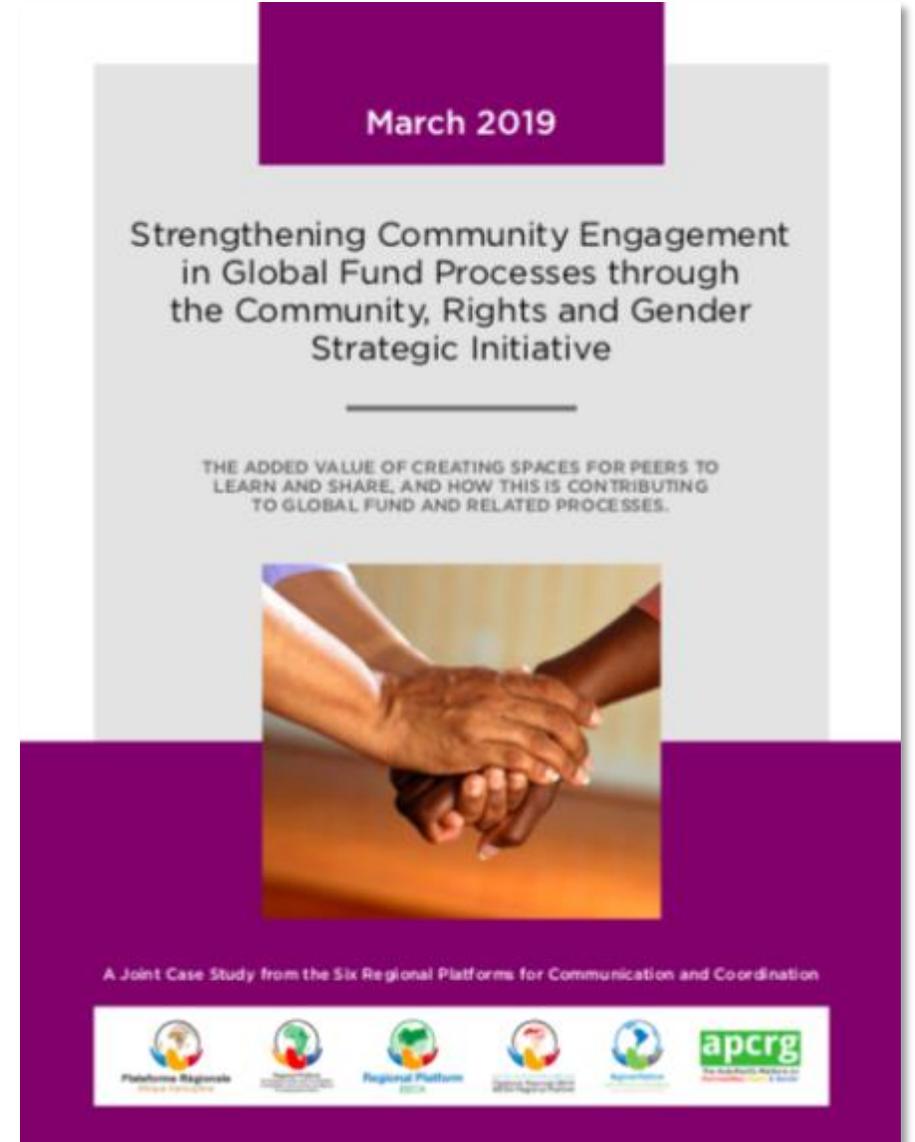
The Global Fund’s Community, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiative (CRG SI) seeks to enhance meaningful engagement of communities in Global Fund-related processes.

As part of the CRG SI, six Regional Platforms Communication and Coordination have been established.

Aligned to the SI’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework, the Regional Platforms regularly collaborate to document their collective results against their strategic objectives.

This is the second joint case study conducted by the six Regional Platforms.

The first case study was published in March 2019 (in [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Russian](#) and [Portuguese](#)), under the theme “The added value of creating spaces for peers to learn and share, and how this is contributing to Global Fund and related processes.”



# Why this Joint Case Study?

- ❑ **Assessing impact of a significant financial investment:** Nearly a third of Regional Platform resources (32%) are directed to information sharing and communications. As such, these are key activities to evaluate and ensure high-impact results and return on investment for the Platforms and the CRG SI.
- ❑ **Measuring progress against a key strategic objective:** Objective 1 of the Regional Platforms is To enhance knowledge and improve meaningful engagement of communities through regular dissemination of tailored and targeted information on Global Fund-related processes and the CRG SI.” This joint case study is focused on measuring outcomes related to this objective.
- ❑ **Contributing timely information on the CRG SI to inform the end-term evaluation:** As part of the CRG SI’s MEL framework, a joint case study was due at the mid-point of implementation (in February 2019), to inform the Global Fund Board decision on SI funding continuation. The framework states that a second case study is due in December 2019 to feed into the CRG SI external end-term evaluation.
- ❑ **Enhancing collaboration across the six Regional Platforms:** This case study creates an opportunity for the six Regional Platforms to work together on a project, united by the objective of assessing their collective impact. This also responds to findings of the CRG Special Initiative evaluation that “The Platforms have benefitted from facilitated opportunities to convene and collaborate.”
- ❑ **Expressing our collective global impact:** The opportunity to aggregate the impact of the six Regional Platforms’ information and communication support helps create a picture of global impact for the CRG SI.
- ❑ **Creating an opportunity to adapt and improve during the third iteration of the CRG SI:** The timing of the joint case study provides critical feedback to the Platforms themselves, enabling them to improve, as we approach the third iteration of the CRG SI in the 2020-2022 funding cycle.

# Methodology

- ❑ **A Joint Case Study Task Force was formed** in June 2019, during the monthly coordination call of the six regional Platforms. Members of the Task Force are self-nominated. The Task Force comprises of Gemma Oberth (Regional Platforms Coordinator for the Global Fund CRG SI), Onesmus Mlewa Kalama (Technical Support Center Manager at the Anglophone Africa Platform), Ida Savadogo (Coordinator of the Francophone Africa Platform) and Liesl Messersshmidt (Former CRG SI M&E Consultant).
- ❑ **The Task Force defined five specific research questions** to be answered by the case study. These were set during a series of planning calls, in June and August 2019:
  1. What kinds of tailored and targeted information on Global Fund-related processes and the CRG SI do the Platforms disseminate to communities?
  2. How do the Platforms develop, synthesize, translate, and/or disseminate information on Global Fund-related issues?
  3. Have the Platforms updated mappings and listservs of regional and national community groups and networks, to ensure information is targeted?
  4. Is there evidence that the information shared has enhanced knowledge and improved meaningful engagement of communities?
  5. How can the Regional Platforms improve their communication strategies?
- ❑ **A data collection tool was developed** with sub-questions under each research area.
- ❑ **The six Regional Platforms were tasked with completing the data collection tool**, returning the information to the Task Force.
- ❑ **The results of the regional data collection were synthesized and analyzed** by the the Task Force.
- ❑ **The results were shared with all members of the six Regional Platforms** for discussion and reflection.
- ❑ **Next steps:** the case study will be written up, translated (into English, French, Spanish, Russian and Portuguese) and disseminated by the six Regional Platforms. Publication is anticipated in Q1 of 2020.

# OUTLINE

PART 1: What do we share?

PART 2: How do we share it?

PART 3: Who receives it?

PART 4: What is the impact?

PART 5: How could we improve?

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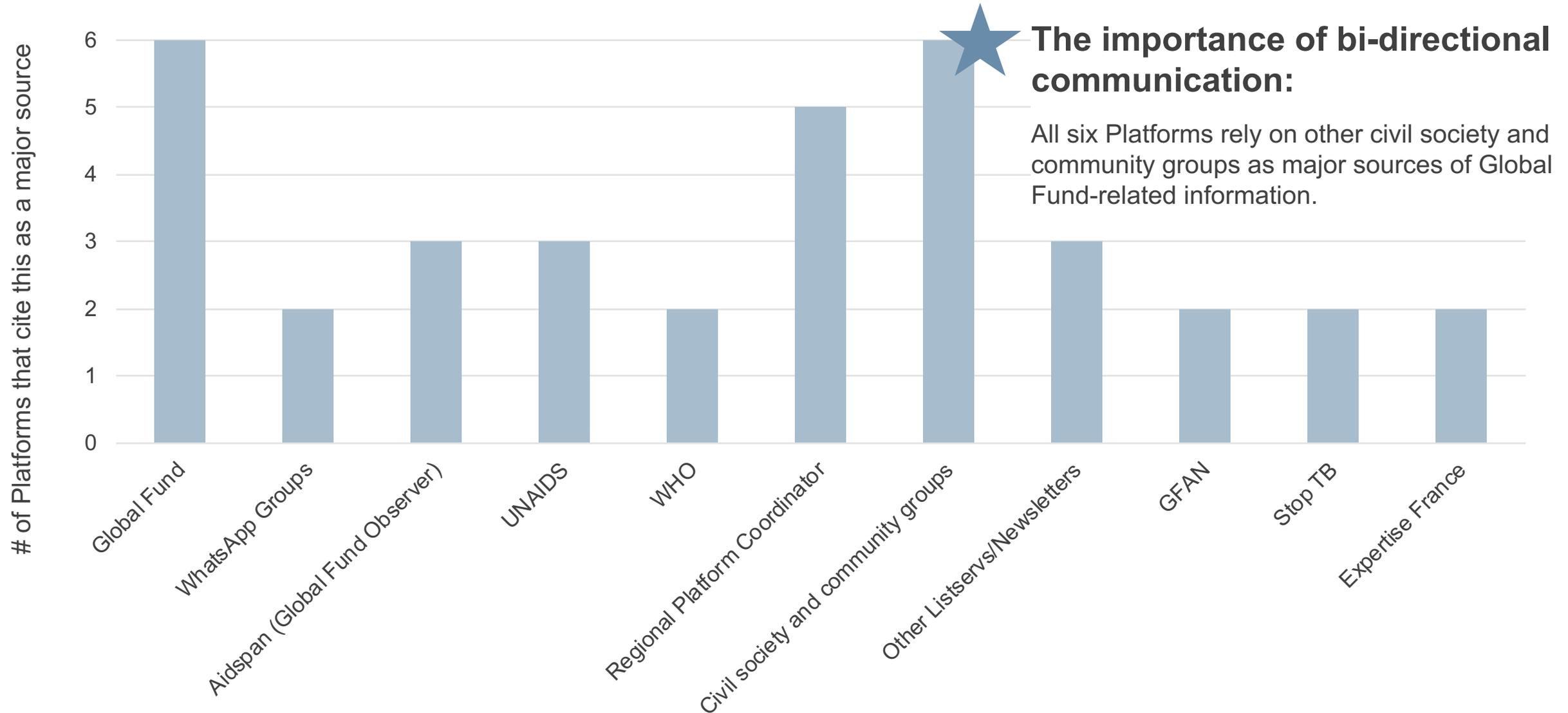
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# Major Sources of Information Shared by the Regional Platforms



# Selecting Relevant Topics Through Consultation with Communities

To ensure that the information shared is relevant and useful, the Regional Platforms select topics and themes through **a consultative process with communities**.

Several Platforms have done **communications surveys**, helping them to gauge the utility of the information shared, and make it more tailored and targeted to the needs of communities.

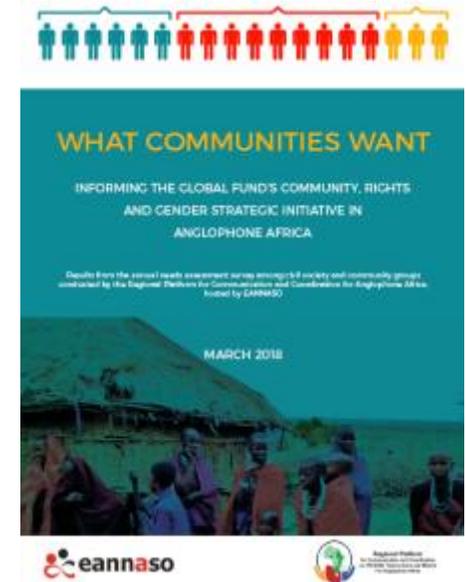
Platforms also rely on **feedback from communities during in-person workshops, training and consultations**. These events are another critical source of guidance for the Platforms when selecting relevant topics of information to share.



Help us improve our APCASO/APCRG newsletters

As part of improving the way we communicate Global Fund, Communities, Rights, and Gender (CRG), and other related information and opportunities to you towards ending the HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria and other diseases, we would like you to answer our quick survey!

The purpose of this survey is to assess your level of satisfaction and usage of the various information and references that we publish and share through our Mailchimp.



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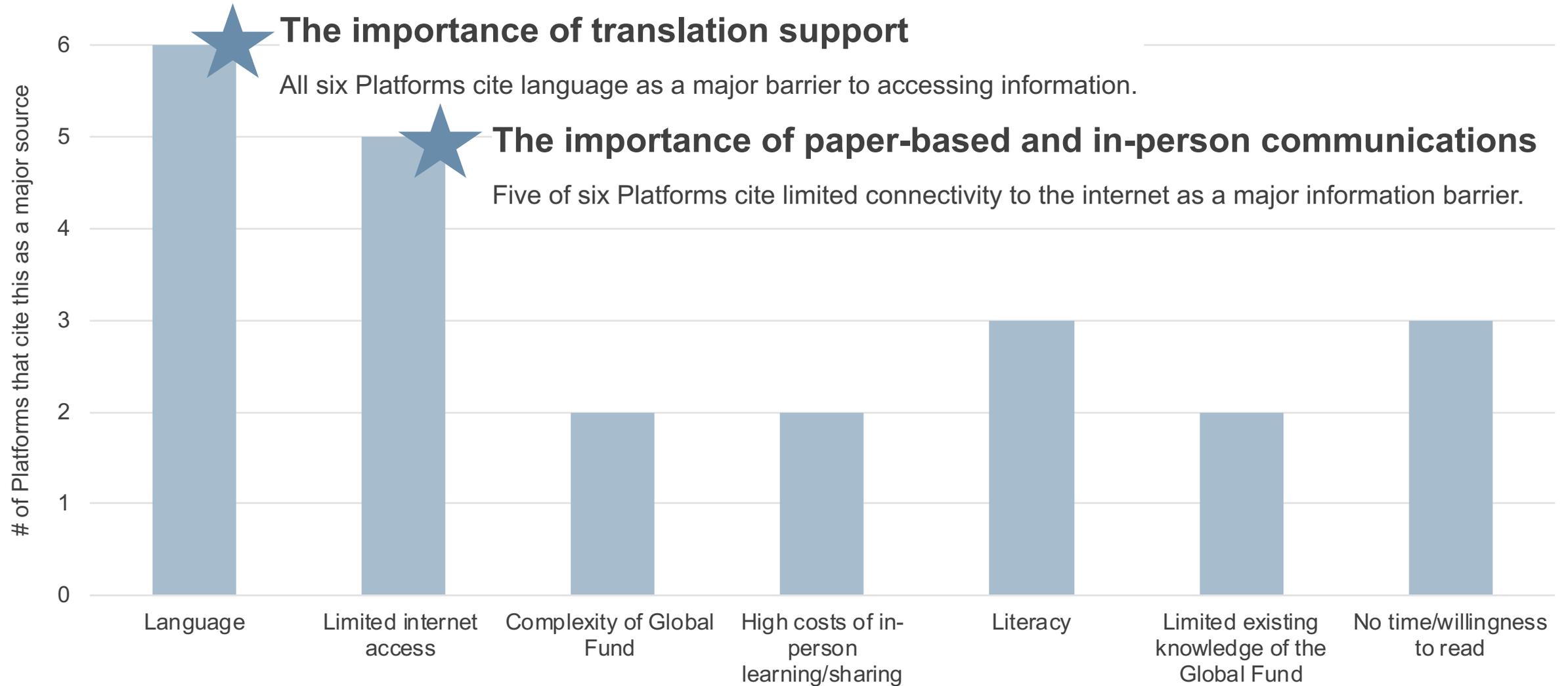
**PART 2: How do we share it?**

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# Major Barriers to Accessing Global Fund Information Faced by Communities



Region	Major barriers to accessing accurate and timely Global Fund-related information, by region
Anglophone Africa	<b>Language</b> , Communities not having a culture of reading, limited internet connection, misinformation
Asia Pacific	<b>Language</b> , accessibility (internet access, literacy), diversity of needs in the region, information “overload”
EECA	<b>Language</b> , not knowing where to find it, Global Fund information is difficult to understand, limited time to read, limited internet access (particularly for key populations)
Francophone Africa	<b>Language</b> , limited internet connectivity, limited resources to do in-person information sharing (a preferred method for communities in the region), limited literacy.
LAC	<b>Language</b> , complexity of the content (difficult to understand), lack of existing knowledge on Global Fund, scattered or fragmented information from different sources, lack of visibility of community responses, limited internet connectivity, limited availability of easy-to-use tools or guidelines, limited spaces for in-person exchange (due to cost).
MENA	<b>Language</b> , low levels of literacy, limited existing understanding of the Global Fund

# Regional Platform Initiatives to Overcome Language Barriers



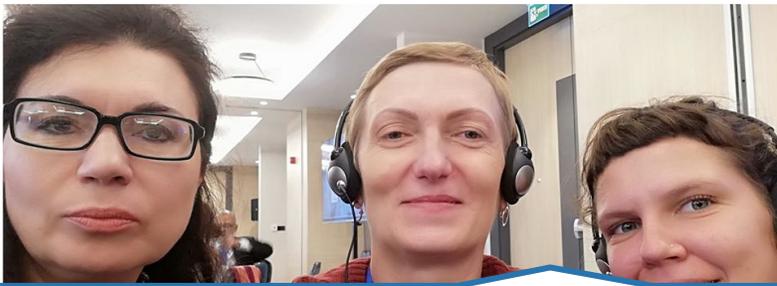
The **Anglophone Africa Platform** has 16 Global Fund community guides, each available in English, Portuguese and Swahili. There have been more than 3000 downloads of the Portuguese guides, and more than 1000 downloads of the Swahili guides, demonstrating utility of this translation.



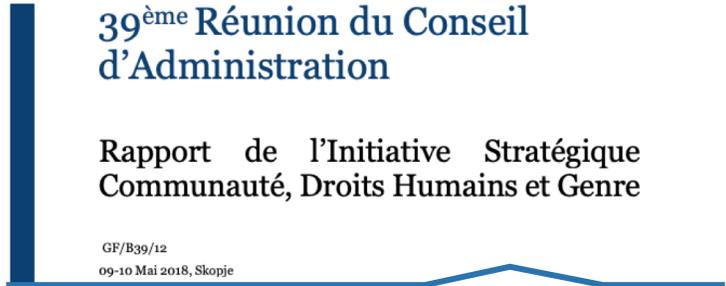
The **Asia-Pacific Platform** published an info note on the Global Fund's human rights complaint mechanism, in English, Khmer, Sinhala, Vietnamese, Bahasa, Indonesia and Lao. An increase in the region's use of the complaint mechanism followed the publication of this information.



The **LAC Platform** translated Global Fund slides on the CCM Evolution process into Spanish. This was key for communities in Colombia and Guatemala – two evaluation pilot countries – to be able to effectively participate.



The **EECA Platform** hosts regular webinars in Russian, to share Global Fund-related information, access to technical assistance opportunities, and other ways to engage. Testimonials from stakeholders in the region confirm how critical these Russian language webinars are.



The **Francophone Africa Platform** translated eight key documents from the 39<sup>th</sup> Global Fund Board meeting into French, enabling Francophone communities to engage with this information. All Global Fund Board documents are only available in English.



The **MENA Platform** supported live translation of key sessions in the community village at the 20<sup>th</sup> International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa, in Kigali, Rwanda. This made the conference more accessible to MENA communities.

# The Diversity of Regional Platform Communication Channels



Channel	How the Platforms Use it Strategically
Websites	All Platforms have websites (either separate, or embedded in the host organizations website). Maintaining their websites is strategic in terms of knowledge management and information consolidation, including through developing a repository of key documents. The sites allow for information to be stored and accessed by their audiences whenever necessary.
Newsletters	Newsletters are one way of operationalizing the various mappings that the Platforms do. Platforms constantly try to grow, as well as refine, their newsletter subscribers list. This method is far reaching (more than 10,000 inboxes), fast, and provides a useful feedback mechanism (since opens/clicks are measured).
Social networks	Spreading information widely. Facebook in particular is a way for the Platforms to access a large number of people.
Direct email communication	Used for targeted and/or more intensive communication, such as supporting a community member to develop a request for TA
Webinars	Most effective for training, orienting communities on new tools, and enabling interactive questions and discussion
YouTube videos	Given literacy barriers in some regions, video enables a broader audience to access information. Some Platforms find that recording webinars and posting them later as YouTube videos has increased their audience for such sessions.
Mobile phone applications	One Platform has a app which is used to aggregate information from 28 key websites for the response to HIV, TB and malaria (14 in English and 14 Spanish). The app notifies the users each time that a site has new posts, at the exact moment they are updated, without having to do complicated searches.
In-person communication	Particularly critical for coordination purposes, providing spaces for communities to exchange experience, make new connections and expand their networks. The Platforms first joint case study extensively documented the impact of in-person forums for improving community knowledge, skills, connections, and access to support.
Regional / thematic email listservs	In some regions, it is more practical to make use of existing listservs than for the Platform to create and manage a new one. This reduces duplication of efforts, and harnesses existing community networks and platforms for information sharing. Platforms also report making use of this channel bi-directionally, citing other listservs as a top source of Global Fund-related information which use to strengthen their work, coordinate efforts, and pass on to wider/more diverse audiences.
WhatsApp	Best for quick and easy communications. Platforms also make use of this channel for bi-directional communication, learning about what other civil society and communities in their regions are working on/planning. WhatsApp groups also enable communities to showcase their work. Groups are used for functional coordination during in-person events and conferences. It is also used as a feedback mechanism for the Platform, to gauge topics of relevance to communities and identify current information and support needs.
Google groups	These enable the Platforms to curate specific lists of civil society and communities (grant implementers, CCM members, activists and advocates, etc.) and make their communications more tailored and targeted.

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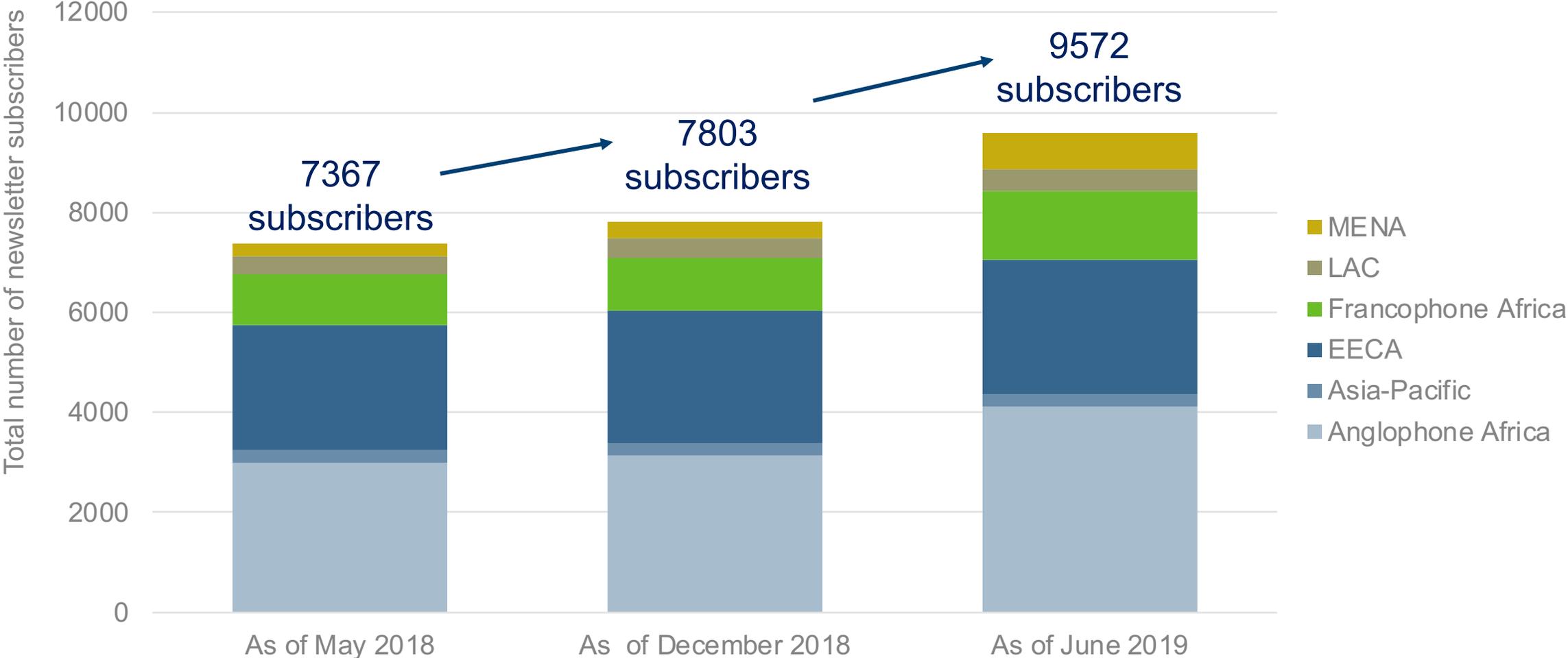
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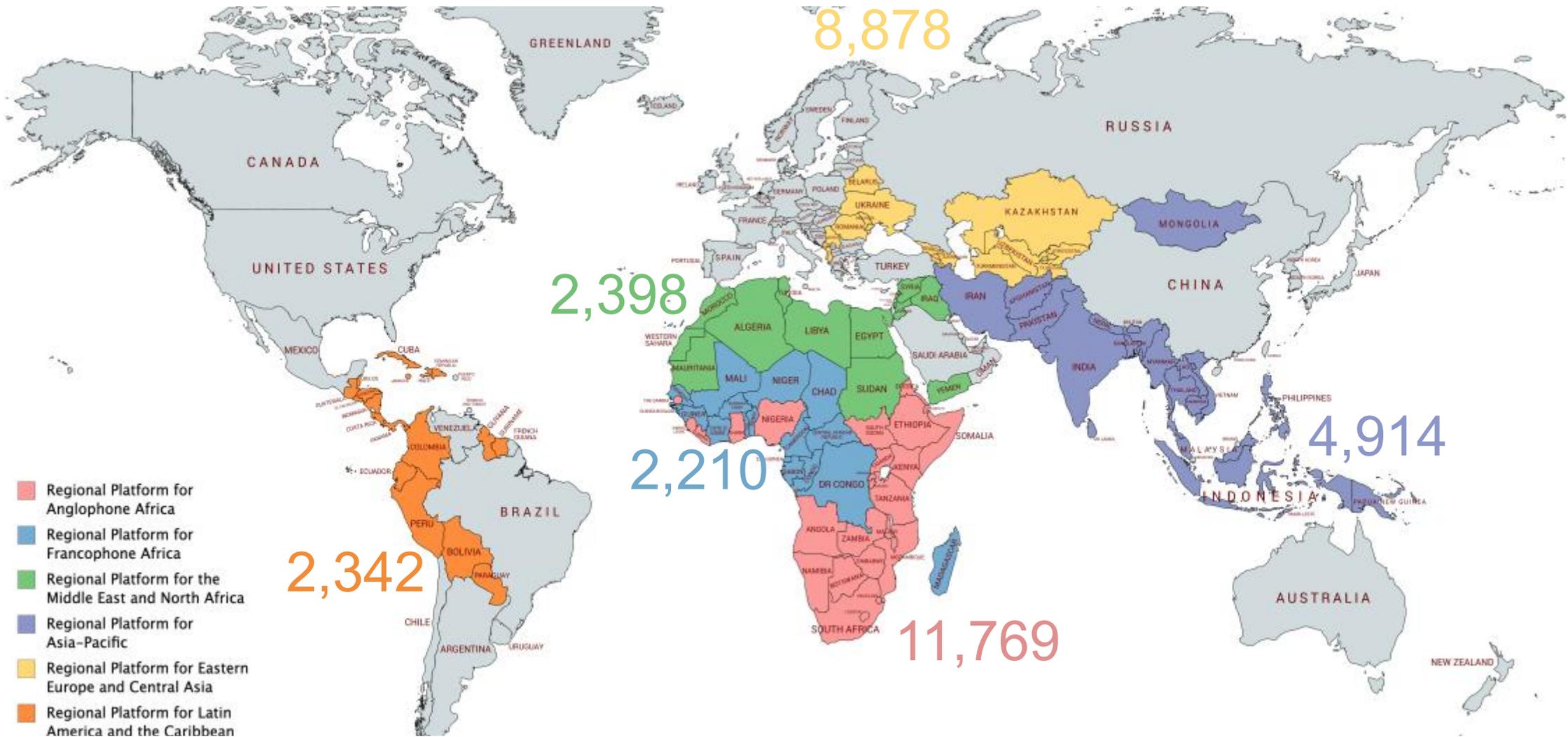
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# Growth in Regional Platform Newsletter Subscriber Reach



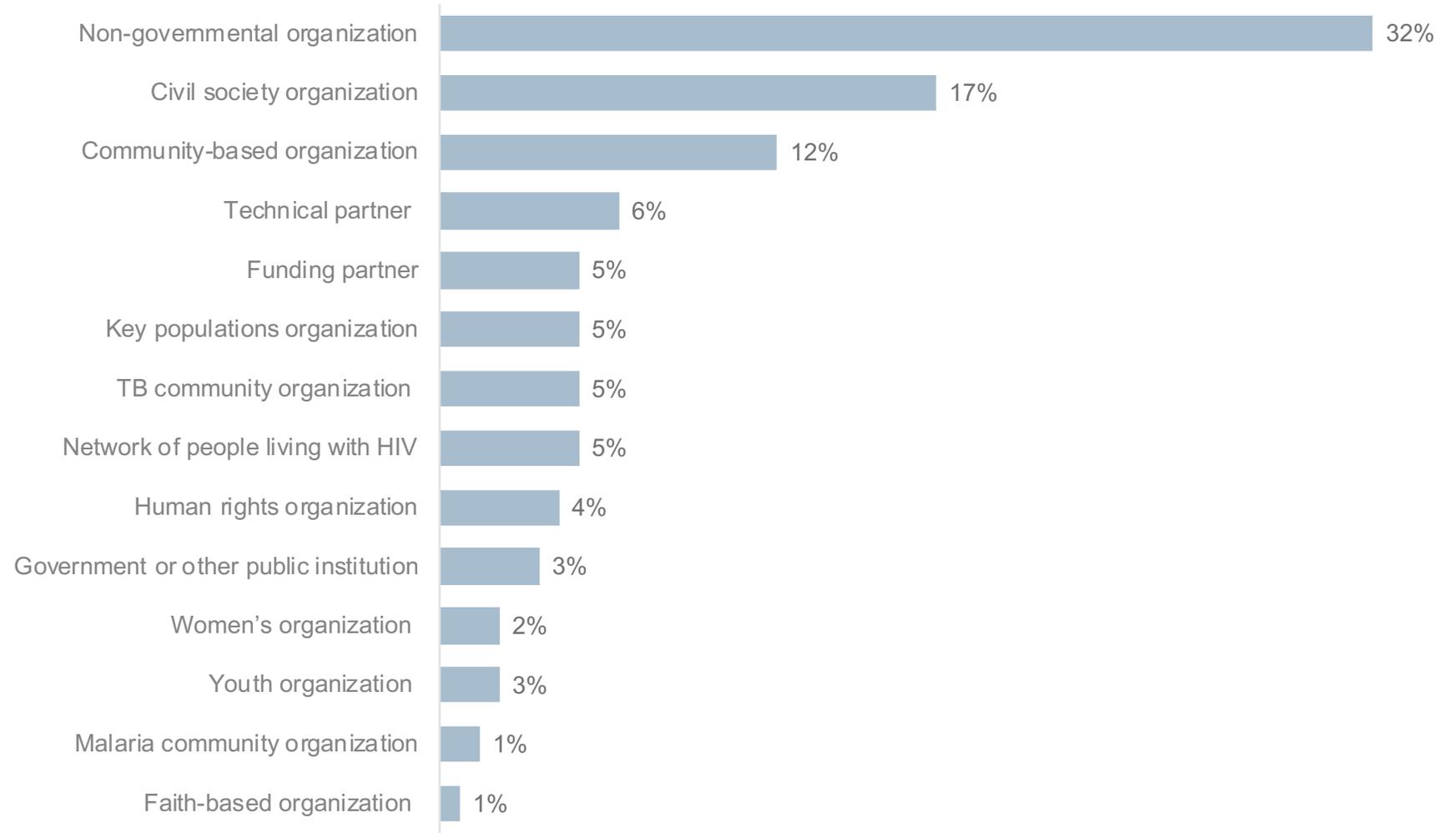
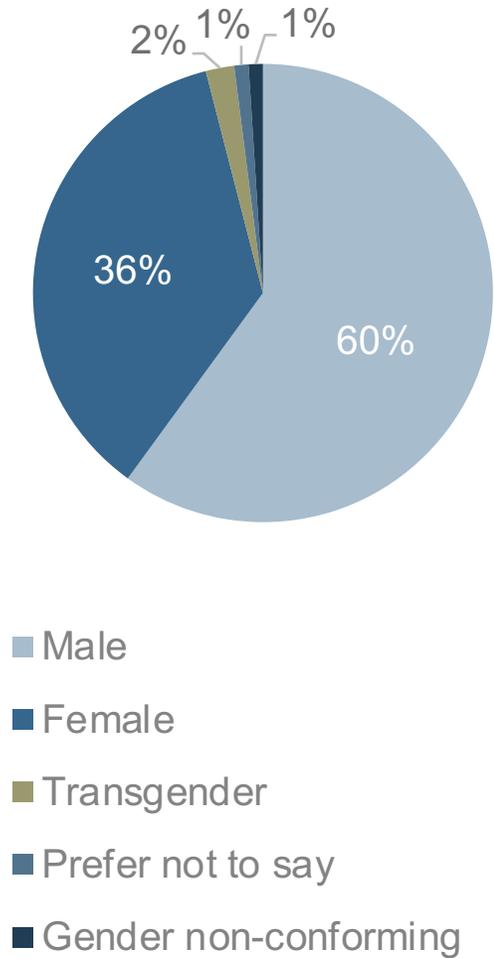
# Estimated **TOTAL** Reach, Across All Communication Channels



# Effective Platform Strategies for Growing Communication Reach

- Regularly publish news, information and materials. The timeliness and relevance of information attracts engagement.
- Cross-publishing newsletters and web posts on Facebook, as well as through other partner-hosted listservs in the region.
- Ensuring that communication channels are interlinked (e.g. links to Facebook are on the website; links to the website are at the bottom of newsletters).
- Co-organizing webinars with other regional partners, including Component 2 regional networks, to draw a wider audience.
- Inviting new civil society organizations to in-person events, particularly those that are held on an annual basis.
- Conducting mapping exercise of civil society and communities working on TB, HIV and malaria and other related health programs.
- Live streaming in-person events (on YouTube or Facebook) so that partners who are not able to attend can still benefit from the information shared.
- Requesting participants lists from partner-hosted events, such as UNAIDS and regional networks, and adding them to Platform databases.
- “Snowballing” new contacts (asking them for additional names and details). This method works particularly well in countries or communities where Platforms do not have a lot of existing contacts.

# Characteristics of Those Reached by In-Person Platform Communications



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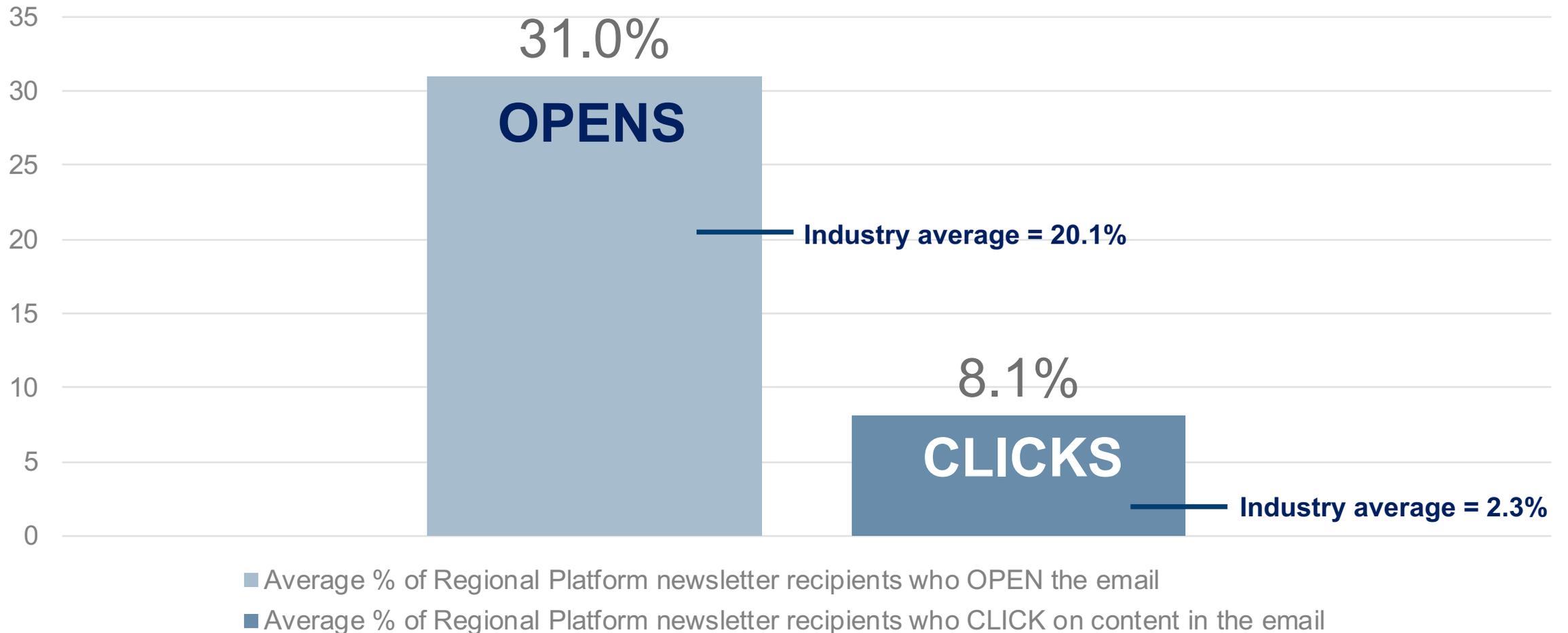
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# Metrics of **Utility** and **Engagement** for Platform Newsletters

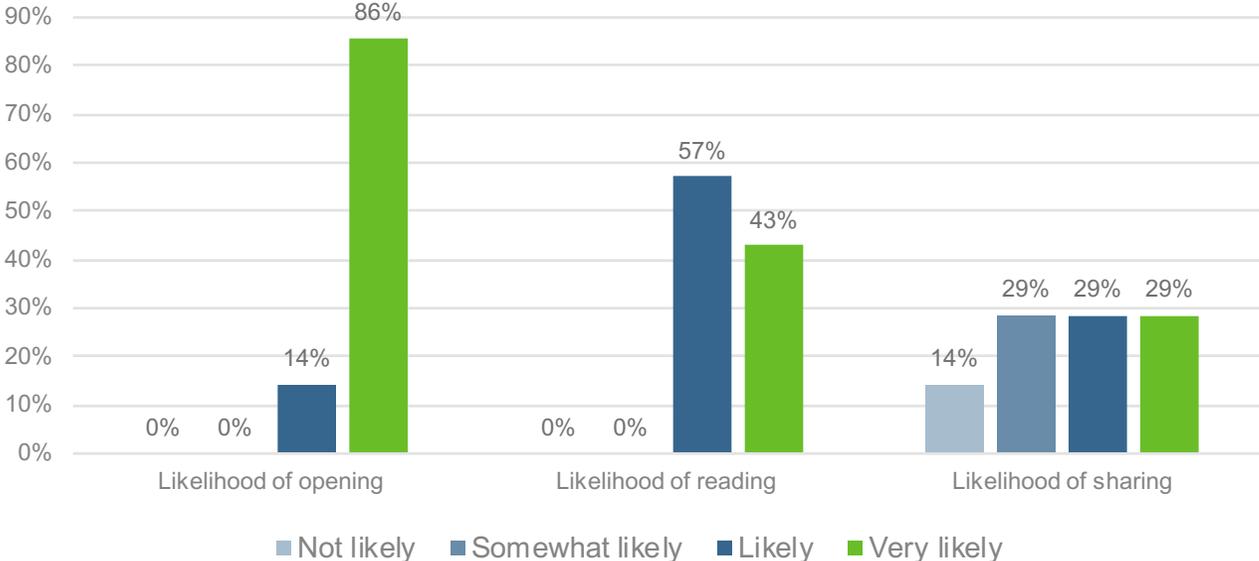


# Results from Regional Platform Communication Surveys

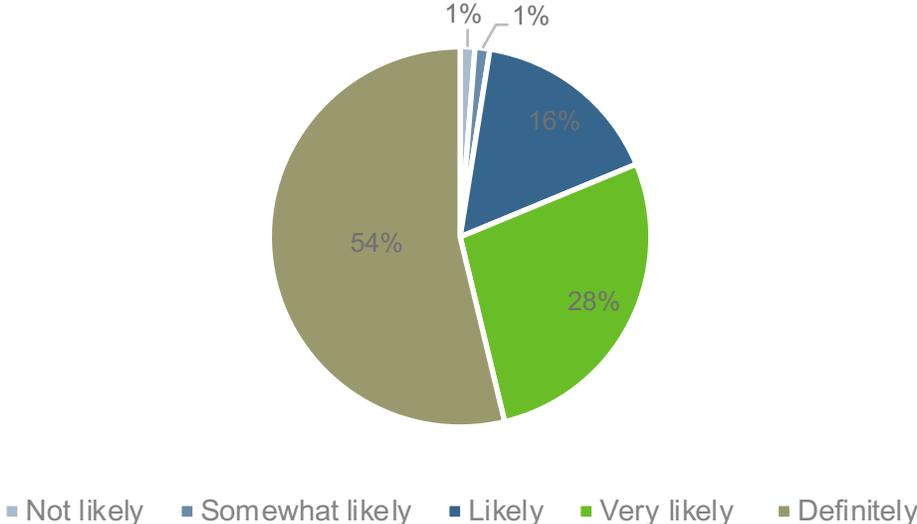
In 2018, three Regional Platforms conducted communications satisfaction surveys to gauge the utility of the information they share and identify ways to improve.

"It is very interesting to have this content. It allows us to generate communication actions, as well as share information and cross-cutting education around the topics studied." – LAC survey

**Asia-Pacific** Regional Platform Newsletter Utility



Likelihood communities would recommend the **Anglophone Africa** CRG Regional Platform newsletter to their peers and networks



# Community Testimonials

## on the impact of Regional Platform information and communications

“

EANNASO stands out as a Regional Platform which is so engaging and interactive. It has brought Global Fund processes closer to CBOs and less-advantaged organizations.

– Respondent to EANNASO’s March 2019 communications survey

”



Reaching communities left behind

“

The periodic publications that the LAC Platform publishes on its Facebook page are very useful. They help us to have updated information on activism actions that are carried out in different countries of the region. I have also found useful information on topics related to HIV, human rights, and technical assistance opportunities like the French 5% initiative and others.

– Trans activist in Mexico

”



Connecting and coordinating activists

“

The support of the Platform team was instrumental in identifying relevant civil society partners for malaria in the Asia Pacific, and their communications ahead of the New Delhi meeting ensured that they arrived ready and well-informed on the opportunities presented by CS4ME.

– Global Coordinator of Civil Society for Malaria Elimination (CS4ME)

”



Preparing communities to engage meaningfully

# Community Testimonials

## on the impact of Regional Platform information and communications

“

Information provided at the EECA Regional Platform’s website is instrumental to a better understanding of Global Fund processes, especially those related to sustainability and transition issues taking place in the EECA region

– Director, of a Women’s Network in Russia

”



Understanding complex thematic topics

“

Through its Facebook group, the Platform helped me to discover that we were not alone in the fight against HIV in the MENA region. The Platform has allowed me to broaden my knowledge of the Global Fund and other partners, including opportunities such as CRG, where I submitted a request for technical support.

– Person Living with HIV in Algeria

”



Accessing Global Fund technical assistance

“

We thank the Francophone Africa Platform for the message about the civil society mapping. It is well-received. We will share it with the other CSOs in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).”

– Coordinator of a Youth Network in DRC

”



Further dissemination of information and opportunities

# Case Example: How Regional Platform Communications Increased Access to Global Fund-related Technical Assistance in Latin America and the Caribbean

At the beginning of the 2017-2019 funding cycle, there were very limited requests to the CRG SI short-term Technical Assistance program from organizations and communities of the LAC region. For this reason, one of the main activities of the Platform was to develop a tool that would facilitate the understanding of the program, the nature of the applications, and support the communities to prepare and fill out the appropriate applications. ★ **Success factor:** Responding to an identified gap/need

A first draft of the tool was presented at the third regional meeting of the LAC Platform, held in Lima, Peru in June 2018. Communities provided feedback to the Platform that the tool was too general and not interactive enough. A technical team was constituted to respond to this feedback. The Platform turned the paper-based tool into an online interactive tool that specifically clarifies what TA is and how it works, while also facilitating the filling of an application. ★ **Success factor:** Getting feedback from communities and adjusting the approach

The final version of the [Technical Assistance Tool](#) was launched in the December 2018. Since that time, several promotional strategies were generated, including through the Platform newsletter. The Platform organized two training webinars in March 2019 (one in Spanish and other in English) for the management and use of the TA tool. The [English](#) version webinar has watched 58 times on YouTube, and the [Spanish](#) version has watched 93 times. Likewise, two debates (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)) were posted in the Community (the social network of the LAC Platform). The online debates explain on detail, step by step, how the webinar and the tool can be accessed, and which member of the LAC Platform can be contacted to request support for the development of an application using the online tool. [Webinars](#) and [debates](#) about the tool were also disseminated by newsletter, Facebook and Twitter; along with this, the platform expands the tool and the TA program positioning in the region. ★ **Success factor:** Active and ongoing promotion, to ensure information is used

As a result of this effort, the number of requests for technical assistance from the LAC region began to increase from 2 requests in January 2018 to a total of 20 requests as of September 2019. ★ **Success factor:** Measuring the outcome of the activity

# Case Example: How Regional Platform Communications Increased Meaningful Engagement in Transition Planning in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Starting in August 2018, the Transition Readiness Assessment as well as the development of the Transition Plan took place in Tajikistan. A special working group was established on the base of CCM to coordinate the implementation of these processes. In light of this, the EECA Platform, decided to organize a workshop for civil society and community representatives in Tajikistan with the aim to improve their understanding of the transition processes taking place in country, and ensure their meaningful involvement into the process of Transition Plan development. The workshop took place on 14 – 15 of November in Dushanbe. ★ **Success factor:** Timing of information sharing was well-aligned to ongoing country processes

The organization of the workshop was approved on the level of the President's Administration with a formal approval being received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Local UNDP office as well as CCM Secretariat provided support with the organization of the event. Also, the Platform cooperated with the International Curatio Foundation (Georgia) to organize this event as Curatio was responsible for the development of the Transition Readiness Assessment as well as for drafting the Transition Plan. Tamar Gotsadze, the expert leading this work in Tajikistan on behalf of Curatio, became one of the workshop facilitators. The second facilitator was Bobokhojaev Oktam, Head of Department of the Program Research at the Republican TB Center (PR of GF TB grant). 34 participants took part in the event altogether including 21 civil society and community representatives 8 of which were CCM members. Also, representatives of UNDP, UNAIDS, Republican TB and AIDS Centers as well as newly appointed CCM Secretary took part in the event. ★ **Success factor:** High-level buy-in and coordination with multiple key stakeholders and TA providers

Civil society and communities' representatives were informed about which national transition-related processes were already completed, which were still on-going, and what the future plans were. They also learned about the possible consequence of all these processes for the sustainability of HIV/TB prevention services for key populations in country. ★ **Success factor:** Clear mapping of community entry points

Civil society and communities' representatives had an opportunity to review the content of the draft Transition Plan and provide their feedback, comments and suggestions on the content of those components of the draft Transition Plan being of a priority for key affected populations and also suggest new activities which, in their opinion, should be additionally included into the Plan. Tamar Gotsadze, Curatio expert, responsible for the development of the Transition Plan included all the suggested relevant activities into the draft Plan before submitting its final version to the Working group coordinating the development of the Transition Plan for the final review and approval. ★ **Success factor:** Clear and measurable outcome

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# Key Lessons Learned

- **In-person communication remains vital, especially in COEs:** In regions with many challenging operating environments – especially conflict zones – internet access is often extremely limited. Communication through Facebook, WhatsApp and email is sometimes ineffective. Country visits are vital to engage communities in these places. They allow the Platform to map partners and conduct rapid situation analyses. Partnering with TA providers working in humanitarian settings (UNDP, UNHRC, Red Cross) has been helpful.
- **Devoting communications to "actionable content" boosts engagement:** Time invested in the curation of newsletter content is worthwhile. Having a diversity of topics covered, and going beyond a single disease has boosted engagement. Moreover, by devoting a large share of the information to "actionable content" (e.g. opportunities to receive support, or provide feedback on processes), Platforms have carved a niche where communities know they can find information that will make a perceptible difference in their work.
- **Local language dissemination of information is critical:** Language is a key barrier to accessing Global Fund-related information in all six regions. Translating materials as well as holding webinars and in-person sessions in local languages is a worthwhile investment. This is a unique value-add of the Regional Platforms which should be maintained or scaled-up in the next funding cycle.
- **Strategic collaboration with other regional and technical partners expands content as well as audiences:** The Platforms have benefited from collaboration with strategic partners, including disease networks, Component 2 partners, regional technical partners, among others. This has helped to generate a cooperative exchange of information and content, define easier ways of reaching other sectors or disease components, or neglected sub-regions. Partnerships have boosted engagement with content in newsletters, webinars, and in-person for a.

# Next Steps



- Become more tailored and targeted with communications through country-level mappings of actors, processes and entry points.
- Set targets for communications activities and measure progress and outcomes. Communicate our results (by numbers) with key stakeholders in the region to generate further buy-in for the Platform's work.
- Intensify translation support and expand local-language exchange opportunities in the next funding cycle.
- Formalize partnerships for collaborative communications with regional partners, particularly Component 2 networks under the CRG SI.
- Increase efforts for direct contact – either in-person or one-on-one – especially when communicating with key decision-making stakeholders such as CCM members.
- Make better use of materials, tools, publications, methodologies, etc. produced by the other regional platforms. Adapting these existing sources of information to other regions will reduce duplication of efforts and enhance inter-platform collaboration and cross-regional learning.
- Develop communications strategies, which capture various approaches, methods, channels and targets. Periodically seek feedback from communities on communication approaches and adjust in light of their feedback.

# Contact The Regional Platforms

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## **LAC Regional Platform**

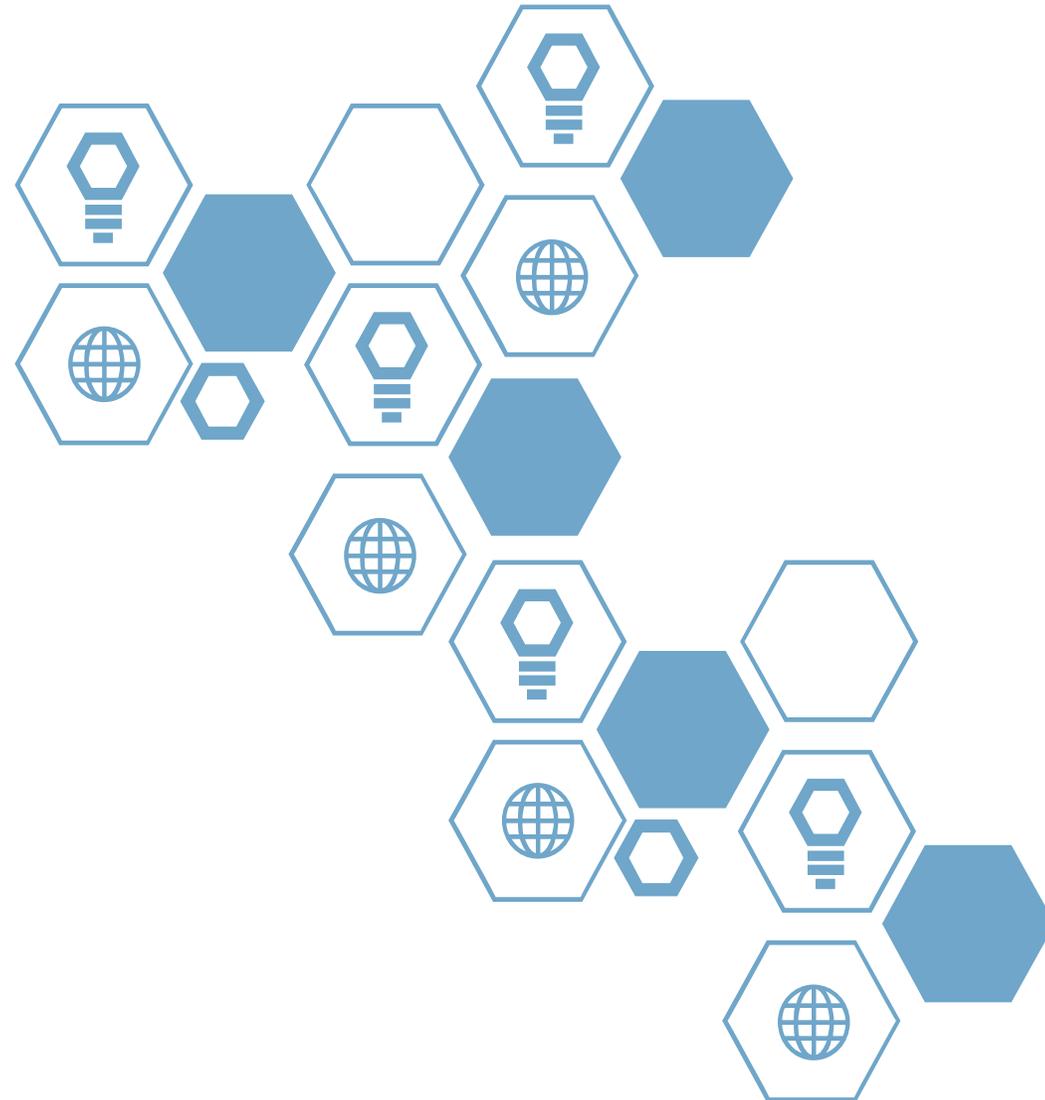
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**THANK YOU!**

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