

Task Force 01

FIGHTING INEQUALITIES, POVERTY, AND HUNGER

Multilateral Interventions to Achieve Collective Efficiency of Pandemic Fund Governance

Viola Savy Dsouza, PhD Scholar, Department of Health Information, Prasanna School of Public Health, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (India)

Jestina Rachel Kurian, PhD Scholar, Department of Data Science, Prasanna School of Public Health, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (India)

George Wharton, Associate Professor (Education) and Programme Director, Department of Health Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom)

Oommen C. Kurian, Senior Fellow and Head of Health Initiative, Observer Research Foundation (India)

Sanjay Pattanshetty, Head - Department of Global Health Governance, Prasanna School of Public Health, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (India) and External PhD Candidate, Care and Public Health Research Institute, Maastricht University (The Netherlands)



TF01

Abstract

The Pandemic Fund, a multilateral investment mechanism hosted by the World Bank with G20 support and WHO as technical lead, is dedicated to pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPPR). To date, the Pandemic Fund has successfully raised around USD 1.7 billion in funding from 27 contributors, rapidly advancing to allocate financial support to countries. In December 2023, a second round of funding was opened totalling \$500 million, aimed at helping lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs) scale up their efforts to prepare for future pandemics. This funding comes after the Pandemic Fund's first round of allocations, which aimed to boost resilience to future pandemics in 37 countries across six regions. The selected projects received funding to strengthen disease surveillance and early warning systems, laboratory capacity, and health system workforce. The Pandemic Fund provides a vital stream of dedicated long-term financing to fortify PPPR capacities in LMICs. However, the fund also faces several challenges. Its effectiveness relies heavily on cooperation and partnership at national and international levels, but limited donor funding and uncertain future support pose risks to the fund's long-term sustainability. There is also mention in the latest draft of the pandemic agreement text about a "Coordinating Financial Mechanism," raising concerns about duplication. Furthermore, there are questions about the fund's approach and ability to catalyse co-financing, and differing views on priorities by geography, activity, income level, and other aspects of project funding. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of strategies to changing contexts will be crucial for the fund's success. This policy brief provides an outline of the fund's future prospects and makes several recommendations to strengthen its role in contributing to a more resilient and sustainable global health ecosystem.

Keywords: Pandemic Fund, governance, World Bank, G20, LMIC

Diagnosis of the Issue

The unprecedented disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted severe impacts on global health, economies, education, and societal structures, both exacerbated by, and reinforcing, pre-existing health inequalities (World Health Organization 2020; OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) 2020). The well-recognised shortcomings of the global response to the pandemic, and the markedly uneven impact it had on communities made plain the importance of health systems for containing cross-border health threats. It also underlined a need to bolster the continuous and resilient delivery of essential health services during crises, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) with fragile health systems. By revealing the insufficiency and bad coordination of existing mechanisms for financing pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPPR), the pandemic further underlined a need to mobilise significant, dedicated resources to remediate gaps in the capacities and capabilities of health systems (Cueni 2023). The pandemic can also be seen to have created a transient surge in the political will needed to address these issues, and a time-limited opportunity for a concerted international effort to establish robust and sustainable financing mechanisms aimed at strengthening global health security.

In response, the World Bank, endorsed by G20 finance and health ministers and supported by multiple agencies, established the "Pandemic Fund (PF)," formerly known as the Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF) for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (PPPR) (World Bank 2022b). Dedicated to enhancing the health sector, the PF aims to address critical global health challenges, including fragile health systems, inequitable healthcare access, and increased spread of infections due to globalisation

(Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation 2022; Joi 2020). The PF will fund initiatives to enhance capabilities at a country level including health system strengthening, surveillance and early warning systems, research and development, supply chain and logistics, community engagement and communication, policy and governance, and training and capacity building. Additionally, one of the purposes of the Pandemic Fund is to streamline resource management and improve coordination among partners to ensure effective pandemic preparedness and response efforts.

The PF has successfully secured over \$1.7 billion in donor funding, with commitments exceeding \$1.9 billion (The Pandemic Fund 2024). The PF received 650 expressions of interest (EoI) with requests for grant financing of over \$7 billion, or about 24 times the amount of funding available through the first call for proposals. While the majority (73%) of submitted EoI are single-country proposals, 16% are multi-country requests, and 11% are from regional entities (World Bank 2023a). The first round of approvals showed \$338 million in grant amount allocated to 19 proposals selected out of a pool of 179 proposals (World Bank 2023b). The fund's initial grants were focused on strengthening comprehensive disease surveillance and early warning systems, laboratory systems, and public health workforce capacity. Countries that received single-country grants in the first round are ineligible for single-country grants in the second round, with a May 2024 application deadline, but are eligible for multi-country or regional proposals.

Despite notable achievements, these figures fall short of the recommended annual target of \$10 billion or more set by global organisations such as the World Bank and WHO (Michaud and Kates 2023). The fund's long-term sustainability is clouded by the existing funding gap and the waning of policy focus on strengthening global health in the wake of COVID-19. This precarious situation places the fund at a critical juncture,

heavily reliant on the generosity of donors for its continued operation. Moreover, the latest draft of the Pandemic Agreement introduces a "Coordinating Financial Mechanism" aimed at facilitating the implementation of both the agreement itself and the International Health Regulations (IHR), and there is no clarity yet on whether PF will be that mechanism or a new mechanism will be launched. The PF leadership has conveyed apprehensions that a new entity would result in duplication of efforts, undermining the efficiency and effectiveness of resource allocation (Cullinan 2024).

Against this backdrop, it is clear that even if future funding objectives are met, the PF must learn from past experiences with financial intermediary funds (FIF) and avoid the pitfalls to which they fell foul. Examining past global health funds, such as the World Bank's pandemic emergency financing facility and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFATM), reveals significant challenges due to the lack of policy harmony and divergent priorities among stakeholders. Incoherence in interpreting fund objectives and commitment issues led to a lack of trust and deficient fund flow. The varied objectives of different governmental agencies, donors, and stakeholders created challenges in reaching a consensus on fund allocation (Usher 2011). The result of these issues was a limited impact on the ground and patchy attainment of objectives (Saldinger and Mohammed, 2022; Greenall et al., 2017). A closer look at specific challenges within LMICs, including inadequate government funding, fragmented health systems, regulatory obstacles, and poor performance management, reveals the context-specific limitations of FIFs. Fragmented health systems create efficiency and cohesion challenges for FIFs, limited investments hinder expansion and effectiveness. Moreover, the lack of integrated data systems exacerbates these issues, impeding effective decision-making and resource allocation, further amplifying the challenges in leveraging global health funds efficiently.



These lessons highlight the importance of incorporating actionable policies derived from established priorities to overcome limitations and enhance effectiveness of PF. Furthermore, policy harmony, transparency and shared success metrics among all stakeholders will be needed to enhance trust, political will, and align divergent priorities.

Recommendations

The following strategic recommendations are proposed to address the existing challenges in achieving collective efficiency of PF governance. The recommendations outlined in Figure 1 focus on strengthening the financial base for PF, enhancing the operational efficiency and the effectiveness of its deployment of funds to diverse initiatives.



FIGURE 1. Recommendations to the G20

Enhance donor commitments: The PF has secured significant donor funding, raising \$2 billion in seed capital from 24 sovereign and three philanthropic contributors. However, it falls short of the recommended annual target of \$10 billion or more. The G20 member countries and international organizations should increase their contributions to the PF to ensure its long-term sustainability to address the shared global risk of future

pandemics. Given the fund's success in mobilizing over \$2 billion in additional resources from its initial grants, demonstrating the value and impact of its investments could be a compelling argument for increased commitments (World Bank 2023b; 2023c; 2022a).

Enhance monitoring and evaluation: A robust monitoring and evaluation system, with clear metrics, should be developed for transparency and accountability to ensure effectiveness. PF should adopt multidimensional and longer-term metrics, acknowledging the broader costs and benefits including pandemic preparedness surveillance. While the fund currently leans towards the 7-1-7 metrics¹ emphasizing timeliness, it could benefit from selecting a small menu of independently verified indicators reflecting the diverse value of surveillance (Fan, Smitham, and Regan 2023). These indicators may be tied to specific surveillance approaches chosen by countries, focusing on adaptability, use of data for programmatic decisions, and expanding geographic coverage for greater representativeness. Improving the Results Framework, particularly reducing reliance on the Joint External Evaluation Tool, is crucial for a more comprehensive evaluation strategy.

Fostering street-level bureaucracy and strengthening co-financing: G20 should endorse supporting street level bureaucracy through the PF. This will be important to ensuring tailored interventions that are not only effective but also build trust and ownership crucial for sustained pandemic preparedness and response efforts (Schieber et al. 2006; Siqueira et al. 2021). The effectiveness of pandemic responses often depends on the collaboration and efficiency of street-level bureaucrats (frontline workers and

¹ 7-1-7 is an accountability metric designed to measure the timeliness and effectiveness of a country's response to public health threats.

agencies that directly interact with the public, often implementing and delivering government policies) in executing policies and supporting the community (Tomar and Kane 2020; Dsouza et al. 2024). The G20 can highlight the PF's role in catalysing co-financing from the private sector, philanthropies, and domestic governments. Encouraging effective co-financing mechanisms, including incentives, will mobilize additional resources for PPPR. The PF's co-financing principles, emphasizing funding based on national or regional priority plans with costed roadmaps, are central to this. By encouraging low and lower-middle-income countries to lead funding applications, including domestic financing plans, the G20 can incentivize co-financing and foster the close engagement of diverse stakeholders to enhance the PF's impact (Garrett and Chakravarthy 2020).

Supporting One Health approaches: The G20 should encourage the PF to prioritize activities that consider the entire health ecosystem. For instance, WHO and CDC underscore the critical role of One Health in addressing zoonotic public health threats and environmental issues, advocating for networks and communication among sectors, and investing in prevention at the source (World Health Organization 2023). One Health recognizes the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, emphasizing collaboration across sectors for a comprehensive and effective response to health threats (World Bank 2021). Encouragingly, many initiatives and projects funded by the PF support a One Health approach. By ensuring that the approach is consistently operationalised through PF funded initiatives, the PF can enhance its effectiveness in addressing global health challenges, ensuring a more integrated response to health threats and leveraging the strengths of different sectors to improve health outcomes for both humans and animals (World Organization for Animal Health 2024).

Implementing data-informed policy and data governance: This approach leverages data to inform policy decisions, ensuring resources are allocated strategically to where they are most needed and can have the greatest impact (Brdarić et al. 2020) . The G20 should encourage the PF to utilize data analytics and technology to improve disease surveillance, early warning systems, and public health workforce capacity. Evidence supports the effectiveness of data-informed decision-making in various contexts, such as the World Bank and WHO's study on health systems strengthening and the Global Commission's report on antimicrobial resistance. The G20 should support the deployment of PF in developing robust data governance frameworks to ensure data quality, accessibility, and security, which in turn will enhance data-driven decision-making (Brown et al., 2023).

Scenario of the Outcomes

Scenario: Adopting recommendations for Enhancing PPPR in G20 Countries

The recommendations outlined in this policy brief are intended to contribute to the success of the PF in fostering a more resilient global health ecosystem. The following table 1a and 1b provides a high-level summary of the outcomes to which each is intended to contribute, the factors that might impede their effectiveness, and the trade-offs involved:

TABLE 1a: Possible outcome of implementing recommendations

Recommendation	Key Outcome	Contraindication	Trade-offs
Enhance Donor Commitments	Sustained financial support for PPPR and recovery particularly in LMICs, strengthening global health systems and improve capacity to manage outbreaks with pandemic potential	Limited donor funding and uncertain future support by perceiving the fund's objectives or strategies as not aligned with their priorities or if they face competing demands for their financial resources	While increased donor commitments can significantly boost PPPR in LMICs, it also places the fund in a precarious financial situation if the funding gap cannot be filled, potentially affecting its long-term sustainability
Strengthening Co-financing	Increased domestic funding for pandemic response, reducing reliance on external donors	Requires commitment from both donors and recipient countries, which might be challenging in low-income countries and may impact the affordability and access to essential healthcare services, especially in regions where financial resources are limited	Strengthening co-financing can enhance sustainability but required significant effort in mobilizing domestic resources. Co-financing agreements may be difficult to negotiate and enforce, especially in challenging fiscal environments
Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation	Improved understanding of pandemic outbreaks and the effectiveness of interventions, leading to more targeted and efficient responses.	The complexity of pandemic outbreaks and the rapid evolution of the disease can make monitoring and evaluation challenging	Enhanced monitoring and evaluation can improve decision-making but may also require significant resources and expertise, potentially diverting attention from other critical health security issues

TABLE 1B. Outcome scenarios on implementing recommendations.

Recommendation	Key Outcome	Contraindication	Trade-offs
Fostering Street-level Bureaucracy	Empowerment of local communities, leading to more responsive and effective pandemic response	Potential for inefficiencies, corruption, duplication of efforts or delays in implementing crucial measures due to overemphasis on local response without adequate central strategy or oversight. Local bureaucracies may lack the necessary expertise or resources to effectively manage pandemics	While fostering street-level bureaucracy can empower communities, it may also introduce challenges in coordination and accountability
Supporting One Health Approaches	Integrated approach to health, addressing the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health	Required cross-sectoral collaboration and funding, which might be challenging to achieve. For instance, challenges in ensuring interoperability of data systems integrating human, animal, and environmental data sources	Supporting One Health approaches can lead to more holistic pandemic response but requires coordination across different sectors
Implementing Data-Informed Policy and Data Governance	More effective and targeted pandemic response strategies	Requires significant investment in data collection, analysis, and technology, which might be challenging for low-income countries. The availability and quality of data can vary widely, and there may be challenges in ensuring data privacy and security	While data-informed policies can improve response effectiveness, they might overshadow the need for direct interventions if not properly balanced with other strategies. Moreover, inadequate governance can lead to increased bureaucracy and potential misuse of data, highlighting the importance of robust data governance measures to accompany such policies.



References

- Brdarić, Dario, Senka Samardžić, Ivana Mihin Huskić, Giorgos Dritsakis, Jadran Sessa, Mariola Śliwińska-Kowalska, Małgorzata Pawlaczyk-Łuszczynska, Ioannis Basdekis, and George Spanoudakis. 2020. “A Data-Informed Public Health Policy-Makers Platform.” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17 (9): 3271. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17093271>.
- Brown, Garrett Wallace, Natalie Rhodes, Blagovesta Tacheva, Rene Loewenson, Minahil Shahid, and Francis Poitier. 2023. “Challenges in International Health Financing and Implications for the New Pandemic Fund.” *Globalization and Health* 19 (1): 97. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-023-00999-6>.
- Cueni, Thomas. 2023. “Lessons Learned from COVID-19 to Stop Future Pandemics.” *The Lancet* 401 (10385): 1340. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)00507-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)00507-X).
- Cullinan, Kerry. 2024. “Who Will Finance Countries’ Pandemic Response?” Health Policy Watch. March 3, 2024. <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/who-will-finance-countries-pandemic-response/>.
- Dsouza, Viola Savy, Jestina Rachel Kurian, Brayal D’souza, Varalakshmi Chandra Sekaran, and Lena Ashok. 2024. “Building Perspectives for Resilient Health System: Lessons Learned from the Experience of Patients and Health Professionals during COVID-19.” *Journal of Health Management* 26 (2): 203–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09720634241229267>.
- Fan, Victoria, Eleni Smitham, and Lydia Regan. 2023. “How the Pandemic Fund Can Strategically Invest in Pandemic Preparedness.” Center for Global Development. June 20, 2023. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/how-pandemic-fund-can-strategically-invest-pandemic-preparedness>.

Garrett, Greg S., and Meera Chakravarthy. 2020. “Putting the Innovation Back into Innovative Financing for Health.” ThinkWell. July 7, 2020.

<https://thinkwell.global/innovative-financing-for-health/>.

Greenall, Matthew, Osamu Kunii, Kate Thomson, Rene Bangert, and Olivia Nathan.

2017. “Reaching Vulnerable Populations: Lessons from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.” *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 95 (2): 159–61.

<https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.16.179192>.

Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. 2022. “11 Global Health Issues to Watch in 2023, According to IHME Experts.” December 20, 2022.

<https://www.healthdata.org/acting-data/11-global-health-issues-watch-2023-according-ihme-experts>.

Joi, Priya. 2020. “5 Reasons Why Pandemics like COVID-19 Are Becoming More Likely.” VaccinesWork, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. June 10, 2020.

<https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/5-reasons-why-pandemics-like-covid-19-are-becoming-more-likely>.

Michaud, Josh, and Jennifer Kates. 2023. "The New Pandemic Fund: Overview and Key Issues for the US" KFF. May 30, 2023. <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/the-new-pandemic-fund-overview-and-key-issues-for-the-u-s/>.

OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19). 2020. “The Territorial Impact of Covid-19: Managing the Crisis across Levels of Government.” 2020.

<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government-d3e314e1/>.

Saldinger, Adva, and Omar Mohammed. 2022. “Global Fund Falls Short of \$18B Target as UK, Italy Delay Pledges.” Devex. September 22, 2022.

<https://www.devex.com/news/global-fund-falls-short-of-18b-target-as-uk-italy-delay-pledges-104046>.

Schieber, George, Cristian Baeza, Daniel Kress, and Margaret Maier. 2006. “Financing Health Systems in the 21st Century.” In *Disease Control Priorities in Developing Countries*, edited by DT Jamison, JG Breman, and AR Measham, 2nd ed. Washington (DC): The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK11772/>.

Siqueira, Marina, Maíra Coube, Christopher Millett, Rudi Rocha, and Thomas Hone. 2021. “The Impacts of Health Systems Financing Fragmentation in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review Protocol.” *Systematic Reviews* 10 (1): 164.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-021-01714-5>.

The Pandemic Fund. 2024. “Contributors.” 2024.

<https://www.thepandemicfund.org/contributors>.

Tomar, Adie, and Joseph W. Kane. 2020. “To Protect Frontline Workers during and after COVID-19, We Must Define Who They Are.” Brookings. June 10, 2020.

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/to-protect-frontline-workers-during-and-after-covid-19-we-must-define-who-they-are/>.

Usher, Ann Danaiya. 2011. “Donors Continue to Hold Back Support from Global Fund.” *The Lancet* 378 (9790): 471–72. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(11\)61235-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)61235-X).

World Bank. 2021. “Safeguarding Animal, Human and Ecosystem Health: One Health at the World Bank.” June 3, 2021.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/safeguarding-animal-human-and-ecosystem-health-one-health-at-the-world-bank>.

World Bank. 2022a. “FAQs: The Pandemic Fund.” June 30, 2022.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/pandemics/brief/factsheet-financial-intermediary-fund-for-pandemic-prevention-preparedness-and-response>.

World Bank. 2022b. “G20 Hosts Official Launch of the Pandemic Fund.” November 28, 2022. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/12/g20-hosts-official-launch-of-the-pandemic-fund>.

World Bank. 2023a. “Demand for Funding from Pandemic Fund Exceeds Expectations with Requests Totaling over \$7 Billion.” April 5, 2023.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/financial-intermediary-fund-for-pandemic-prevention-preparedness-and-response-ppr-fif/brief/demand-for-funding-from-pandemic-fund-exceeds-expectations-with-requests-totaling-over-7-billion>.

World Bank. 2023b. “Pandemic Fund Allocates First Grants to Help Countries Be Better Prepared for Future Pandemics.” July 20, 2023.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/07/20/pandemic-fund-allocates-first-grants-to-help-countries-be-better-prepared-for-future-pandemics>.

World Bank. 2023c. “The Pandemic Fund Announces First Round of Funding to Help Countries Build Resilience to Future Pandemics.” February 3, 2023.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/02/03/the-pandemic-fund-announces-first-round-of-funding-to-help-countries-build-resilience-to-future-pandemics>.

World Health Organization. 2020. “Impact of Covid-19 on People’s Livelihoods, Their Health and Our Food Systems.” October 13, 2020. <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people’s-livelihoods-their-health-and-our-food-systems>.



World Health Organization. 2023. “One Health.” October 23, 2023.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/one-health>.

World Organization for Animal Health. 2024. “Global Health Risks and Tomorrow’s Challenges.” 2024. <https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/global-initiatives/one-health/>.



Let's **rethink** the world

