

# Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group

## Terms of Reference

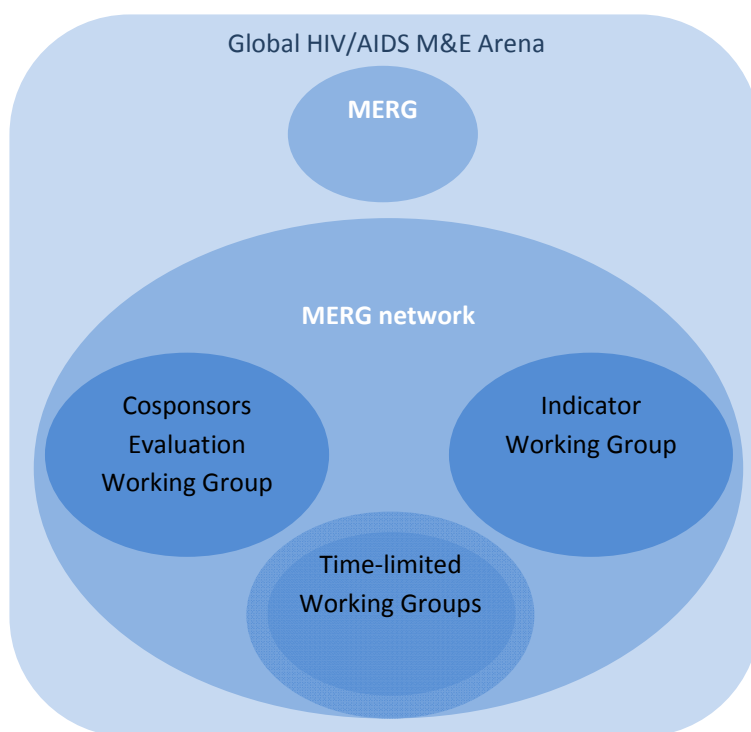
### Introduction

The UNAIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG) was established in 1998 to advise UNAIDS on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) at all levels of the Program. An independent assessment of the Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG) was conducted in 2011. The recommendations called for a new MERG that is an independent global forum able to respond to the changing global HIV and AIDS environment. These Terms of Reference operationalize the assessment's recommendations. It details the mandate, structure and membership of the new MERG.

### Mandate

The MERG is an independent global body of experts that lead M&E thinking and provides advice in matters related to M&E of the global AIDS response. Its key functions are a) to set the M&E agenda in a changing global HIV and AIDS environment and b) harmonize M&E approaches of UNAIDS and its partners.

### Structure and Membership



## **MERG**

The new MERG's structure consists of a "Strategic Body" which brings together influential partners, policy experts, and key thinkers in the global HIV/AIDS M&E arena. The MERG is limited to a maximum of fourteen (14) members who are invited or hold ex officio seats. This inspired group will be drawn from academia, private sector, multilateral and bilateral agencies, donor and recipient countries, non-governmental organizations and civil society. It will be an independent group that through its credibility (composition and work) is a preferred partner for the main HIV/AIDS decision makers.

Invited members may hold a maximum of ten (10) seats in the MERG. The process of constitution of MERG will also aim at achieving a balance of representation from low and middle income countries and gender.

Ex officio members may hold a maximum of four (4) seats in the MERG with the following composition:

- Two (2) seats may be held by UN agencies. UNAIDS will hold one of the seats as the secretariat. The remaining seat will be selected by the Cosponsors Evaluation Working Group, on a rotating basis.
- Two (2) seats may be held by 1) Representative of GFATM TERC 2) Chair of PEPFAR SAB.

The MERG will meet biannually to make decisions on the critical questions to be addressed in M&E of HIV and AIDS, in line with the MERG's mandate.

### **Chair of MERG**

The Chair and vice chair will be selected from the invited MERG members through consensus. The term of the chair and vice chair will be two years and can be renewed once. The Chair will set the overall direction and work plan of the MERG, oversee the work of the MERG secretariat, develop the biannual meeting agenda, and ensure follow-up action by the Working Groups.

### **MERG Rotation**

MERG members are appointed on a regular two year term, renewable once. All invited MERG members will rotate on an annual basis after an initial two year term for all after which a minimum of two members will rotate out per year and be replaced by new members. Selection of the members to rotate annually will be based on voluntary opt out, or through a draw of lots if necessary. The MERG may terminate the membership of any member if they have not participated in two consecutive meetings.

## **MERG Network**

The MERG will be supported by, and draw from the expertise of a broader pool of experts, the "MERG Network". They will be drawn from academia, private sector, multilateral and bilateral agencies, donor and recipient countries, non-governmental organizations and civil society on the basis of their expertise. The MERG may draw from this network, and other experts as relevant, as the need for additional expertise arises to analyze specific topics. The

MERG may decide to establish time limited, task oriented working groups. Standing working groups envisioned in the MERG Network include a) the Indicator Working Group and b) the Cosponsors Evaluation Working Group.

It is envisaged that the MERG Network would comprise up to about 50 experts, with a balanced geographic, institutional and expertise representation. The experts of the MERG network will be informed about relevant decisions and work products produced under MERG oversight.

### **MERG Network Rotation**

The MERG Network members are appointed on a regular two year term, renewable once. At the end of the first biennium, and every year thereafter, a minimum of 20 percent of the MERG Network members should rotate off the MERG Network and be replaced by new members. Selection of the members to rotate annually will be based on voluntary opt out, or through a draw of lots if necessary. The MERG may terminate the membership of MERG Network members if they have not participated in two consecutive meetings

### **Secretariat**

UNAIDS will host the secretariat of the MERG. The Secretariat will develop a yearly work plan, and prepare and convene the biannual MERG meeting. The Secretariat may assist in the identification of MERG Network experts, and present its recommendations to the MERG for their review and decision.

The Secretariat may coordinate the work of the different Working Groups, and any other specific activities that arise. The Secretariat may assist in identifying the experts from the MERG Network for carrying out the Working Groups tasks and propose financial resources to fund those tasks. Proposed Working Group projects will be presented to the MERG for their review and decision.

The Secretariat will communicate the MERG's decisions by preparing and publishing biannual meeting reports. The Secretariat will create a forum for communication, mutual learning and discussion of emerging and topical issues. This venue may be an electronic discussion forum maintained and moderated by the secretariat.

### **Oversight**

The MERG will report to the UNAIDS Executive Director. Relevant updates of MERG activities would be included in the Executive Director's report to the PCB of UNAIDS.