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Global Fund Is Promoting Joint Action on Stolen Medicines

The Global Fund is attempting to persuade national and international agencies to collaborate on ways to prevent the theft of medical drugs. The Fund announced in December 2010 that it is inviting major international funders of drug supplies for developing countries, technical and law enforcement agencies, and implementers of health programmes “to take concerted action to stem drug thefts, ranging from information-sharing and joint strengthening of procurement and distribution capacity in developing countries to applying stringent security measures around drug storage and transport.”

The Global Fund said that the theft of drugs is “an old and persistent problem in developed and developing countries alike, especially for drugs that may be cheap or free in the public sector but fetch high prices on the open market or in neighboring countries with different pricing policies.” The Fund added that the problems are exacerbated by limited resources and imperfect distribution systems in many poor countries.

Representatives of key partner agencies attended a half-day meeting on 17 February 2011 to discuss the scope of the problem and to lay the groundwork for a larger meeting, which was to have been held in April 2011, but which has now been pushed back by a few months to allow time for more data to be gathered on the nature and extent of the problem. A new date for the meeting has not yet been set. An inter-agency working group was established to plan the larger meeting.

The problem of drug thefts was raised by the Global Fund’s Office of the Inspector General in several of its audits. GFO has featured several articles on this topic, the most recent being [here](#).

Michel Kazatchkine, the Global Fund's Executive Director, said that "theft of medicines is a problem that affects all institutions investing in health services, and we must clamp down on it. However, no single institution can act on its own. We can only solve this challenge if we all work together."

Some of the Information for this article was taken from a [press release](#) issued by the Global Fund on 10 December 2010.

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