



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

RETIREMENT – NO EMPTY DAYS, PLEASE

by Bernard Rivers

My father was a manager. When he retired, his days were suddenly empty. He had nothing to manage.

And now, it's my turn to "retire." But no empty days for me, please – that would be a fate worse than death.

Fortunately, even though I've handed over my management role at Aidspan to Kate Macintyre, I'll be retaining a part-time "doer" role – which is the role I've always preferred. So I'm afraid the readers of GFO, and the staff and board members of the Global Fund, have not heard the last of me.

From time to time I will research and write about relatively narrow Global Fund-related topics, such as management changes, or funding prospects, or the role of the Inspector General. But my primary focus for some time now will be what has and has not worked at the Fund over its first decade, and what the lessons are.

Ever since the Global Fund was established, it has had features that set it apart from all other global grant-making institutions. Among the more notable: the Fund's governance is shared between governments of developed countries, governments of developing countries, civil society, and people living with the three diseases; the Fund is remarkably transparent; the Fund has sought to leave control of the projects it funds to the countries in which those projects take place; and the Fund has an Inspector General who vigorously looks for and publishes evidence of misuse of funds.

I've always been a strong supporter of these features, and I've wished they would be imitated by others. But the plain fact is that these features have not always worked smoothly. Accordingly, over the next 18 months I will run a project on Governance of Global Institutions (GGI). The GGI project will start

by analysing and critiquing the Global Fund's innovative approaches to governance, transparency and audit. Then it will compare the Fund's approaches on these issues to the approaches of other global institutions, particularly grant-making ones. Finally, it will recommend how these global institutions could improve their handling of these issues.

The GGI project will be an Aidspace special project, and I will work on it in my new capacity as a Senior Fellow of Aidspace. But also, during much of 2013, I will be based at Cambridge University, where I will work on the project while serving there as a visiting fellow.

However, I have promised my wife that I won't drown myself in work in the way I used to. I started this new approach last month, when at the age of 66 I entered the Nairobi Marathon, my first ever marathon since I took up running at the age of 50. I had only two objectives – to complete the 42-km course, and not to come last. I succeeded with both, though for a while it was touch and go with the second objective.

My wife and I moved to Kenya six years ago. It was the smartest thing we ever did, not just professionally but also personally, and we plan indefinitely to spend a significant part of each year in our new home on the Kenya coast.

What else do I have planned? Well, some camping in remote areas of Kenya. And learning to cook Indian food. And reading some history. And playing linguistic catch-up with my wife, whose Swahili is fluent. I rule out nothing – just so long as I can continue to get a fix for my email addiction at least once a day.

Bernard Rivers ([email](#)) founded Aidspace in 2002 and ran it until September 2012. He now serves as Aidspace's first Senior Fellow.

[Read More](#)
