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The Search for a New Director of Country Programs

The Global Fund spends a very large amount of money to save a very large number of lives. The work that is done to save those lives is planned by CCMs, implemented by principal recipients and sub-recipients, and financed by the Fund.

Thus, the Global Fund is only as good as its principal recipients (PRs). If a PR fails to produce the promised results in a timely manner, the Fund can't take over management of the programme that the Fund is financing. The Fund's only options are to try to persuade the PR to do better; to try to persuade the PR to seek technical assistance; to delay financial disbursements; or to terminate the grant.

There is a strong parallel between the Global Fund and major automobile manufacturers. An automobile manufacturer – say, Honda – signs contracts with independent companies to supply automobile components. Each supplier is required to deliver quality products, on time. Honda can't instruct the supplier on how to do its work; but if performance requirements are not met, Honda has the right to terminate the contract, or to decline to award new ones.

Within Honda, a key official is the person who supervises those staff who manage all the contractual relations with suppliers.

Within the Global Fund, the equivalent job is carried out by the Director of Country Programs (DCP), who supervises about 180 staff who, in turn, supervise the Fund's contractual relationships with PRs.

Less than a month ago, Global Fund Secretariat staff were informed that the DCP was leaving the Fund at the end of April, and that an outsider would be brought in to play that role in an “acting” capacity for about six months while a new DCP is found.

This is the third time since 2005 that the person serving as DCP has departed. During the five years from November 2005 to November 2010, the Global Fund will have spent nearly two years using temporary substitutes to serve as DCP. And during the total of three years that the two most recent DCPs have served, they spent most of their time either learning how the Global Fund operated and what was expected of them, or struggling to meet the requirements of an incredibly challenging job.

This represents a lot of wasted time, and a serious loss of Global Fund efficiency and impact.

Following the above parallel between the Fund and Honda, the Fund now needs to find a world-class manager – probably from within the private sector – who specialises in managing a large number of staff who in turn manage billions of dollars worth of contracts with independent contractors/suppliers.

Unfortunately, this approach has not been followed thus far. When the second DCP was recruited, the Fund placed an advertisement that asked for “Substantive work experience in program planning and implementation in developing countries, and technical expertise in development program design and operations and development finance.” The person chosen had a medical degree, a doctorate in public health, and experience running health-related projects in the field.

And when the third DCP (the one who has just left) was recruited, the job advertisement said that “knowledge and experience in innovative program development in developing country settings are essential.” The person chosen had a doctorate in development economics, and had served as UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in several countries.

The Fund should not be choosing a world-class expert in public health and then attempting to mould that person into the highly specialised manager that the position requires. The Fund should be choosing a world-class manager of a particular type, and providing that person with needed insights about public health. Finding the right person will have a substantial impact on the Global Fund’s long term impact.

Bernard Rivers (rivers@aidspan.org) is Executive Director of Aidspan and Editor of GFO.

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