



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

A NEW FUNDING OPPORTUNITY? HUH?

The Global Fund is renowned for its almost militant policy of transparency. Do you want to know the most recent rating the Fund gave a particular grant? [Click here](#). Do you want to know the precise details of a fraudulent act uncovered by the Office of the Inspector General? [Click here](#). Do you want to read Annex 7 of a Board paper on the Fund's financial situation? [Click here](#).

But when something really important happens, something with enormous consequences for grant applicants, implementers and potential beneficiaries around the world, don't rely on the Global Fund to tell you about it. Three linked incidents at the Fund's recent Board meeting in Accra illustrate this.

The first incident was when the Board – after anguished and at times heated discussion – agreed to cancel Round 11, yet chose wording for the resolution that did not include the word “cancel” or anything implying it. Instead, the Board resolved “to convert Round 11 into a new funding opportunity in 2014.” That's roughly equivalent to my calling my hungry children to the dinner table, placing a tasty meal before them, and then, before they can eat, yanking away the meal and replacing it with a couple of raw potatoes, telling the kids that this represents “a new feeding opportunity.”

The second incident happened the following morning. Just as we were sending out GFO to 9,000 people with a lead story saying “Board cancels Round 11...”, the Global Fund sent out a press release reporting what had happened at the meeting. And amazingly, even though the Board had just made its most difficult decision in ten years, the press release engaged in ever greater avoidance than the Board, because it didn’t even contain the words “Round 11.” The nearest the release came to this was when it said that as a result of “a revised resource forecast,” the Board had “adopted measures ... making savings in the existing grant portfolio ... [in order] to finance essential services for on-going programs that come to their conclusion before 2014.” Crystal clear, right?

The third incident occurred later the same day. Twenty-four hours after the Board had made its momentous decision to cancel Round 11 (or, if you prefer, to provide a new funding opportunity), the Fund’s website still said nothing about this decision, despite the numerous people who must have been visiting the site to find out more details about what they had been hearing.

This whole approach represents timidity and evasiveness in the extreme. This is not how things should be done. Yes, true, it is how most other large organisations handle such situations. But the Global Fund was supposed to be different, and the Global Fund community deserves better.

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

[Read More](#)
