



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

A Little Less Spin, Please

by Bernard Rivers

The Global Fund issued a [news release](#) on 24 January under the headline “Germany Makes EUR 1 Billion Contribution to the Global Fund.” The news release began: “Germany announced today that it will contribute EUR 1 billion to the Global Fund.” This was good news, because two years ago Germany had been very critical of the Fund and had temporarily put its payments on hold.

Many readers of the news release probably assumed that all of this €1 billion represented “new money.” But that was not the case. Instead, there was some “spin” going on.

The amount of new money to which Germany has committed is not €1 billion but €600 million, to be given over the period 2014–2016. The remainder of the €1 billion cited in the news release consists of €200 million that Germany gave last year and a further €200 million that Germany [promised](#) three years ago to give in 2013.

If Germany is going to include money it gave to the Fund last year in the total that it says that it “will” contribute, why not include the entire amount it has given since 2002? That would push the “€1 billion” total to an even more impressive €2.1 billion.

(Commenting on a draft of this commentary, Seth Faison, Communications Director for the Global Fund, said “You make a good point. Looking back, we should have written ‘committed’ instead. That would be more accurate.”)

The real story revealed in the news release is that despite the Global Fund’s increasing needs, Germany has decided to continue flatlining the Global Fund, giving €200 million every year from 2008 to 2016. (But

before I sound too grumpy, let's be grateful that Germany continues to support the Fund, unlike countries like Austria, Israel and United Arab Emirates, which have never given a penny. And it certainly helps the Fund that Germany has made pledges for 2014–2016 so early in the year in which all donors are being asked to make commitments for that period.)

A previous example of spin at the Global Fund occurred a year ago, on 26 January 2012, when the Fund issued a [news release](#) announcing that the Gates Foundation would give the Global Fund \$750 million over the next few years. The news release said “The Gates Foundation ... has previously contributed \$650 million and today's announcement brings its total investment in the Global Fund to \$1.4 billion.” The news release made no mention of the fact that \$500 million of that \$750 million had already been [announced](#) fifteen months earlier, and ever since then had been included in the Fund's revenue forecasts. (Though, again, the Gates Foundation has to be applauded for the fact that since the start of the Global Fund, the Foundation has given the Fund more than three times as much money as all other foundations, charities and private sector entities combined.)

(Commenting on a draft of this commentary, Bryan Callahan, Senior Communications Officer at the Gates Foundation, said “We agree that accurate reporting is important and think that the Global Fund provided an accurate summary of our contribution history.”)

The Global Fund wants its grant implementers to submit progress reports that are solidly fact-based rather than involving spin. We should expect no less from the Fund itself.

Bernard Rivers ([email](#)) founded Aidspace in 2002 and ran it until September 2012. He now serves as a Senior Fellow at Aidspace and as a Visiting Fellow at Cambridge University.

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