



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

THE GLOBAL FUND DOESN'T NEED TO STRETCH THE TRUTH

The Global Fund regularly publishes statistics on the impact that programmes supported by the Fund are having in the fight against AIDS, TB and malaria. These statistics are very important because they demonstrate the value of the Global Fund, not only to donors and potential donors but also to the “general public,” a term that includes the taxpayers of donor countries as well as the people delivering and receiving services.

The key word in my opening paragraph was “supported.” The statistics that the Fund publishes refer to programmes that received support from the Global Fund. Most of these programmes also receive funding from sources other than the Global Fund. These sources include national governments, foundations, other international donors and bilateral donors.

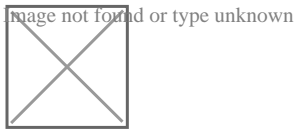
Thus, when the Global Fund says that at the end of 2011 there were an estimated 3.3 million people living with HIV/AIDS receiving antiretroviral medicines thanks to programmes supported by the Global Fund, the Global Fund is not taking credit for all 3.3 million. Similarly, when the Global Fund says that 7.7 million lives were saved because of Global Fund-supported programmes, the Global Fund is not taking credit for all 7.7 million.

The problem is that this distinction often gets lost when the numbers are reported by the media and by other organisations working in development. And it often gets lost in the Global Fund’s own publicity.

Each time the Global Fund issues a press release, it includes a tagline that mentions some of the impact numbers, but it is always careful to include the all-important caveat: “Programmes supported by the Global Fund.”

And yet, if you went to the Global Fund home page on 23 March 2012 and clicked on “About Us,” this is

what you would have seen:



There was nothing on this page about “programmes supported by the Global Fund.” If you had clicked on “Learn More” and had read all of the text on the page you were taken to, you would have seen the “programmes supported” caveat. But, at the top of that page, in big print, were the same three numbers and the same three texts as shown above, with no caveat.

On one particular [page](#) on the Global Fund’s website, where the Fund is asking people to co-sign a letter of support for the Fund, the text at the top of the page says: “The Global Fund has saved more than 7.7 million lives by funding treatment and preventative care programs across the planet. But these programs are at risk.” There is no caveat.

At [One.org](#), a grassroots advocacy organisation that fights extreme poverty and preventable disease, there is a page promoting a Global Fund video that was created for the Fund’s tenth anniversary earlier this year. The heading on the page reads: “Watch: 10 years of the Global Fund, 7.7 million lives saved.” No caveat.

If you watch the video, you will hear one celebrity saying “7.7 million people are alive today because of the Global Fund.” And throughout the video, you will see a graphic that says:

7.7 million lives

10 years

I checked the websites of two bilateral funding agencies, also on 23 March 2012, and this is what I found:

- (U.K.) [Department for International Development](#) (DFID): “Since 2002, the GFATM has saved 7.7 million lives.”
- [Canadian International Development Agency](#) (CIDA): ” An estimated 7.7 million lives have been saved so far through Global Fund support.”

On that same day, I looked up “Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria” at www.wikipedia.com and found this:

“According to the [Global Fund], it has financed the distribution of 160 million insecticide-treated nets to combat malaria, provided anti-tuberculosis treatment for 7.7 million people, and provided AIDS treatment for some three million people, saving 6.5 million lives.”

(These were the numbers at the end of 2010.)

There are numerous instances of the media reporting the numbers without any caveat. For example, on 27 January 2011, when it reported that Germany had suspended contributions to the Global Fund because of concerns about fraud, [Aljazeera](#) wrote that the Global Fund “claims to have saved 6.5 million lives by delivering AIDS and TB treatment and handing out millions of insecticide-treated malaria bed nets.”

Without the caveat, the statements about how many lives have been saved by the Global Fund are wrong. Leaving out the caveat is like you or me saying “I have saved countless lives because I pay taxes in the U.S.” [or France, or Kenya, or Japan] “and some of my taxes are used to save these lives.”

The Global Fund has accomplished many wonderful things. But it does not need to stretch the truth in order to make this point.

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