



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

A retrospective of 2021 through the eyes of the GFO

Dear subscribers

This is the last issue of the Global Fund Observer in 2021 and we thought we would have a quick look back on what has happened in 2021 that has shaped the content we have brought to you through the GFO and our French-language OFM.

Of course, the single biggest news affecting our stories has been the impact of COVID-19 on priority disease programs and weakened health infrastructures, and the astonishing resource mobilization that has taken place to enable the Global Fund to offer countries quickly accessible funding to address pandemic preparedness and response (PPR) through the COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM). From the lessons of Rwanda for a successful response to the innovative online technical support from UNAIDS, we have brought you a wide range of articles on C19RM, pandemic mitigation and program adaptations. Unfortunately, it looks as if the pandemic will continue to be a recurring theme throughout 2022: but we look forward to bringing you more success stories and lessons learnt as countries (and the science!) find out more about COVID-19 and how to deal with it.

The second biggest recurring theme has been that of the development of the forthcoming Global Fund Strategy. We have been able to report in-depth (through a deep dive!) on the exhaustive consultations held by the Global Fund, including the five regional Partnership Forums in March and the subsequent Strategy development. Indeed, there was so much controversy over the Strategy's design, or framework, that it was almost a relief to get to the Narrative which was, to some extent, much less contentious (although there are always a few outliers...).

Thirdly, the tongue-twisting phrase on all our lips has been 'pandemic preparedness and response'. Most of us would be overjoyed never to hear it again but this seems unlikely; not only is it a sign of our times

and, after very emotional debate, a key 'evolving objective' (Global Fund-speak) of the new Strategy, it has also made us think about how the world responds to immediate global medical emergencies and who is best placed to mobilise rapidly and effectively to address them. The Global Fund's new Strategy has been designed to reflect these issues.

Fourthly, but related to the above, the heartbreak of the inequality of COVID-19 vaccination distribution and the failure of the much-heralded ACT Accelerator to get the vaccines out to those that need them. As we write, it is clear that the goal of the ACT Accelerator (to end the COVID-19 pandemic as quickly as possible by 'reducing COVID-19 mortality and severe disease through the accelerated development, equitable allocation, and scaled-up delivery of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to reduce mortality and severe disease') has not been met. Only [7.2%](#) of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose. It is fairly certain, therefore, that without a dramatic change in 2022 we will not see much in the way of an 'end of the health and economic crisis, restoring full societal and economic activity globally in the near term and facilitating high-level control of COVID-19 disease in the medium term.' This is a depressingly and shockingly low distribution of vaccines to poorer countries and the richer countries should be embarrassed at their greed and in not ensuring a more equitable access. Will they learn from this failing to dramatically improve the track record in 2022?

We have listened to what you, our readers, have told us and asked for. Several of you provided feedback on the number of articles directly related to Committee and Board papers and meetings ('too much!' said some of you) while others lamented what they saw as scant attention paid to country and regional-level programs. We do have to balance the one with the other (after all, we are a Global Fund watchdog and this means we have to report on Committee and Board meetings and their accompanying papers ? especially as many of you do not have access to these and would like to know what is discussed). But one must recognise that this has been an exceptional year because of COVID-19 and the Strategy development and so it really does seem as if we have spent a lot of time on these meetings and documents, and not enough on what our country programs are teaching us. To this end, we have introduced a new category of article (NEWS FROM THE FIELD) from this issue onwards. Please also take some responsibility, you guys ? if you want to see more from the field, send us something! Or ask for our help in writing up your story; we are always happy to do so.

We would like to end on two personal highs for the GFO and OFM. The first was a celebration of our 400th edition when we looked back on the GFO's modest beginnings and some of the best pieces of journalism from our founder, Bernard Rivers. The second was our last issue which published a discourse on the very particular Global Fund-speak, [A deep dive into Global Fund language: Trying to make sense of the impenetrable and incomprehensible](#). In the space of days, the Aidspace website had amassed over 1,200 hits on this article, certainly the most of any this year and maybe even ever in our history (we'll have to check that...). It even brought Bernard out of his retirement to comment! Based on the interest generated, we have changed our Comments box so anyone can comment anonymously on any article in the future.

And please do provide Likes (or Dislikes) and Comments: without feedback, we cannot improve or give you more (or less) of what you want (or don't want).

If you enjoy the GFO and find it relevant to your work, please encourage your colleagues to [subscribe!](#)

Finally, the Aidspace team would like to wish you a very Happy Christmas or Season's Greetings, however you may celebrate this time of the year, and our very best wishes for a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2022.

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