



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

EDITOR'S NOTES

I am delighted to be writing the Editorial for this very special issue of the Global Fund Observer, our 400th since our modest beginnings back in 2002.

When Aidspan's founder, Bernard Rivers, launched Aidspan, it was described as 'a new non-governmental organization providing fundraising assistance to developing-country AIDS projects, based in New York, USA' and the organisation was officially incorporated in November 2002. But neither Bernard nor Aidspan's very first directors could have imagined the events of the past twenty years. The growth of Aidspan and the regular publication of the GFO is a testament to the work of the Global Fund and the vision of Aidspan's role as a watchdog of the Global Fund, ensuring good governance and accountability while bringing you, our subscribers, the latest news pertaining to the Global Fund, the three diseases of HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, health systems strengthening and, more recently, enlarging our mandate to cover the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impact on setting back the hard-won gains of the past twenty years.

To mark this milestone birthday, our special issue is devoted entirely to remembering the launch of the Global Fund and its 'conscience', Aidspan. We remind readers of the chronology of Aidspan ([From an acorn grew an oak tree](#)) and the paper that Bernard and his partners in crime, Tim France and Gorik Ooms, distributed to 20,000 AIDS professionals, government officials, journalists and activists around the world in April 2002, [The Global Fund: Which Countries Owe How Much?](#), based on their formula the 'Equitable Contributions Framework'. This was the first attempt that anyone had made in examining how this new institution, the Global Fund, should be funded and apportioning a funding percentage to the various donor countries.

Bernard himself has kindly provided us with an interview ([An Interview with the founder of Aidspan](#)). We

also reprint some articles from the early days of Aidspan and the GFO that we think reflect Aidspan's role as 'an independent platform for news, analysis and commentary about the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria', as well as Bernard's passion and excellent journalism ([Holding the Global Fund to account ? Aidspan's Role in the Investigation of the Global Fund Secretariat](#); [A blast from the past](#) (including the Corruption Quiz); and [The Elephant and the Mouse](#)). What a treat for you if you are reading these for the first time!

The ethos of Aidspan and the GFO remains that which is so adequately summed up by Bernard himself, who says "While I ran Aidspan, Aidspan's loyalties were not to the Global Fund as an organization, they were to the principles upon which the Fund was founded and to the people whom the Fund served. I had a deep desire for the Fund to succeed. But if I ever felt that the Fund as an organization was clearly not living up to those principles or not doing its best for those people, I felt it was both appropriate and necessary for GFO to say so".

We like to think that we are continuing to exemplify these sentiments, almost twenty years later.

Colleagues who were involved with the Global Fund and Aidspan from the beginning, as well as our Board members, have sent their birthday wishes ([Happy birthday, GFO!](#)).

Finally, all of us here at Aidspan, both staff and Board members, would like to emphasize how proud we are to be associated with Aidspan, the GFO and its French counterpart the OFM. We continue to be excited about the work we are doing and the support we are able to provide to the Global Fund family, including its partners and implementers, through our research, capacity building and publications / articles. We would also like to give a vote of thanks to our donors for their trust and belief in us and who have helped us to keep Aidspan and the GFO alive. Finally, to you, our readers. Without our subscribers, there would be no GFO.

As usual, we ask that if you enjoy the GFO and find it relevant to your work, please encourage your colleagues to [subscribe](#)!

Don't forget: if you are aware of an interesting development relevant to disease programs or health systems and that you feel is worthy of global discussion, do let me know together with the name of a person prepared to write about this ? why not have a go yourself? We are always looking for new writers. Suggestions and comments can be sent to us in English, French or Spanish. Christelle Boulanger, the GFO's interim editor, can be contacted through her email, christelle.boulanger@aidspan.org.

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