



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

THE GLOBAL FUND'S I SPEAK OUT NOW! CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGES THE REPORTING OF FRAUD AND CORRUPTION EASILY THROUGH ONLINE REPORTING

On International Anti-Corruption day, 09 December 2015, the Global Fund's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) launched its campaign to raise awareness about fraud and abuse of Global Fund money.

By the end of 2015, the OIG had received hundreds of allegations of fraud and abuse. This represents an increase of 30 percent compared to 2014 and on average, over a third of allegations become investigations which result in recommendations to recover misspent funds and actions to strengthen the Fund's impact.

According to the Fund's [Core Whistleblowing Philosophy document](#), the OIG has been tasked to provide appropriate mechanisms for whistle-blowers to report all irregularities relating to Global Fund activities. The 'I Speak Out Now!' campaign is one such mechanism the Fund is using to combat fraud and corruption.

The objective of the campaign as stated by the Fund, is to improve the quality and timeliness of allegations that it receives so that the Fund can intervene in a timely manner. Targeted audiences include Global Fund staff and grant implementers. The audiences targeted were the Secretariat and the three pilot countries: Malawi, Côte d'Ivoire and Ukraine, which were selected based on quantitative and qualitative data. The first phase of the campaign consists of an e-learning platform available at www.ispeakoutnow.org in English, French, Russian and Spanish. The platform aims to empower staff and grant implementers by giving them the tools to be able to recognize the early signs of fraud and corruption in the programs financed by the Fund.

The campaign's success in Malawi

Malawi was chosen as a pilot country because the OIG received many reports of misuse of funds from Malawi, but their poor quality made it difficult to know how to intervene. After discussions with the Secretariat Country Team, it was clear that the campaign's objective should address the widespread issue of stolen artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) from public health facilities that could compromise the Fund's grant objectives.

The OIG launched its campaign in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Anti-Corruption Bureau and USAID in April 2016 to encourage Malawians to speak out against drug theft. The OIG decided to implement specifically-designed materials in Chichewa and by July 2016, within three months of implementation, the hotline had received 40 reports relating to the theft and/or illegal sale of anti-malaria drugs (please see other article in this issue regarding drug theft in Malawi [here](#)).

As a result, an anti-malaria drug theft taskforce, made up of the OIG, the Malawi Police Service, and the Anti-Corruption Bureau, was able to act on intelligence from reports which identified 25 sites where stolen anti-malarial drugs were allegedly being sold. The task force subsequently found evidence that resulted in a number of high profile arrests, fines and prosecutions. The country has shown greater commitment through the Ministry of Health's 'Drug Availability and Security Action Plan' and renewed funding and support for the Drug Theft Investigation Unit (including \$206,000 of Global Fund grant funding and support from USAID and DfID.)

Raising awareness about drug theft in Cote d'Ivoire

Launched in Cote d'Ivoire in April 2016, the OIG targeted its campaign in Côte d'Ivoire on the theft of the drug RHZE, a powerful and essential antibiotic used to treat tuberculosis financed by the Global Fund.

RHZE was being diverted from the supply chain and sold on street markets as a cure-all to a variety of ailments. The practice not only represented a financial loss for programs funded by the Global Fund but also posed a major public health risk as it could reinforce multidrug-resistant forms of TB. The campaign built on the work of the Chirac Foundation, the charitable foundation of the former French President, by using its slogan « Le médicament de la rue tue! » (The medicine of the street kills!). In parallel to the campaign, the OIG also investigated the diversion of Global Fund financed TB drugs.

Tackling bribe-paying in Ukraine

In Ukraine, the campaign addressed the problem of people who inject drugs being forced to pay bribes to get on to free opioid substitution therapy (OST) treatment financed by the Global Fund. In partnership with the local OST hotline, the campaign focused on the many OST centers but although the local hotline received an increase in reports thanks to the campaign, a parallel investigative review by the OIG could not find evidence to indicate if in fact, people who inject drugs were having to pay bribes or not, suggesting that the problem was more anecdotal, than widespread.

Next steps

In an email from the Fund, Aidspace was told that for phase II of the campaign, the OIG will be focusing on the Secretariat in a more effective manner and a broader audience of implementers, rather than particular countries or communities and says more results of the campaign and its hoped-for success will be coming soon.

The results of the investigation are available here: <http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/oig/reports/>.

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