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Independent observer
of the Global Fund

EDITOR'S NOTES

As I write this, England is experiencing a lovely sunny June (so far) after a soaking wet May! Whereas my colleagues in the Nairobi office are going into their winter...

This issue we start with our usual feature article on COVID-19 with a thoughtful piece from Alan Whiteside who asks, are we winning the battle against one of the world's biggest-ever health threats? The review is mixed. Still so many unknowns...how many more variants are there to come, will the vaccines be as effective against the new strains as we are told they will be, will Africa see the kind of infection rates that so far most countries in the region have avoided, why can't we do the same for HIV and other diseases as we have done for COVID-19 in such a short space of time, and so on and so forth ([COVID-19: Are we winning? Yes and no!](#)). We are all suffering from COVID fatigue, another symptom of long COVID!

Our 'From the Field' article is the second in our series on the Middle East Response multi-country grant. This article builds on our first which addressed the strong inter-agency partnerships that have contributed to the grant's success. This time we talk frankly about the socio-cultural, religious, political and legally punitive climate in which the region's HIV programs are delivered and ask whether the Global Fund can expect HIV, including sexual and reproductive health and gender, programs to succeed without interventions to address these drivers of inequality and, to some extent, repression ([The Middle East Response multi-country grant: delivering HIV programs in challenging sociocultural setting](#)).

We are finally winning the battle of catching up with the Office of the Inspector General Reports: only one for you this time ([OIG Report finds the Global Fund's Emergency Preparedness response has worked well](#)).

We are pleased to publish a statement from the Ministry of Health in South Sudan in response to the last GFO issue's article on the malaria grant and Global Fund processes for choosing a new Principal

Recipient ([South Sudan responds to Aidspace's article regarding the Principal Recipient for the malaria grant](#)). It highlights the importance of country ownership in the PR selection process and presents the rationale for why South Sudan is steadfastly insisting on the right to have a say in which PR should manage its malaria grant.

[Turning off the tap: the perilous state of HIV prevention funding in Southern Africa](#) reports on a new publication of almost the same name that addresses the parlous state of HIV prevention in ten Southern African countries. Nearly two decades of focusing on HIV treatment, care and support has meant that HIV prevention has trailed behind...this new report is aimed at civil society and community groups engaged in HIV budget advocacy for increasing funds for prevention. We at Aidspace believe that the report itself should be compulsory reading for all Country Coordinating Mechanisms not just in Southern Africa but in other parts of the world where prevention takes a back seat ? for example, many countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia where HIV infection is increasing; in countries transitioning from Global Fund support where the fate of civil society becomes more uncertain; and above all for governments who should continue to support civil society and community groups offering HIV prevention to key populations and, indeed, to increase that support. Without this, the region will not be able to meet the fast-track HIV targets let alone those of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, please meet Ann Ithibu, Aidspace's Policy Analyst and one of our longest-serving staff members ([An interview with Ann Ithibu](#)).

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. Suggestions and comments can be sent to me in English, French or Spanish. My email address is: acampbell.white@aidspace.org.

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