



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

Countries know what's coming: so why don't they prepare better?

Dear subscribers

First and foremost, happy International Women's Day! It would be great to start this Editorial with a stirring success story but unfortunately, it's the opposite. Staff writer Amida asks why, after decades of increasing action, a woman's lot is still not a happy one, especially in Africa ([Why are we still talking about women's rights in 2023?](#)). We could do better: indeed, we know we should do better. So why can't we? The answer of course lies largely with men. Without male support, and indeed activism, women alone cannot succeed in vanquishing centuries of misogyny, sexism, inequality and inequity. So, this is a call to readers: any good ideas for how we go about this? We would be very happy to publish articles that can respond to this!

As we mentioned last time, we're nearing the deadline for Window 1 funding applications which closes on 20 March. Countries are now scrambling to get their funding requests ready in time to submit but we all know, from past experience, that many will struggle. Applications of varying quality, some missing key supporting documents, will be submitted by countries who have worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the past few weeks in an effort to provide the Global Fund with a package of information that fulfills the prescribed criteria. Why is it, with this the seventh round of funding cycles in 21 years, that countries cannot seem to prepare earlier and better? We all knew this is coming. Even before Allocation Letters were issued in the December before the funding cycle year starts, countries knew that in 2023 grants would be coming to an end and new applications would have to be submitted. Yet still country dialogue starts late, requests for technical assistance arrive even later and there is a fight to get the 'best' and most experienced consultants to write the funding requests. This doesn't do justice to the development of a robust, comprehensive technical sound and appropriately prioritized proposal that has been widely circulated, discussed and agreed with all stakeholders. Some countries are even preparing their national strategic disease plans concurrently with their funding requests....

And then, of course, there is the issue of the application materials. The Global Fund has tried to provide as much guidance as possible, including a series of webinars and an abundance of supporting materials such as Technical Briefs and Guidance Notes. There are five application approaches tailored to different country situations and the templates for the narrative and other documents include helpful checklists and questions. But countries still feel they need to engage international consultants to navigate the forms and the language: which, we agree, are overwhelming (even for native English speakers). The idea that countries would be able to transition from using highly paid international technical assistance to local experts went out of the window several funding rounds ago...

Enough ranting (for now) and on to this issue of the GFO. We look at two issues of relevance for this funding cycle: the new shorter TB treatment ([Action Needed to Scale Up Access to Shorter, Safer TB Prevention and Treatment Regimens](#)) and the centrality of human rights in the funding requests ([The importance of human rights in the GC7 funding requests](#)).

In article 3, Alan Whiteside asks: [Global health architecture: fit for purpose ?](#) And finally, we review two Office of the Inspector General audits and reports, for [Madagascar](#) and [Sierra Leone](#).

As ever, Aidspace and our editorial team, under the leadership of Ida Hakizinka, does its best to ensure the accuracy of data and statements in our published articles ? and hence our inclusion of hyperlinks ? but if you, the reader, identify an error or important omission, please notify us and provide us with your data source; and we shall be happy to publish a correction or amendment.

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

Don't forget: if you are aware of an interesting development relevant to disease programmes 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 us, Ida Hakizinka or Arlette Campbell White in English, French or Spanish at ida.hakizinka@aidspan.org or acampbell.white@aidspan.org.

The Aidspace Editorial Team

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