



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

Plans Are Fine, But Who Has Been Helped?

In the past few years we have heard many announcements – such as today’s – about scaling up plans and programs regarding HIV/AIDS treatment. They have come from UNAIDS, WHO, PAHO and the Global Fund, as well as generic and originator drug companies. But after the press coverage dies down, things don’t seem to change very much for the people who need these drugs. Lots of our AIDS leaders like to be in the headlines, but they don’t seem to focus on the follow-up issues related to being sure that the promised medications actually reach the target populations.

I have seen little interest by the Global Fund in organizing a press conference that would point out that of the 30,000 people in Peru, Ecuador, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic who could and should have received ARV therapy from Global Fund projects approved in Round Two, fourteen months ago, not one person has as yet received a single pill. Very likely a third of the people who needed treatment when the projects were approved have died. India is the same. Ironically, CIPLA’s drugs, produced in India, do not reach India’s 400,000 people who need treatment now, and a Global Fund grant to India worth \$100 million has yet to provide treatment for a single person.

To me these tragedies related to bureaucracy, negligence and indifference are newsworthy, but you don’t see them in the New York Times.

Announcements such as this, coming one after the other, may actually be counterproductive in the sense that they give everyone a false sense of complacency. People reading about them think, “Well, the AIDS problem is solved in developing countries,” and go on to some other issue. The media operates on one level, while the reality of the epidemic and the challenge of implementing effective solutions is often ignored. UNAIDS, PAHO, WHO, the Clinton Foundation and the Global Fund should start to hold press conferences focusing on why, with so much money available and prices so dramatically low, so few

people are actually receiving treatment.

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