



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

More Evidence of Fraud in Global Fund Grants to Mauritania

In Mauritania, a full criminal investigation, initiated by the Office of the Mauritanian Inspector General, has led to the arrest of three senior officials in the Executive Secretariat of Mauritania's National AIDS Committee (SENL), and to the issue of an arrest warrant for a fourth staff member. SENL is the principal recipient (PR) for Mauritania's Round 5 HIV grant, the only active HIV grant in the country. Meanwhile, investigations have also confirmed systematic fraud by sub-recipients (SRs) in the Global Fund programmes administered by the UNDP, the PR for two malaria grants and two TB grants in Mauritania.

This information is contained in "The Office of the Inspector General Progress Report for October 2009 – February 2010."

In September 2009, GFO reported that the Global Fund had temporarily suspended the Round 5 HIV grant after an investigation by the Global Fund's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found evidence of "fraudulent and unjustified expenditures." (See GFO 107, available at www.aidspan.org/gfo.) It was this investigation that led to the Mauritanian investigation, which in turn led to the arrests.

The Global Fund has been reimbursed \$1.7 million, which is the amount that the OIG said in its initial investigation was subject to fraud. Following the review by the OIG of additional supporting documentation relating to programmes administered by SENL, the Global Fund has requested a refund of a further \$2.5 million.

In a separate development involving grants in Mauritania for which UNDP is the PR, the OIG was informed by the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigation (OAI) of multiple fabricated documents among the materials provided by sub-recipients (SRs) to UNDP over a five-and-a-half-year period. These irregularities were discovered during a regular UNDP audit. As a result, the OAI has commenced an

investigation into the apparent fraud.

In the course of assisting the UNDP OAI with its investigations, the OIG sent four investigators to Mauritania, including a computer forensic expert and a forensic auditor. The team reviewed 20,000 pages of documentation, together with digital evidence from several computers.

The OIG said that the work to quantify the value of the loss to the Global Fund from these UNDP-related grants has not yet been completed. The OIG is discussing with the UNDP OAI the process of formally referring the evidence to Mauritanian authorities for the criminal investigation and prosecution of those responsible.

In separate reports, the Global Fund said that it has “put in place immediate and comprehensive measures to safeguard its assets and protect patients’ access to treatment” in Mauritania, and that the Fund and its partners “had mitigated the impact of the grant suspension by ensuring continuity of treatment for over 1,100 people who had been receiving ARV treatment through programs supported by the grant.”

“The Office of the Inspector General Progress Report for October 2009 – February 2010? is available at www.theglobalfund.org/en/oig/reports. Information for this article also came from “Secretariat Follow-Up on Inspector General Findings and Recommendations,” and “Report of the Executive Director,” both of which are available at www.theglobalfund.org/en/board/meetings/twentyfirst/documents.

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