



Studies of the Systemwide Effects of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria

The overall objective of SWEF research is to document the effects of the processes involved in applying for and receiving a Global Fund grant, and implementing Fund-supported activities, on the health-care systems of recipient countries.

Members of the SWEF Network currently include Partners for Health Reformplus, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine (Belgium), Curatio International Foundation (Georgia), Instituto Centroamericano de la Salud (Nicaragua), Measure Evaluation and Rational Pharmaceutical Managementplus Projects, Miz-Hasab Research Center (Ethiopia), Health Systems Trust (South Africa), and other research organizations.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria aims to attract, manage, and disburse resources that will make a significant and sustainable impact on the three focal diseases. The Global Fund has also stated its commitment to support programs that address the three diseases “in ways that contribute to the strengthening of health systems.” The Global Fund is likely to have a variety of direct and indirect effects upon health care systems that could be positive or negative in nature. To be effective and sustainable in the long run, interventions will depend upon well-functioning health systems. This is true not only for the Global Fund, but also for other initiatives, such as the World Bank Multisectoral AIDS Program (MAP), the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and others that aim to substantially increase the scale of response to specific diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS.

SWEF Research Network

The Systemwide Effects of the Fund (SWEF) Research Network is a collaborative research network, composed of research organizations in the South and the North, that seeks to understand how monies being disbursed by the Global Fund, as well as other significant sources of funding for AIDS, TB, and malaria affect the broader health care systems of recipient countries. The SWEF Research Network is committed to addressing these difficult policy questions in a timely, empirical, and objective manner that is sensitive to the complex policy environment within which initiatives like the Global Fund operate. The SWEF network strives to engage key stakeholders, at the national and global level, in conceptualizing the research, interpreting study findings, and considering implications for policy.

The results will be used to derive lessons for:



- ▲ Stakeholders in countries receiving Global Fund grants, to inform policies and implementation strategies for fund-supported activities
- ▲ The Global Fund Board and Secretariat, to help improve Fund processes and guidelines in order to ensure that Fund-supported activities enhance broader health care systems;
- ▲ The broader donor and global community regarding how best to channel efforts to scale up substantially the assault upon AIDS, TB, and malaria and other diseases of poverty in low- and middle- income countries.

The SWEF Research Network plans to conduct country case studies in 8 to 10 countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. SWEF studies are currently underway in Benin, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and the Republic of Georgia. Country studies are likely to proceed in Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, and Zambia. The research is funded by USAID, the European Commission, and other donors.

Our Research Approach

A conceptual framework developed on this topic¹ suggests that Global Fund supported activities may have intended and unintended effects upon the broader health care system and that these effects may enhance health system performance (in terms of improving accessibility, sustainability, efficiency and equity) or detract from it. The study will focus upon four thematic areas, namely:

¹ Bennett, Sara and Alan Fairbank. October 2003. *The System-Wide Effects of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: A Conceptual Framework*. Technical Report No. 031. Bethesda, MD: The Partners for Health Reformplus Project, Abt Associates Inc.

▲ **Effects upon the policy environment** - Global Fund proposal and planning processes are designed to enhance the range of actors involved in informing policy and implementing disease control activities. The study will assess the extent to which this occurs. The development and implementation of Global Fund-supported activities interfaces with other planning and aid frameworks such as Sector Wide Approach and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, as well as other new financing mechanisms (e.g., MAP) targeted at HIV/AIDS. The study will assess the effect of Global Fund support upon the broader pattern of health system funding, and the extent to which the policy and operational pursued by the Global Fund are in alignment with existing structures.

▲ **Effects upon the public-private mix** - The Global Fund explicitly welcomes innovative approaches to expanding service coverage and approaches that draw private sector actors into the health care system; accordingly a greater role for private sector actors may evolve. The study will evaluate the effects of Global Fund support upon the number, distribution and organization of different types of providers (public, private for-profit, private non-profit) and relationships between public and private sectors (such as the number of public/private partnerships in non-focal areas, and the degree of trust and cooperation between sectors). In addition, the study will explore the implications of these changes for overall health system performance.

▲ **Effects upon human resources** - Many Global Fund proposals include training activities for health workers, and some address issues of staff retention and motivation. Where health workers are in short supply, Global Fund-supported activities may over-burden capacity. Fund-supported activities may also affect the skills, motivation, and distribution of health workers, and may cause shifts in the distribution of health workers from non-focal disease programs/functions. The study will evaluate the extent of these effects, and identify the mechanisms through which they were affected.

▲ **Effects upon pharmaceuticals and commodities**

- Approximately 50 percent of Global Fund money already committed will procure pharmaceuticals and commodities. This injection of funding may affect procurement, supply and distribution systems, and the quality and prices of other drugs and commodities. The study will use the drug management framework (procurement, distribution, utilization/rational use, and monitoring and evaluation) as well as the access framework (geographic access, physical availability, financial affordability, quality, and specific issues of pricing/subsidies) to investigate the effects of the Global Fund upon pharmaceuticals and commodities.

These four thematic areas will be examined through a combination of research methodologies including short-term monitoring, longer-term evaluation, and optional special studies. The SWEF Network has developed a core research protocol,² which will be adapted and tailored by individual country research teams to meet specific policy concerns and data availability. The use of a common core protocol will help to ensure the technical quality and comparability of findings across countries.

The SWEF Research Network partners, in collaboration with several stakeholders including Country Coordinating Mechanism members from various countries) developed a set of operating guidelines to facilitate coordination and implementation. These guidelines outline general agreements made during an October 2003 workshop about overall coordination of the study across countries, quality assurance and technical review mechanisms, and processes for communicating with stakeholders and disseminating findings. Overall, the Network is committed to a country-driven, yet independent and objective approach, and is committed to being open and transparent regarding both the study approach and the findings.

For more information, please visit www.phrplus.org/swef.html or e-mail PHRplus Research Coordinator Kate Stillman at kate_stillman@abtassoc.com.

² The protocol was discussed in detail and developed during a research protocol development workshop held in Oxford, England, October 16-18, 2003.



Abt Associates Inc.
International Health Area
4800 Montgomery Lane
Suite 600
Bethesda, MD 20814 USA
Tel: 301-913-0500
Fax: 301-913-0562
URL: www.PHRplus.org
Email: PHR-
InfoCenter@abtassoc.com



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