



Investing in our future

**The Global Fund**

To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

## ***Role of Friends of The Global Fund Organisations***

**- A DISCUSSION PAPER -**



Pacific Friends of  
**The Global Fund**

To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

Sydney  
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# ***Role of Friends of The Global Fund Organisations***

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# **THE GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA**

## ***Role of Friends of The Global Fund Organisations***

### **- A Discussion Paper -**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION – AIM OF PAPER**

This paper has been prepared by Pacific Friends of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (“Pacific Friends”). The paper canvasses the role of Friends organisations in the work of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (“the Fund”) and identifies areas in the relationship that may need clarification and strengthening. The paper also discusses some of the difficult challenges facing the Fund, notably the global economic downturn, the impact of complacency and “AIDS fatigue”, and promotion of the Fund’s work in responding to the three diseases.

This paper also proposes recommendations designed to assist the work of the Fund and to clarify roles and responsibilities with Friends organisations.

In raising issues in this paper that arguably concern the operation of all Friends organisations, we do so from the perspective of a relatively new Friends organisation. Our purpose is to be clear about our role and operations in order to maximise our efforts on behalf of the Fund in the Pacific region.

All involved in Pacific Friends greatly respect the Fund’s achievements and the major contributions made by our partner Friends organisations. We hope that this discussion paper is constructive and that the ideas proposed may strengthen the role of Friends organisations in supporting the vital work of the Fund.

#### **2. THE GLOBAL FUND AND FRIENDS ORGANISATIONS - BACKGROUND**

##### **2.1 Establishment of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**

In 2001, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan called for the urgent establishment of a global fund to fight HIV/AIDS given the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and its devastating impact in many parts of the world.

Soon after, United Nations member states endorsed the creation of the Fund as part of the United Nations General Assembly’s Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (2001). Some months later, the scope of the Fund expanded to include tuberculosis and malaria.

The Fund began operating in 2002 as a unique financial mechanism to raise, direct and account for funds from public and private sector donors for programs to address the spread of the three diseases. Compared to other international financial institutions, the Fund has a relatively small Geneva-based office staff relative to the amount of funds

raised and disbursed. As a matter of policy, the Fund has not established a network of regional offices.

## **2.2 Formation of Friends of the Global Fund**

Networks of supporters played a crucial role in the Fund's early years, providing technical expertise and effective advocacy to donors. These supporters came from diverse backgrounds, including business, politics, health, research, and affected communities.

Over time, these networks coalesced into eight Friends of the Global Fund organisations. Friends of the Global Fight (USA), Friends Japan, Friends Europe and Friends Africa were formed between 2004 and 2006. More recently, the Fund encouraged formation of Friends Latin America, Friends South and West Asia, Friends North Africa and Middle East and Pacific Friends.

Friends organisations are not directly funded by The Global Fund but are supported by a variety of philanthropic and third-party institutions, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Friends model provides an important vehicle for experienced and influential supporters to intensify global advocacy for the Fund's work. It is clear that the Fund's leadership and staff recognise the very successful advocacy efforts made by the Friends over the years and the potential for Friends to do even more in the future.

However, there appears to be some uncertainty about how best to use the Friends organisations and the expertise of their members, especially in the difficult environment in which the Fund is operating. Related to this is further uncertainty about the role of Friends and their relationship with the Fund itself. These issues are discussed in more detail later.

## **3. CHALLENGES FOR THE FUND AND FRIENDS ORGANISATIONS**

A confluence of factors has created a challenging operating environment for the Fund and for the Friends organisations. These factors include:

- declining public interest in HIV/AIDS
- variable awareness of the Fund and its responses to the three diseases
- complacency among governments and the public
- uncertain economic times

Adding to this is lack of clarity about some aspects of the relationship between the Fund and Friends, which could negatively impact on the Fund if not addressed. These areas include:

- communication
- support
- roles and responsibilities

On the other hand, there are opportunities to enhance the relationship and make even greater use of the Friends organisations to support the Fund's crucial work.

In this paper, we discuss these challenges, issues and opportunities and propose recommendations to address them.

### **3.1 Awareness of the Fund and responses to AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**

Predictably, there was some initial scepticism about the formation of the Fund and its structuring as a very different model of health funding. However, seven years on, the impressive record of accomplishment of the Fund has resulted in strong support among United Nations member states, government agencies, philanthropic organisations and civil society.

The Fund also enjoys strong support from those working directly with the Fund from the non-government sector, the business sector, health care professions and affected communities. However, awareness of the Fund's work is more variable among people and organisations who do not work directly with the Fund, even though they may be significantly involved in responses to the three diseases,

The Fund's profile is low in most developed and developing countries compared to other major institutions like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Clinton Foundation. The Fund must compete for attention with a myriad of government, quasi-government and non-government initiatives working on the three diseases at global, regional and national levels.

The Fund has done an exceptional job in involving civil society and affected communities in its planning and implementation operations. This also helps promote the work of the Fund to some degree. However, the capacity of people to contribute to the operational side of the Fund as well as promote the Fund's work is often limited. In any case this is often requires quite different skill sets.

While awareness about tuberculosis and malaria may well have increased through the work of the Fund and others, interest in HIV/AIDS within the media and the public is not as high as it was a decade ago. Today "AIDS fatigue" is a reality in many countries, including some major donor countries that are facing difficulties with their own HIV/AIDS responses due to complacency.

Where the Fund stands out is in its inclusive approach, its technical expertise, its ability to direct funds quickly, its rigorous processes, its accountability and its commitment to partnership. However, getting these concepts across to the public and opinion leaders is a challenge. It is not easy to describe the work of the Fund in a short sound byte and to differentiate its role from that of governments and other actors. Even within the HIV/AIDS sector, people do question why the Fund (and probably Friends organisations) is needed given the plethora of other national, regional and global HIV/AIDS organisations.

### **3.2 Impact of the global economic downturn**

Over the past seven years, assisted by a long period of global economic growth, the Fund has been able to generate impressive levels of funding.

But the global economic downturn has dramatically changed the landscape, with major donor countries particularly affected. Government spending on international aid will obviously come under pressure. There will be scrutiny of all areas of donor funding, include responses to the three diseases and the performance of organisations like the Fund. The same applies to the private sector and its capacity to fund aid and humanitarian efforts.

While there are early signs of recovery in some economies, predictions are that recovery will be slow and uneven, so it may be many years before economic growth returns to levels of the past decade. In the medium-term, as economies recover, many

governments will likely shift focus from economic stimulus to debt reduction, so competition for aid funding will remain intense.

The profile of the Fund was arguably less important in good economic times. However, in the current economic climate successful promotion of the Fund will be crucial to its ability to maintain - let alone expand - its work. The Fund will need to be very sophisticated in promoting its work to donors and helping generate support in the wider community for action against the three diseases.

In these difficult economic times, the best use should be made of the skills and experience of Friends organisations to help maintain financial support for the Fund and promote public awareness of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

*Recommendation:*

- 1. That strategic planning for the Fund identify initiatives that may be taken by Friends organisations to help increase public awareness of the Fund and mitigate the impact of the global economic downturn on the Fund's work on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.*

### **3.3 Internal and external communication**

An effective communications strategy will be crucial to addressing the challenges described in the previous section.

In February this year, the Fund established a Communications Task Force to make recommendations for a communications strategy for 2009 – 2012. The Task Force recently completed its report, which contains valuable findings and recommendations<sup>1</sup>. The next step will be the writing of the strategy as directed by Fund staff. The communications strategy is due for completion by the end of the year.

Given the findings of the Communications Task Force and the difficult operating environment described earlier, we hope that the strategy and an implementation plan are developed as soon as possible.

We note there are relatively few comments and recommendations concerning Friends organisations in the Communications Task Force report. This is puzzling given the potential of the Friends to generate support for the Fund. Perhaps the lack of focus on the Friends in the Task Force report reflects some of the uncertainties about the role of Friends organisations described earlier in this paper.

We suggest that Friends organisations should be more fully included in the Fund's new communication strategy. This will not only benefit the profile of the Fund, but also help ensure that promotion and advocacy efforts on behalf of the Fund are well coordinated and any potential for confusion or disagreement between the Fund and Friends is minimised.

We also suggest that Friends organisations should be invited to comment on the Communications Task Force findings and recommendations. There is a great deal of advocacy and communication expertise among the Friends and further good ideas may be forthcoming. Consideration should be given to involving appropriate Friends members in finalising the new communication strategy and monitoring its implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Global Fund Communications Taskforce Report & Recommendations, June 2009.

*Recommendations:*

2. *That, given the global economic downturn and other challenges facing the Fund, the new communication strategy be finalised as soon as possible.*
3. *That Friends organisations and their role be fully included in the new communication strategy.*
4. *That Friends organisations be invited to comment on the Communication Task Force's findings and recommendations.*
5. *That consideration is given to involving some Friends members in finalising the communication strategy and monitoring its implementation.*

### **3.4 Information and support for Friends Organisations**

As mentioned, membership of the Friends organisations comprises an impressive number of senior and experienced people from many backgrounds and with diverse professional expertise. They are committed to promoting the work of the Fund within their countries, regions and networks. In effect, these members comprise an invaluable “sales team” for the Fund.

In the absence of any permanent regional Fund representative office, governments, civil society and the media will likely see members of Friends as a *de facto* source of knowledge about the Fund and about responses to the three diseases.

It is therefore crucial that members of Friends have access to clear, authoritative guidance from the Fund about trends in prevention, treatment, scientific progress and societal and economic impacts across the three diseases. This guidance should complement the material available on the Fund's website. It should concisely explain key current issues, and deliver the views and advice of senior Fund personnel<sup>2</sup>.

Friends may need information to answer “hard questions” about the Fund: What makes the Fund different from other funding mechanisms? How does the Fund “add value” to global and regional responses? Isn't it the responsibility of Governments to fight the diseases and does having a Fund let them evade responsibility? How does my country and region get a fair share of Fund money?

Friends will need to be informed about the impact of the global economic downturn on the Fund: What are the latest funding targets for the Fund? How will the work of the Fund be impacted? What impact could the economic downturn have on global responses to the three diseases?

This kind of information will be essential to assist the Friends in local and regional initiatives to promote the Fund and to communicate new facts to governments and networks.

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<sup>2</sup> See paper “*Need for Resource Documents on Friends Organisation*” (March 09) by Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG, which discusses the role of the Fund in supporting Friends and proposes measures to address this, including print, electronic and media resources.

*Recommendation:*

- 6. That a plan be developed and linked to the Fund's communication strategy to ensure that technical and other information is available to assist Friends organisations in their advocacy work for the Fund.*

### **3.5 Involving Friends Members in the Fund's work**

Consideration should be given to having Friends members more involved in the Fund's operational work, given their extensive experience and expertise. For example, members of Friends could be invited to serve on technical review panels, and other Fund processes and activities.

Over the course of say a two to three year involvement with Friends, members could be invited to participate in one large Fund event – perhaps a conference of Friends. From time to time, it may be possible to invite small groups of Friends to Geneva to meet senior staff and obtain briefings on Fund activities. Members of Friends could also be more involved in the Fund's strategic planning.

There should be an agreed mechanism to foster interactions between the Friends and the Fund's senior management and Board.

*Recommendation:*

- 7. That consideration be given to further utilising the expertise of Friends members in the Fund's operations.*
- 8. That a more formalised mechanism be developed to guide interactions between Friends organisations and the Fund's senior management and Board.*

### **3.6 Operation of Friends organisations and relationship to the Fund**

Friends organisations are independent of the Fund and autonomous in their operation. Each of the Friends raises its own operating funds and there is no financial support (or oversight) from the Fund itself. There is no common template or model constitution for Friends organisations.

At least in the case of Pacific Friends, no agreement or exchange of letters exists between Pacific Friends and the Fund that defines purposes, agreements, common objectives or reciprocal rights and responsibilities. The one governing agreement that Pacific Friends operates under is the agreement between the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lowy Institute for International Policy under which the Foundation funds the Lowy Institute to support the operation of Pacific Friends.

Each Friends organisation has developed their own aims and objectives, although there are similarities. All Friends have a primary aim of generating donor support for the Fund. However, some Friends have additional aims. These include organising events to raise public awareness about HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, fostering policy debate about the three diseases through position papers and research, promoting discussion on new funding mechanisms and encouraging public-private partnerships.

The identity and branding of each Friends organisation encourages close identification of each Friends group with the Fund itself. Each Friends organisation uses the name of the

Fund and adopts and adapts the logo and insignia when it advocates on behalf of the Fund. Some Friends organisations have developed their own websites.

For example, Pacific Friends uses the brand, logo, insignia and reputation of the Global Fund to present itself to governments, opinion-formers and the public in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region. No agreement governs the right of Pacific Friends to use the Fund's brand. The Fund in effect relies on the goodwill of the Pacific Friends office-holders to act in the interests of the Fund, and in support of policies and priorities determined by the Fund's Board.

Arrangements for the operation of the Friends organisations have emerged in an ad hoc way and have so far served the Fund well. That no serious problems have emerged owes a great deal to the quality of the people attracted to the Friends organisations, and to the diligence of Fund staff charged with liaising with Friends.

However, there are weaknesses in the operational model for Friends that have compounded as more Friends organisations are established. First is the understandable perception among the media, the public, the HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria sectors and even some governments, that the Friends and the Fund are essentially different arms of the same organisation. Therefore, Friends organisations doing advocacy or public commentary may be viewed as doing so as an extension of the Fund itself.

A worst-case scenario could be a situation where a Friends organisation (or one of its supporters) disagrees with or diverges from Global Fund policy, or otherwise acts prejudicially to the Fund's interests. This could be very damaging to the Fund.

### **3.7 Codifying relations between the Fund and Friends organisations**

As mentioned earlier, the Fund faces difficult challenges, not the least being the impact of the global economic downturn. Therefore, it is crucial that the Fund and Friends are configured to maximise their efforts to gain funding for the three diseases.

We are concerned that continuing the *ad hoc* and at times confusing arrangements concerning the Friends-Fund relationship, described above, might create unacceptable levels of risk for the Fund and Friends alike. We suggest that this is an opportune time to review the strengths and weaknesses of the Friends relationship with the Fund and with sponsors, funders and supporters.

Firstly, we believe there is merit in codifying relations between the Fund and Friends organisations. We suggest that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), exchange of letters, or similar process, be developed to clarify mutual roles, obligations and responsibilities between the Fund and Friends. This document should identify and mitigate the avoidable risks associated with several years of ad hoc development of Friends organisations. This process may identify other actions to enhance the Fund and Friends partnership.

We believe it is important that the MOU (or other process) include the formal acceptance by Friends organisations of the internationally agreed framework of principles, policies and actions identified as being fundamental to effective responses to the three diseases. This includes scientifically proven prevention approaches like harm reduction; the goal of universal access to prevention and treatment; and actions to protect the human rights of affected communities and people living with the three diseases.

For HIV, these principles, policies and actions are contained in the United Nations General Assembly's Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (2001), which also

endorsed the formation of the Fund, and in the United Nations General Assembly's Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (2006). The Fund itself operates under the framework of these two United Nations Declarations, as well as the Millennium Development Goals Declaration (2000).

By accepting these United Nations declarations within a MOU (or similar), clear guidance can be given to Friends organisations about which policy positions are endorsed by the United Nations system and the Fund itself. The MOU (or similar) should specify that statements, actions, activities, etc, taken by Friends organisations should be consistent with these United Nations declarations.

The MOU (or similar) should describe how any conflicts might be resolved and describe interventions that the Fund is able to take to dissolve a Friends organisation in the unlikely event that should prove necessary. There may be other areas that the proposed MOU (or similar) should cover, including baseline requirements for financial administration and governance.

- Recommendations:*
- 9. That a fixed term working group comprising Friends leaders and Fund officers report to the Board with recommendations to clarify the role and relationship of the Fund and Friends and to ensure consistency in approaches to policy and advocacy work across the three diseases.*
  - 10. That consideration be given to establishing a Friends advisory and coordination group reporting to the Board through the Executive Director.*
  - 11. That relations between the Fund and Friends organisations be codified through a memorandum of understanding (or similar) and that this instrument describe mutual aims, objectives and obligations; communication processes; conflict resolution; financial administration and governance.*
  - 12. That the memorandum (or similar) include acceptance by Friends organisations of the internationally agreed framework of principles, policies and actions endorsed by the United Nations as being fundamental to effective responses to the three diseases.*

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

We look forward to the response of the Fund and Friends organisations to this discussion paper.

We suggest that the forthcoming New York meeting of Friends representatives in September 2009 would be a good forum to discuss the issues raised in this paper and, hopefully, reach agreement about how best to progress them.

Any recommendations endorsed at the September meeting could then go to the November meeting of the Fund's Board for discussion.

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Pacific Friends of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria  
Sydney, August 2009

## Appendix

### **LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. *That strategic planning for the Fund identify initiatives that may taken by Friends organisations to help increase public awareness of the Fund and mitigate the impact of the global economic downturn on the Fund's work on HIV, tuberculosis and malaria.*
2. *That, given the global economic downturn and other challenges facing the Fund, the new communication strategy be finalised as soon as possible.*
3. *That Friends organisations and their role be fully included in the new communication strategy.*
4. *That Friends organisations be invited to comment on the Communication Task Force's findings and recommendations.*
5. *That consideration is given to involving some Friends members in finalising the communication strategy and monitoring its implementation.*
6. *That a plan be developed, linked to the Fund's communication strategy, to ensure that technical and other information is available to assist Friends organisations in their advocacy work for the Fund.*
7. *That consideration be given to further utilising the expertise of Friends members in the Fund's operations.*
8. *That a more formalised mechanism be developed to guide interactions between Friends organisations and the Fund's senior management and Board.*
9. *That a fixed term working group comprising Friends leaders and Fund officers report to the Board with recommendations to clarify the role and relationship of the Fund and Friends and to ensure consistency in approaches to policy and advocacy work across the three diseases.*
10. *That consideration be given to establishing a Friends advisory and coordination group reporting to the Board through the Executive Director.*
11. *That relations between the Fund and Friends organisations be codified through a memorandum of understanding (or similar) and that this instrument describe mutual aims, objectives and obligations; communication processes; conflict resolution; financial administration and governance.*
12. *That the memorandum (or similar) include acceptance by Friends organisations of the internationally agreed framework of principles, policies and actions endorsed by the United Nations as being fundamental to effective responses to the three diseases.*