

The World's Chance to Change the Trajectory of the Leading Infectious Killer

With the Zika virus dominating headlines, the world is reminded that our action on global health affects us all. And even as we take on new threats, we also have the chance to change the trajectory of some of the oldest and deadliest epidemics once and for all.

March 24 marks World Tuberculosis (TB) Day, and TB is now officially the world's leading infectious killer. It also remains one of the biggest causes and consequences of poverty globally.

This need not be the case. TB is both treatable and curable. And scientists believe that it's possible to put an end to the epidemic. No other single event will play a bigger role in deciding if we make that possibility a reality than this fall's replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The Global Fund provides about eighty percent of all external funding for fighting TB. Since 2000, TB deaths have declined 29 percent in countries partnering with the Global Fund. From here we have the chance to continue in the right direction and work to end this epidemic, or risk squandering our recent progress.

As Zika so powerfully reminds us, diseases respect no borders. And left untreated, TB can become more dangerous, developing drug-resistant strains that are more difficult and costly to cure.

We need to make sure that the world's progress over the last 15 years isn't undone. Raising and investing money to defeat these diseases, the Global Fund can help make sure we do just that. World leaders will come together to pledge their support this fall, and the U.S. should commit to continuing its investment of one-third of the Global Fund's resources.

The Opportunity

The Global Fund now has a plan to help save 8 million lives and prevent 300 million new cases of AIDS, TB and malaria by 2020. It will do this by supporting countries to scale up proven treatments, target the people who need it most, and work with local communities to make sure every dollar is maximized. World leaders now have the chance to invest the \$13 billion it will take to put that plan into action.

When the Global Fund began in 2002, AIDS was ripping through the developing world, especially parts of sub-Saharan Africa. TB and malaria were rampant. At that point, the Global Fund was just trying to help stop as many deaths as possible. But because of

major innovations and scientific advances since then, this work is not just about preventing deaths anymore. It's about ending all three epidemics once and for all.

U.S. Role

Since the Global Fund's inception, the U.S. has played a leading role in the partnership, including providing a full one-third of the Global Fund's financial resources. U.S. support for the Global Fund has always been uniquely bipartisan, crossing party lines when often not much else could.

President Obama hosted the Global Fund pledging conference in 2013. At the next pledging conference this fall, he now has the opportunity to cement his global health legacy by once again committing to provide one-third of the resources the Global Fund will need over the next three years. The last two Administrations – Republican and Democrat alike – have established the United States as a leader in this fight, and the next President will have the chance to move us closer to the end of the epidemics for good.

Why the Global Fund?

The Global Fund is an innovative partnership between governments, communities, and the private sector. It supports programs facilitated by local experts in countries and communities where there is the greatest need. Driven by the goal of ending AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria as epidemics, the Global Fund has helped save 17 million lives since it was founded in 2002.

With Global Fund support, 13.2 million people have received lifesaving TB treatment. An additional 8.1 million people are on antiretroviral treatment for HIV, and 548 million mosquito nets have been distributed to prevent malaria.

The Global Fund partnership has been an extraordinary global success story. The U.S. and other donor countries must make sure it can continue to support countries to save lives and invest in the groundbreaking work needed to end these epidemics once and for all.

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