

Rich donors have failed the Global Fund: Lives will unnecessarily be lost

By *moderator*

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Tuesday, October 5, 2010 (New York City, USA)-- The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) today said the funding shortfall from donors to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria at this week's Replenishment meeting taking place in New York means lives will be lost in countries like South Africa and has pledged to scale up its Resources for Health campaign. TAC's campaign is calling on all countries ? rich and poor ? to devote the necessary political attention and financial resources to health, and holds governments accountable for the promises they have made.

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There were important new pledges of close to \$12 billion from donor countries and foundations at the meeting, held this week in New York,, and chaired by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. But still the pledges fell far short of the US\$20 billion needed to maximize the impact of the Fund over the next three years and to put the world on track to achieve the health Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

?In South Africa many people have been saved by the HIV and TB treatment programmes which the Global Fund has supported?, said Nkhensani Mavasa, TAC's Community Health Advocacy Coordinator who is attending the meeting in New York. ?But now I'm afraid, afraid of what this will mean for South Africa, for the lives that we are now going to lose, the children who will be born with HIV who don't need to be, and for our National Strategic Plan which will be starved of the resources needed to reach Universal Access. ?

TAC is concerned about the impact of the low outcome of the Global Fund replenishment on all countries not just South Africa. Just as countries are beginning to build the infrastructure and systems to deliver services, and science is delivering new and more effective responses to HIV, the funding appears to be drying up. There are hundreds of programmes that will now not be able to access finance, and millions of lives that will be lost as a consequence. Based on estimates prepared by the Global Fund secretariat, the shortfall of more than US\$8 billion will deprive at least 3.1 million people of access to life saving anti-retroviral treatment, 490,000 women will not be reached by PMTCT services to prevent HIV transmission to their babies and more than 2.9 million people will not get treatment for TB will be deprived of it.

The Global Fund Replenishment process demonstrated that there has been huge progress in the fight against the three diseases. Countries have made such strong progress through their own leadership and with support from many eternal partners, and in particular the Global Fund. The Fund provides two thirds of all external funding for TB and malaria programmes, as well as 20 per cent of all international funding for HIV/AIDS programmes. It has saved nearly six million lives already, and continues to save nearly 4,000 lives every day.

South Africa pledged some 15 million Rand (approx \$US 2.2 million) at the meeting. Not all donors pledged their contributions at the Replenishment meeting today, and many important donors pledged well below their fair share of the \$20 billion needed.

‘Taking into account South Africa’s enormous HIV and TB burden, the country’s population size together with its pressing social needs, this pledge can be considered a significant act of global solidarity. It is far more generous than countries like China who between 2002-2010 gave a total of \$US16 million to the Global Fund and at this meeting have come up with a dismally disappointing \$US14 million despite receiving some of the largest grants ever from the Fund,’ said Vuyiseka Dubula General Secretary of TAC.

‘Where is the accountability?’ said Dubula. ‘Rich countries found hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out our banks, but couldn’t pull together the extra \$US8 [or 9] billion to keep the Global Fund on track to save the lives of poor children, women and men. TAC urges all of the Global Fund donors to dig deeper. Those that have not yet pledged must step forward with bold new contributions to make sure that the Fund can truly support countries to meet their ambitions.’

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