



NEWS

GLOBAL FUND LAUNCHES PARTNERSHIP FORUM – YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

On 5 March 2004 the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria launched its Partnership Forum – an open opportunity for stakeholders to offer input on how well the Global Fund is doing and guidance on how it can do better in the future.

The Partnership Forum is identified in the Global Fund bylaws as one of its four governing, administrative and advisory bodies, alongside its Board of Directors, Secretariat and Technical Review Panel. The Forum provides a channel for feedback from stakeholders who are not formally represented elsewhere in the governance structure of the foundation.

'We encourage all stakeholders to add their voices to the Partnership Forum and to give us an honest assessment of how the Global Fund is working in your countries and communities, as well as your guidance on how to maximise its impact,' said Helene Gayle, Global Fund Board Member and Director, HIV, Tuberculosis, and Reproductive Health, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In collaboration with Health and Development Networks (HDN) 1, the Global Fund has launched a dedicated online discussion forum, called PartnersGF, to promote and support multi-stakeholder participation, particularly that of civil society. Supported by GTZ BackUp Initiative, the discussion allows all stakeholders to communicate ideas and suggestions on how to improve the impact and operations of the Global Fund.

PartnersGF is managed by HDN, an independent network with previous experience in facilitating civil society input into the Global Fund. It focuses on themes that stakeholders and others have consistently brought to the Fund's attention over the past 2 years. Syntheses and conclusions of the discussions will be considered by the Global Fund's Board in due course.

Dr Richard Feachem, Executive Director, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, says '... we recognise that transparent and frank discussion is key'.

On 7 - 8 July this year the Global Fund also organised a physical meeting of the Partnership Forum in Bangkok, Thailand, just before the XVth International AIDS Conference.

To access the online discussion go to www.theglobalfund.org/en/about/forum or send an e-mail to: join-partnersGF@forums.healthdev.org.

Information on the work of the Global Fund is available on the website: <http://www.theglobalfund.org>.

WHO PREPARES FOR FLU PANDEMIC

The World Health Organisation (WHO), in collaboration with national and international partners, hosted a global consultation on priority public health interventions before and during the early stage of an influenza pandemic in Geneva in March this year. Prompted by the recent outbreak and spread of bird flu in Asia, which has highlighted the inevitability and possible imminence of another flu pandemic, the meeting will be attended by experts on the disease, public health, health economics, health policy, hospital management, drugs and pharmaceuticals, infection control measures, disease surveillance and modelling, and risk communication.

Predictive epidemiological models will be studied to estimate the disease burden and economic costs. The impact in poor countries will be the most severe owing to limited health care resources and poor health and nutritional status of the population. The WHO and its affiliates acknowledge the need to contain the current avian influenza emergency as rapidly as possible.

Experts agree that efficient surveillance, together with focused and timely public health measures, may retard the spread of an influenza virus during the initial phase of a potential pandemic sufficiently to allow global pandemic response measures to be implemented.

Accordingly, the objectives of the WHO global consultation include:

- Reviewing the global response to the avian influenza outbreak in Asia.
- Reviewing issues on influenza vaccine use and availability before and during influenza pandemics and identifying priority actions by various stakeholders to increase access.
- Reviewing issues on antiviral use and availability before and during influenza pandemics and identifying priority actions by various stakeholders to increase access.
- Reviewing the possible impact and feasibility of implementing national and international public health interventions, including travel recommendations, to slow down the spread of pandemic influenza viruses.
- Reviewing issues related to surveillance of human influenza before and during pandemics, including monitoring of strains in human cases and early detection of changes in influenza subtypes.

The consultation is expected to identify practical measures and interventions for implementation at national and global level both before and during the early stage of a pandemic. Such interventions would include appropriate access to and use of vaccine and antivirals; sound public health measures to retard the spread of the pandemic virus and reduce its impact on the population; and surveillance strategies to detect a new pandemic virus rapidly and monitor its spread efficiently.

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