

HEALTH

Global Fund Cites Progress in Treating AIDS, TB, Malaria

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The Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria report for 2010

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The **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria** reports dramatic

progress has been made in the treatment and control of these three killer diseases. The Global Fund says its multi-billion-dollar investment in combating these diseases is paying big dividends in lives saved.

Since it was created in 2002, the Global Fund has disbursed \$10 billion to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria in 144 countries, 60 percent of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

The results speak for themselves. Over this period, the Global Fund estimates 5.7 million lives have been saved. That comes to 4,000 fewer deaths every day.

The organization's director for resource globalization, Stefan Embled tells VOA the impetus for carrying out assistance programs comes from the countries themselves. He says this is a major reason behind the successful results.

"It has to be the country itself that is in the drivers seat and the way we

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are set up, the countries come up with proposals," Embled said. "So, we do not sit in Geneva and tell them what they should be doing. It is them that are identifying what their needs are at the country level and then there is an independent review to make sure that what is being proposed to achieve their priorities is technically and financially sound."

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As of now, the Global Fund reports 2.8 million people with HIV are on life-saving antiretroviral treatment, some seven million people with tuberculosis have received TB drug treatment, and a total of 122 million insecticide-treated bed nets, which protect people against malaria, have been distributed.

All these figures represent a substantial increase over the number of last year's recipients.

Embled says there is a lot of focus this year on funding maternal and child health programs.

"Here we are very pleased to be able to report that we have put 930,000 HIV-positive pregnant women on the complete course of anti-retroviral prophylaxis, which reduces the mother-to-child transmission, the risk of mother-to-child transmission and almost eliminates it," he said. "These are babies that have a very good chance of being born HIV-free."

The Global Fund is in the midst of what it calls "a replenishment year". It is appealing for \$17 billion to \$20 billion to fund its life-saving programs over the next three years.

Embled says the organization finds itself in a peculiar situation. There is a sense that the problem has been overcome because of the rapid results being achieved in combating AIDS, TB and Malaria. He considers this is a dangerous misperception.

He notes many of the gains, which have been made are very fragile. If support for these programs diminishes, he warns many important health opportunities will be missed.

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