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The Global Fund calls on partnerships that save lives

Michel Kazatchkine, reviews the latest Partnership Forum in Brazil

Anyone who despairs at the sheer scale of the challenge that AIDS represents should hear the story of Jacqueline, a 21-year old Brazilian mother who I met in Sao Paulo during a Global Fund conference. She was born HIV-positive and grew up destitute, but was put on treatment as a child. The treatment saved her life and after forming a stable relationship with a young man, Jacqueline gave birth last year to a healthy HIV-free baby, Heitor.

'I was born homeless, the fourth daughter my alcoholic mother, Irineia, had with her third companion,' Jacqueline told the conference. 'At the time my mother was only 21. Together with her and my younger brother, I survived until the age of 7 by living rough on the streets of the town of Campinas.'

Her survival and the birth of her HIV-free daughter are testimony to the success of Brazil's policy of putting HIV treatment within reach of the poor and disinherited.

She ended her speech with a plea which I wholeheartedly endorse: 'I ask this forum to make the biggest effort possible so that the Global Fund can help change the destiny of millions of adolescents and young people living with HIV/AIDS, young people like me.'

Brazil was one of the one of the first countries in the developing world to establish universal access to antiretroviral treatment for people living with HIV. Jacqueline was one of the beneficiaries of this extraordinary success and it is fitting that she was speaking at what we in the Fund consider a kind of 'parliament' held every 2 years to bring together our partners from over a 100 countries.

In something unique for an international institution involved in global health and development, that everyone can contribute in this partnership forum to design a strategy for where the Global Fund -- an organisation that has already saved more than 6 million lives -- should be in 5 years' time. Among those attending was an AIDS activist-turned-politician from Nepal, a businessman from Morocco, and an academic from Iran.

Without such strong global partnerships, we would not have made the remarkable progress in the fight against AIDS that we have seen in the last decade.

Ten years ago, with the exception of Brazil, there was virtually no-one on antiretroviral treatment in the developing world. Today, nearly 7 million are on treatment and mortality and incidence are falling in a large part of the world. Results released by the Global Fund this week showed that 3.2 million people are now receiving antiretroviral medication from programmes the Global Fund supports.

Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director, the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Geneva.

Malaria was a neglected disease at the beginning of this century. We are now approaching universal access to bed nets in Africa. There are at least 12 countries that have shown a reduction of 50% or more in either confirmed malaria cases or admissions and deaths in just the last few years. In the last 1 year alone, Global Fund-supported programmes have distributed 70 million bed nets, enabling an estimated 140 million people to protect themselves from malaria, on the assumption that each bed net protects two people.

TB mortality has fallen by more than a third since the 1990s. In recent years TB has been diagnosed much more effectively and DOTS has expanded significantly. An additional 1.2 million people were reached with effective tuberculosis treatment through programmes backed by the Global Fund in the 12 months to June 2011, bringing the accumulated total since 2003 to 8.2 million. TB mortality is declining in many countries and we are on track to achieve international TB targets, with the notable exception of multi-drug-resistant TB.

These results show what we can achieve when we work together in a collective global effort, in the type of partnership that we celebrated in Sao Paulo. As we embark now on a new drive to reach the ambitious target of putting 15 million people on AIDS treatment by 2015, we must remember that there are many like Jacqueline out there who depend on this partnership growing stronger and delivering even better results.



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In the Western Highlands of Kenya, small teams carry out indoor residual spraying to protect against malaria. This, combined with the mass distribution of insecticide-treated nets, has led to a 45% reduction in the mortality rate for children under 5