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Independent observer of the  
Global Fund



2020

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# ANNUAL REPORT

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A YEAR OF RESILIENCE

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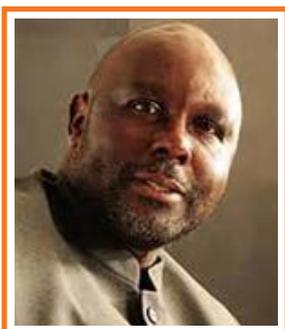
## AIDSPAN OVERVIEW

Aidspan is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) established in 2002 as an independent observer of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (the Global Fund). It provides all Global Fund stakeholders, including civil society, communities, country coordinating mechanisms (CCMs), governments; and the Global Fund donors,

Board and Secretariat with regular information and analysis to explain and evaluate the Global Fund's progress. Aidspan aims to influence the transparency and effectiveness of the Global Fund at the global and country levels.

Aidspan makes information available through its flagship publication, the [Global Fund Observer \(GFO\)](#) produced in English and in French as the [Observateur du Fonds Mondial \(OFM\)](#). The organization also publishes [in-depth reports](#) on its website ([www.aidspan.org](http://www.aidspan.org)). The website also contains a series of [open-access data tools](#) that allow other researchers to conduct analyses on Global Fund-related data, in turn helping the Global Fund to become more effective.

# COMMUNICATION FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AIDSPAN



**Isaac Awuondo,**  
Chairman of Aidspan's Board



**Ida Hakizinka,**  
Executive Director of Aidspan

## Despite a year like no other, Aidspan demonstrated resilience and was even able to expand its work to include coverage of COVID-19

2020 was a unique year by all standards. The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on the world, threatening the global gains in HIV, Tuberculosis (TB) and Malaria and the strengthening health systems. It also posed a huge threat to transparency and accountability. The Global Fund and its implementing partners had to realign some of the normal controls and oversight mechanisms in light of COVID-19 disruptions. At Aidspan, we responded by ensuring that we implement our planned activities for 2020 while still ensuring our staff members' safety and contributing towards the global COVID-19 response.

We stepped up our work of advancing the transparency and effectiveness of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to include coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. This followed the declaration of coronavirus disease, first seen in 2019, as a public health

emergency of international concern, thus requiring a global response. We became a source of information for our stakeholders about the pandemic's development and the effect on response against the three diseases and on health systems. By the end of the year, we had published 31 COVID-19 related articles. We documented interesting community-based activities, particularly civil society organizations' initiatives such as the distribution of personal protective equipment and sensitizing communities on ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## Continued to provide information and in-depth analysis of the Global Fund policies, processes, and grant implementation amid COVID-19 disruptions

Aidspan continued to provide information and in-depth analyses of the Fund's policies, processes, and grants implementation. In 2020, we maintained our online newsletter's regular publication, the Global Fund Observer (GFO), by publishing 21 issues with 158 articles for the English version and 13 issues with 87 articles for

the French version. Due to COVID-19 disruptions, we downscaled the frequency of publishing the English version of our GFO, from bi-weekly to every three weeks. Our articles covered a wide range of topical thematic areas that are of huge interest to our stakeholders, including development of the Global Fund's post 2022 Strategy. We increased our coverage of countries from 40 in 2019 to 63 in 2020, particularly those outside Sub-Saharan Africa, in line with our endeavor to expand the geographical coverage of our work. We improved the coverage of Francophone countries from five in 2019 to 55 in 2020. We reported on the experiences of in-country partners, including civil society and communities, on the implementation of Global Fund grants and the development of the funding applications for the 2020 – 2022 funding cycle amid the pandemic.

### Embarked on the second phase of our project to include more Supreme Audit Institutions

Between December 2018 and March 2020, we strengthened the capacity of eight Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) from Sub-Saharan Africa to audit Global Fund grants by training them to conduct financial, compliance, and programmatic audits of Global Fund grants. We also strengthened the information technology capacity of five of the SAIs by providing them with laptops. We embarked on the second phase of the project in August 2020. We plan to train five more SAIs in sub-Saharan Africa during this phase and provide backstopping to the phase-one SAIs as they carry out Global Fund audits.

### The way forward in 2021

In 2021, we plan to build on our 2020 achievements. In addition to thematic areas covered in 2020, we will intensify our coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, including Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator Partnership,

the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access facility, and COVID-19 vaccine distribution and accountability. We will continue to expand the geographical coverage of our work to include more countries and regions. Aidsplan will continue to strengthen civil society and community voices and those of the private sector and governments from across different Global Fund regions and constituencies. Together with our partners, we will implement the second phase of our project to strengthen the capacity of SAIs to audit Global Fund grants.

### Aidsplan acknowledges and thanks to its supporters, funders and partners

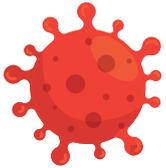
Through the support of donor governments and private foundations, we were able to perform our duties and realize our 2020 successes. A big thank goes out to all our Partners, Funders, and Private Foundations who provided financial, technical, and in-kind support towards the processes, activities, and inputs of Aidsplan's work. Specifically, we would like to thank the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), the French government (through L'Initiative), the Irish government (through Irish Aid), GIZ BACKUP Health, the New Venture Fund (NVF) and the Norwegian government (through the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation – NORAD). We remain grateful to our technical partners, who are key drivers to realizing our mission. Finally, we thank our readers for trusting Aidsplan, as a source of credible information, and we continue to value their feedback.

Thank you all.

**Isaac Awuondo**

**Ida Hakizinka**

## 2020 IN BRIEF



Our coverage of COVID-19; how Aidspan consistently covered the development of the pandemic, its impact on the Global Fund-supported programs.



We maintained regular publication of the GFO in English and French, increased our analytical content and expanded geographical coverage beyond sub-Saharan Africa.



We provided news, analysis and commentary on topical Global Fund-related thematic areas, including the development of the post-2022 strategy.



Intensified our coverage of the Francophone West & Central Africa (WCA) Africa and Middle East & North Africa (MENA) Regions.



Finalized the first phase of the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) capacity strengthening project and the start of the second phase of the SAI project with the support of a new donor.



How we adapted to remote working approaches in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, including switching to webinars, virtual modalities of working and suspending international travel.



Secured a new donor and new grants from existing donors to support Aidspan's work.



Strengthened existing partnerships and secured new ones.

# PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AIDSPAN’S 2018-2022 STRATEGY

Aidspan plans its work in line with its 2018-2022 Strategy. Accordingly, the activities implemented

by Aidspan in 2020 were aligned to Aidspan’s four objectives, as shown below:

## AIDSPAN STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



## AIDSPAN DELIVERED NEWS, ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY ON THE GLOBAL FUND AMID COVID-19

Aidspan maintained a regular publication of news, analysis, and commentary of the Global Fund throughout 2020, despite COVID-19 disruptions. We published 21 issues of the GFO in English, with a total of 158 articles; and 13 issues in the French language version, the OFM with a total of 87 articles. We had initially aimed at producing 24 issues of the GFO based on our original bi-weekly publication schedule but we reduced the frequency of publication to once every three weeks in light of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The OFM is published on a monthly basis.

*Note: Articles published in the GFO or OFM are very similar. Many of the articles published in the OFM appear in the GFO in English, while a smaller proportion of the GFO articles appear in the French newsletter. This difference is because the OFM targets Francophone Africa, including West, Central and North Africa; while the GFO is published in English and focuses on all countries and regions that receive Global Fund grants. For all sections, other than the section entitled Aidspan focus on Francophone Africa (page 19), we report on the issues published on GFO only to avoid duplication.*



2019	Result	2020
<b>Number of Issues (Number of Articles)</b>		
23 (170)	GFO	21 (158)
16 (88)	OFM	13 (87)
<b>Analysis and Commentaries vs. News Ratio</b>		
42%	GFO	40%
32%	OFM	56%
<b>Proportion of Articles Focusing on Country or Region-Specific Issues</b>		
26%	GFO	27%
16%	OFM	24%
<b>Total Number of Countries Covered (proportion of which are from outside Sub-Saharan Africa)</b>		
40 (38%)	GFO	63 (41%)
22 (5%)	OFM	55 (38%)

Aidspan provides a valued service of critical analysis, which supports decision-making among a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, civil society and communities, the private sector; and the Global Fund donors, Board and Secretariat.

We have committed to publishing less 'news'-type articles and more analyses and commentaries, especially concerning the application and implementation of Global Fund policies at the country and regional levels. In 2020, we continued to prioritize analytical content where we had targeted at least 30% of all content as non-news.

By the end of the year, 40% of GFO articles and 56% of OFM articles were either features, analyses, commentaries or interviews with Global Fund stakeholders. The non-news coverage for OFM increased from 32% to 56%; both GFO and OFM newsletters surpassed the target.

Aidspan also increased its coverage of country or region-specific issues relating to the application of Global Fund policies. In 2020, Aidspan published 27% (44 articles, up from 26% in 2019) of GFO articles and 24% (21 articles, up from 16%) of OFM articles focused on country-specific issues related to the implementation and impact of Global Fund policies at the country or regional levels.

Aidspan covers all regions that receive Global Fund grants: in 2020, we covered more than 60 countries, 41% of which are from outside Sub-Saharan Africa (see the section on Aidspan provides country-specific feedback to its stakeholders for more details of our geographical coverage). OFM covered 55 countries in 2020, up from only five in 2019.

## AIDSPAN FOCUS ON COVID-19

The year 2020 can be termed as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic following the World Health Organization (WHO) declaration of COVID-19 as a public health emergency of international concern on 11 March 2020. The pandemic forced many organizations to reorganize their plans, including budgets, to focus on combating COVID-19. For instance, the Global Fund allocated funding to 106 countries and 14 multi-country programs to reinforce national COVID-19 responses, mitigate the impact of the pandemic on HIV, TB, and malaria programs, and to improve health and community systems.

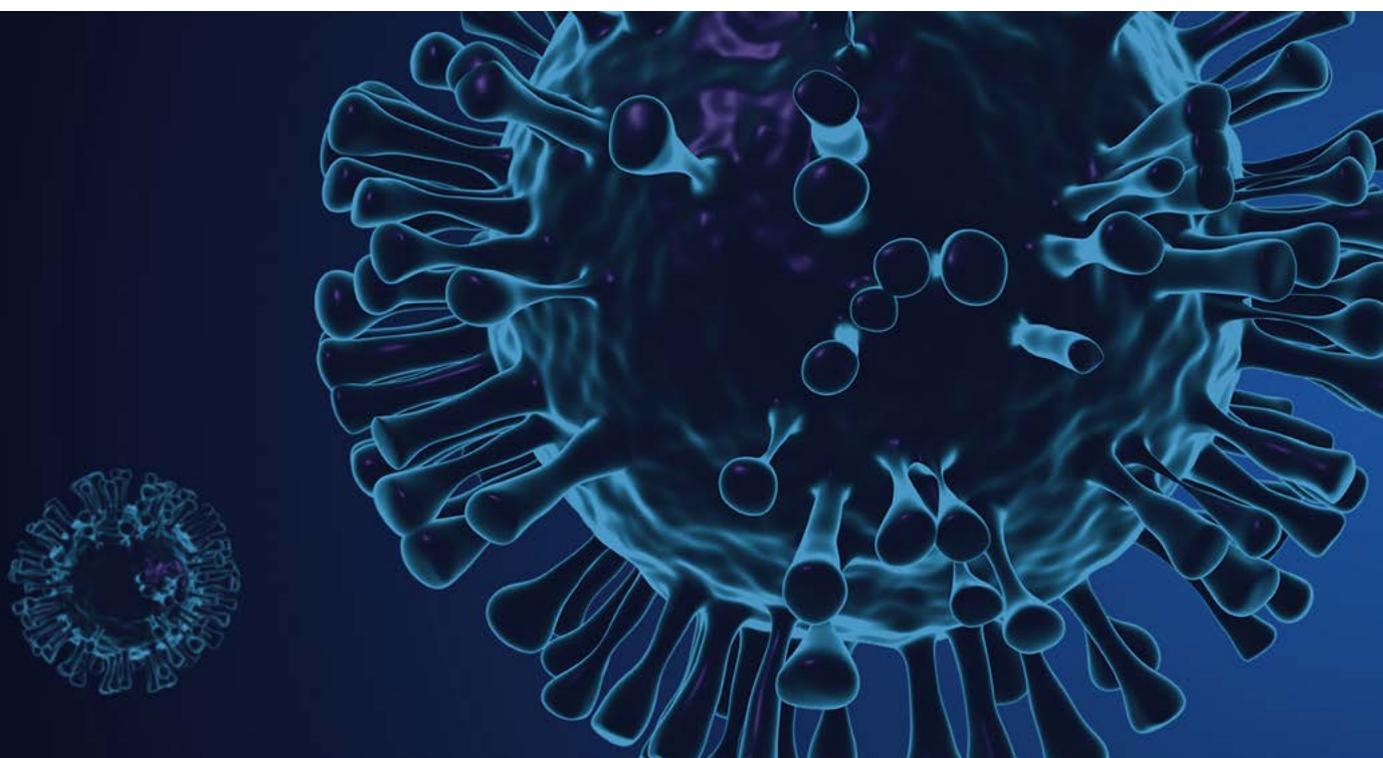
Aidspan joined the world to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by including COVID-19 in its work. In 2020, we became a source of information to our stakeholders about the pandemic and its effect on health systems, and specifically on the response against HIV, TB and malaria, and disruptions to the implementation of the Global Fund grants. In 2020, we published 31

COVID-19 related articles, of which 28 focused on the global level and the remaining three at country level.

Our articles covered a variety of different issues relating to COVID-19. At the early phase of the pandemic, when there was little information about COVID-19, we:

- Provided our audience with a [comparative analysis of the transmission of the coronavirus](#) with the early days of the HIV epidemic
- Highlighted the [lack of information regarding how COVID-19 will impact HIV and TB](#) and provided links to several publicly available COVID-19 tools and resources

We drew attention to COVID-19 related disruptions to Global Fund-supported programs. Our articles covered the following topics:



- [COVID-19 disrupts implementation of Global Fund grants and development of funding requests](#)
- [COVID-19 derails the fight against tuberculosis](#)

We reported on issues related to financing the response against COVID-19. For instance, we:

- Highlighted [the commitment of global health donors, including the Global Fund, to provide resources to fight the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- Reported on how the [Global Fund reacted quickly to provide support and flexibilities to countries affected by COVID-19](#)
- Provided an update on [Global Fund availed \\$1 billion to implementing countries to fight COVID-19](#) and the [United States suspension of funding to WHO over the handling of the COVID-19 crisis](#)

We also covered a wide range of other COVID-19-related issues that were not Global Fund specific, including:

- We called for the involvement of [civil society organizations \(CSOs\) in the](#)

[fight against COVID-19 in Africa for the response to be effective,](#)

- We pointed to the [high risk of truck drivers from East Africa of contracting and transmitting COVID-19](#) and how [the pandemic is a threat to the ratio of health workers to population,](#)
- We emphasized the [COVID-19 negative impact on key populations in the MENA region](#) and the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) facility [boosted hope for developing countries to access the COVID-19 vaccine soon.](#)

Aidspan keenly followed Francophone countries, particularly those in the WCA region that experienced the second wave of the pandemic in November-December 2020. We covered many community-based activities, with the aim of highlighting interesting initiatives of CSOs; from sensitizing communities on the prevention of COVID-19 transmission to the distribution of face masks and sanitizer gels, and the continuity of services. Some of our articles focusing on this region addressed the consequences of COVID-19 on HIV, TB, and malaria program activities and grant performance, and the disruption of services.

*The year 2020 can be termed as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic following the World Health Organization (WHO) declaration of COVID-19 as a public health emergency of international concern on 11 March 2020.*



## AIDSPAN RESEARCHED AND EXPLAINED ISSUES RELATED TO THE GLOBAL FUND AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

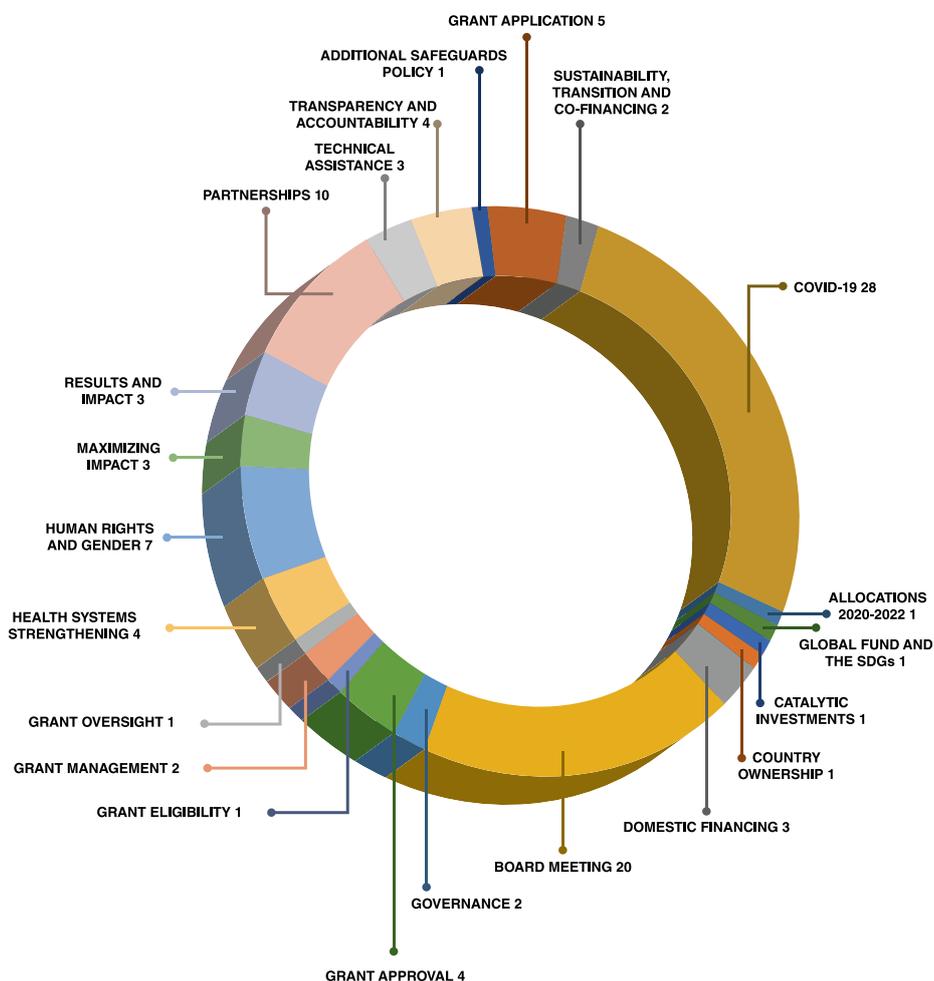
Every year, Aidspace prioritizes several topical Global Fund themes, based on a range of considerations including Global Fund strategic priorities, interests and feedback from civil society, communities, governments and Global Fund implementers.

In 2020, Aidspace prioritized more than 20 thematic areas, including Global Fund Strategy development and implementation, health and community systems strengthening, grant application, domestic financing; and sustainability, transition, and co-financing. Aidspace was able to report on almost all of the prioritized thematic areas although we postponed others, such as

the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) Evolution, which was not implemented in the wake of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We also covered others that were not originally planned, most notably, the emergence of COVID-19 and its impact on the Global Fund supported HIV, TB, and malaria programs, and health systems.

*Aidspace also prioritized some of the thematic areas below under Figure 1 to explore their application and relevance at the country and regional levels. We discuss this in a later section entitled 'Aidspace provided country-specific feedback to its stakeholders' (page 15).*

**FIGURE 2: GLOBAL LEVEL THEMATIC AREAS FOR 2020**



## KEY GLOBAL LEVEL THEMES COVERED IN 2020

We published 28 articles related to the global COVID-19 pandemic response in 2020, more than any other thematic area. We highlighted this work on the pandemic in an earlier section of this report (see section Aidspace Focus on COVID-19; in this section, you will also see our coverage of the COVID-19 response for specific regions and countries).

We report on other recurrent thematic areas covered by Aidspace in 2020 below.

### Global Fund Board Meetings

Aidspace covered the biannual Global Fund Board meetings, which took place virtually for the first time, in May and November 2020.

In the GFO issue before each of the Global Fund Board meetings, Aidspace published one article as a preface to the Board meeting, highlighting the priorities and topics for discussions and decisions. Aidspace also published content in the issue before the Board meeting on topics for discussion during the Board meeting, to provide Board members and other stakeholders with comprehensive information on the issue.

Aidspace usually attends the Global Fund Board meetings as an observer, and reports on the discussions and the main decisions from the meetings. For both Global Fund meetings, we reported on updates in the Global Fund Strategy development process, business continuity amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, updates from the Executive Director and the Global Fund Office of the Inspector General (OIG), and the Global Fund's performance against its key performance indicators for 2017-2019.

Aidspace published 20 articles on discussions and decisions related to the two virtual GF Board meetings in 2020 (see GFO Issues [380](#) and [390](#)).

### Human Rights and Gender

The Global Fund and its implementer countries have struggled to address human rights and gender barriers to HIV, TB, and malaria services. Aidspace is keen to highlight the barriers, successes and challenges, assessing the role of the Global Fund and its partners in addressing these barriers, and providing recommendations. We published seven articles related to human rights and gender, and describe some of them below:

*In one article, we assessed how the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)) has [supported the Global Fund](#) in addressing human rights and gender barriers. Our analysis showed that UNAIDS had supported 32 human rights and gender assignments in 18 Global Fund implementer countries via its Technical Support Mechanism. This support has helped countries to generate evidence of the barriers, respond to findings from the Global Fund's Technical Review Panel (TRP) and the OIG and strengthen grant implementation.*

*We also highlighted the [impact of COVID-19 on human rights](#) as the enforcement of containment measures such as restrictions on movement, curfews and lockdowns led to human rights violations such as the excessive use of force and humiliating punishments. Through a GFO commentary article, we called on the Global Fund and its partners to leverage its investments in implementer countries to promote human rights in the HIV response.*

*In the height of the Black Lives Matter Movement in 2020, Aidspace underlined the [racism experiences of a retired black African](#) previously working in global health. The subject highlighted the early advantages for those coming from developing countries, covert discrimination in promotion, discrimination against African*

experts in Africa, and the importance of home connections while working in global health. In line with this focus on diversity and inclusion, we also [highlighted](#) the findings of a report published by the former Global Fund Ombudsman at the end of her term which described collective reflections on diversity, inclusion, and human dignity. The report noted that factors relating to leadership, organizational systems and practices, and organizational culture, act as barriers to realizing diversity and inclusion at the Global Fund.

Finally, a GFO commentary emphasized that the Global Fund and implementer countries still pay [little attention to human rights and gender equality](#) in the grant funding requests developed and submitted for the 2020-2022 allocation cycle. This is despite long-standing efforts to mainstream them into Global Fund grants. The commentary proposed that CCM members and disease program staff should be trained in understanding local gender realities and forming alliances with grassroot women and KVP CSOs in efforts to improve the observance of human rights and gender equality.

### Grant Funding Applications/Requests

2020 marked the end of approximately 70% of Global Fund grants in the 2017-2019 allocation cycle. Several countries submitted a funding

request for new Global Fund grants for the 2020-2022 allocation period, to begin in January 2021. By the end of 2020, the [Global Fund had signed 157 grants worth \\$8.54 billion](#) for this period. Aidspace monitored the progress of the Global Fund grant funding request/application processes closely and published five articles about this in 2020.

In one of the articles, we brought up concerns over the [quality and timeliness of funding applications](#) in light of the COVID-19 disruptions. We called on the Global Fund to establish new flexibility measures so that countries could submit their funding requests under more favorable conditions. Indeed, the Global Fund pushed back the deadlines and announced new submission windows for the funding requests. Two articles published by Aidspace highlighted the [TRP's feedback](#) on the Global Fund grant funding requests submitted for the 2020-2022 allocation cycle in [Window 1](#). Another article described the [challenges that countries faced when subjected to reiterations by the TRP](#). These countries needed to redraft the funding requests in a relatively short period among COVID-19 mitigation measures and, in some instances, the TRP requested data that were not readily available.

## AIDSPAN HELPS ITS AUDIENCE TO INTERPRET COMPLEX AND LARGE GLOBAL FUND DATA SETS

One of our goals is not only to make Global Fund data accessible to a wider range of stakeholders, including civil society, communities and the private sector, but also to help them to interpret complex and large data sets. In 2020, we continued to analyze information obtained from the Global Fund website and other public sources and shared it with our audience in a simplified and comprehensible way.

For instance, we reviewed the recurring issues plaguing Global Fund grants, as documented in audit reports published by the Global Fund's OIG. These reports are publicly available on the Global Fund website and are a rich source of information on grant implementation status and challenges. Our review of OIG audits identified that 11 countries experienced [difficulties in designing and implementing interventions](#). These challenges were mostly in TB programs where countries

were faced with limited access to TB treatment in rural areas, low private sector participation in TB treatment, the inadequate quality of TB screening and testing, and inadequate contact tracing. We also highlighted the gaps in oversight and assurance arrangements, including weak internal controls and the weak oversight of sub-recipients and other contractors in 13 countries.

In our review, we noted that [11 countries reported incomplete and inaccurate data](#) as a result of almost similar systemic factors. These include differences in the data collection and reporting systems of various health sector donors, the inadequate number and lack of motivation of healthcare workers, and the co-existence of paper-based and electronic data collection systems.

We further highlighted [supply chain-related challenges in eight countries](#). These included the insufficient tracing of health commodities, stockouts of key testing and treatment products and in some cases expired commodities due to a lack of proper documentation practice, inadequate internal controls at the central level, and inadequate supervision.

## AIDSPAN PROVIDED COUNTRY-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK TO ITS STAKEHOLDERS

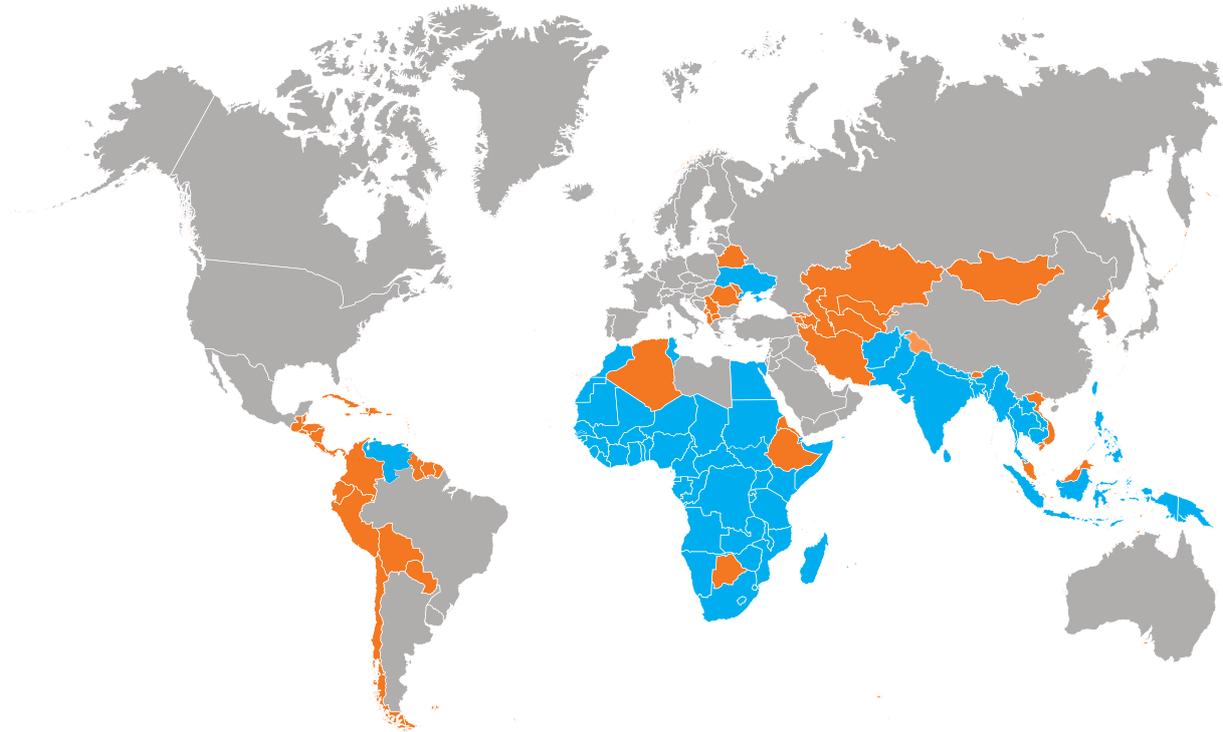
Aidspan remains focused on providing country-level feedback to its stakeholders, including civil society and communities, implementers and governments, by assessing their experiences during grant implementation and determining how

The Global Fund Data Service Page has large data sets of grant data, including total grant amounts, committed amounts, and disbursements across different grant implementation periods. We used this data to conduct an in-depth analysis of grant absorption and published a series of articles on Global Fund grant absorption.

For instance, we assessed the [grant absorption of 12 French-speaking countries in West and Central Africa](#). We found that grant absorption ranged from 39% to 78% in the period January 2018 to December 2020, suggesting that these countries are unlikely to fully utilize their allocation, despite the countries' own huge resource gaps. Also, three months before the end of the implementation of 96 grants, we analyzed their grant absorption and [found that implementers had barely spent 80% of their grants](#). Based on this finding, we advised countries to adopt more robust measures to improve grant absorption before the end of the grant implementation period as stipulated by the Global Fund. Earlier in the year, we had reflected on [strategies used by the government PRs of Malawi, Sierra Leone and Uganda to improve their absorption of funds](#).

the in-country context impacts the Global Fund's strategy and policies. We increased the number of countries we covered in our work from 40 in 2019 to 63 in 2020, of which 41% were from outside Sub-Saharan Africa.

Figure 3: Aidspan’s country-specific focus for 2020 covered more than 60 countries

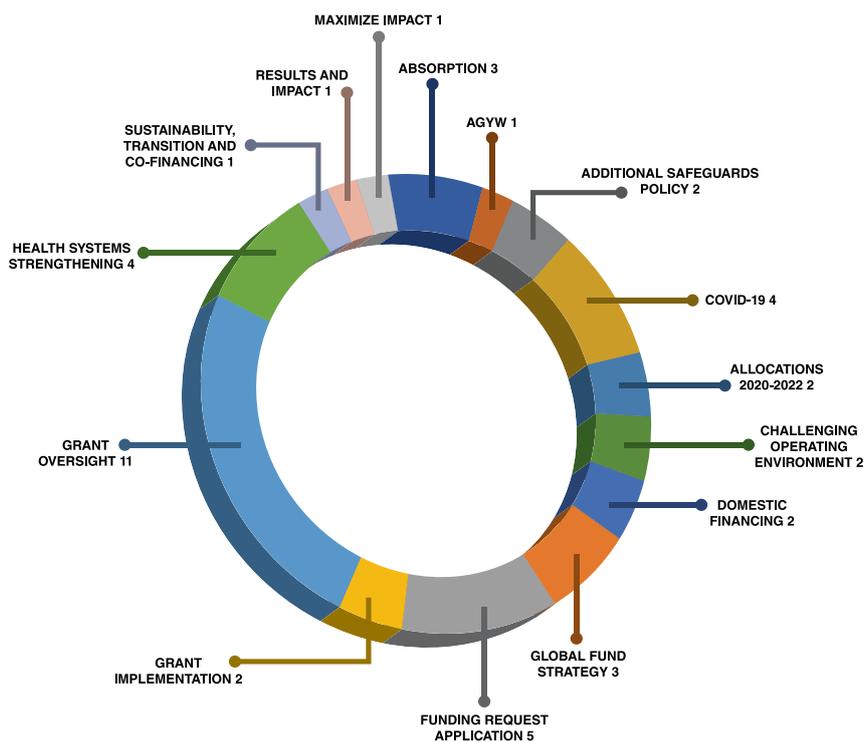


Global Fund-supported countries are those in orange and blue. Aidspan’s 2020 work focused in the countries marked in blue

We also improved our proportion of country or regional-specific reporting and analysis from

26% in 2019 to 28% in 2020. Our 2020 country-specific work covered the countries in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4: COUNTRY OR REGIONAL SPECIFIC THEMATIC AREAS FOR 2020



## THE 2020 KEY COUNTRY LEVEL THEMES

At the beginning of 2020, Aidspace prioritized the publication of articles on various thematic areas covering country-specific content. At the end of the year, most of the planned country-specific thematic areas were reported on, with a greater number of articles on grant oversight and grant funding requests/applications. Our key country level work in 2020 comprised the following areas.

### *Grant Oversight/Transparency and Accountability*

In line with our mandate to promote transparency and accountability in the use of Global Fund grants, we also highlighted grant oversight at the country level. We published 10 articles on audits and investigations conducted in 12 countries by the Global Fund OIG. Specifically, we highlighted key OIG audit findings as follows:

- The need for significant improvements in Global Fund grants implementation and assurance arrangements in [Indonesia](#);
- Governance and oversight challenges for HIV and TB grants in [Lesotho](#);
- Poor grants performance in [Angola](#);
- The need to improve the supply chain management in [Zimbabwe](#);
- The need to improve grant implementation arrangements and community interventions in [Cote d'Ivoire](#);
- The ineffective financial management and oversight of Global Fund grants in the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#); and
- An increase in new HIV cases and HIV-related deaths in [Pakistan](#).

We updated our stakeholders on the OIG investigations reported in 2020. For instance,

we highlighted OIG investigations in Indonesia, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. For [Liberia and Tanzania](#) we emphasized the OIG's updates on findings of fraud and abuse. We also underscored the non-compliant expenditures in [Indonesia and Nigeria](#), and fraud, collusion, and non-compliant procurements in [Sierra Leone](#).

### *Funding Requests/Applications*

In 2020, we highlighted the process, good practices, challenges and gaps faced by countries while applying for Global Fund grants for both the 2017-2019 and 2020-2022 funding cycles. We kept our stakeholders informed of some of the [key HIV interventions for adolescents and youth that were overlooked during the 2017-2019 funding cycle](#) in the Eastern and Southern Africa region. Our analysis revealed that sexual behaviour and social protection were the most prioritized, while pre-exposure prophylaxis was the least prioritized, interventions

We highlighted the findings of a [survey conducted in seven countries on the engagement of civil society from Asia-Pacific in the Global Fund's country dialogue process](#). The results indicated that civil society and communities' opportunities to engage in country dialogue Global Fund improved for the 2014-2016 and 2017-2019 funding cycles. However, English-language barriers, the lack of preparatory meetings before the start of country dialogue, and low awareness of the importance of consultations on an ongoing basis during funding request development, limited civil society and communities' engagement with the Global Fund.

We highlighted [concerns raised by civil society in Venezuela](#) about the Global Fund's failure to consult them during the preparation of the country's malaria grant funding request for the 2020-2022 funding cycle. This was after the Global Fund Board agreed to fund malaria interventions for the first time in Venezuela due

to resurgence of malaria following the political and economic crisis that started in 2015; as the country was previously ineligible for Global Fund grants.

We keenly followed the [non-state PR selection process in Kenya](#) and reported on how it derailed the grant funding request submission. The Kenya Coordinating Mechanism (KCM) decision to award the Global Fund grant for the 2020-2022 funding cycle to one non-state PR was contested by the non-state PR who had been managing the HIV grant for the previous 2017-2019 funding cycle. Consequently, the Global Fund Secretariat rejected the selection of the new non-state PR, citing a lack of transparency and openness in the process, thereby disrupting the grant funding request/application submission.

### ***The Global Fund's post-2022 Strategy***

During 2020, the Global Fund embarked on the process of developing its post-2022 strategic plan. From May 2020 onwards, consultation processes have resulted in the Global Fund receiving inputs from its stakeholders, including

its partners, civil society, governments and implementers. During 2020, we kept an eye out for countries' deliberations and inputs into the development of the next strategic plan. Through the GFO, we provided different Global Fund stakeholders with a platform to voice their needs and recommendations to feed into the development of the Global Fund post-2022 Strategy.

We informed our stakeholders about the [sub-Saharan African countries deliberations on challenges and achievements experienced during the current Global Fund Strategy](#) and their inputs for the next Strategy. We [highlighted the South East Asia Constituency's virtual meeting](#) held to discuss the development of the new Global Fund Strategy. For Latin America and the Caribbean, we provided key highlights affecting the region, based on the opinions and experiences of stakeholders implementing Global Fund grants in the region. According to them, [the main barriers to ending HIV, TB, and malaria in the region](#) are weak political commitment and low domestic investments in health.





Participants in the regional workshop in Benin held from 5 to 8 February 2020

## AIDSPAN FOCUS IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA

French is spoken in at least 29 African countries and it is the official language of 21 of them. Unfortunately, most of the French-speaking countries lack access to news and information regarding the Global Fund, as most of the information is primarily available in English. (Aidspan [highlighted this challenge](#) in 2020, where it noted that the Global Fund Secretariat translates about two-thirds of its documents into French). Aidspan has stepped up to fill this gap by ensuring the regular publication of OFM, the French-language Newsletter, and by convening meetings with stakeholders from this region. As an organization, we pay special attention to these countries in the language they best understand.

In 2020, Aidspan published 13 OFM issues containing 87 articles, of which 26 were original publications in French that were also translated

into English for publication in the GFO. The articles showcased good practices from Francophone countries, particularly the actions and contribution of CSOs in the fight against the three diseases, as well as the continuity of service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the first time, three articles captured the experiences of KVPs and women from MENA countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen). We worked closely with the civil society platforms from WCA, headed by the Réseau d'Accès aux Médicaments Essentiels ([RAME](#)) and the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition MENA ([ITPC-MENA](#)) to highlight CSO-led initiatives in these regions.

Aidspan's activities for 2020 in the Francophone region, mainly funded by Expertise France, focused on the following activities:

- Funding request development process;
- Follow up to the OIG report on WCA countries and the decisions made by the Global Fund Secretariat to implement the OIG's recommendations;
- COVID-19 related topics (see the section on Aidsplan focus on COVID-19); and
- Translation of articles originally in English relating to Global Funds news, particularly articles related to the Global Fund Board and Committee meetings (see OFM Issues [100](#) and [106](#)).

### **Analysis of the Global Fund grant funding request development process**

The Global Fund has increased its funding allocation for the WCA region for the 2020-2022 funding cycle. Most allocation letters received by the CCMs in this region emphasized investments in resilient and sustainable systems for health (RSSH), particularly in health management information systems (HMIS), community systems and the supply chain. To help the region to better grasp issues related to RSSH and for the coverage of funding request preparation, Aidsplan:

- **Organized a Regional Workshop in Benin, 5-8 February 2020**

Together with the Global Fund's Africa Constituency Bureau (ACB), Aidsplan co-organized a regional workshop in Benin to train seven WCA countries on prioritizing RSSH components. The countries included Congo Brazzaville, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone. These countries gained a better understanding of the main issues to be addressed during the country dialogue and the funding request process. They elaborated a roadmap to ensure the implementation of a dialogue between disease

components actors (national disease control programs) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) divisions (such as HMIS, human resources for health, PSM and laboratory services).

Participants in the regional workshop in Benin held from 5 to 8 February 2020

- **Published eight articles on the 2020-2022 cycle**

We conducted an analysis of the Global Fund's TRP recommendations and main findings for countries that submitted grant funding requests during Window 1, the engagement of civil society actors in country dialogue and the elaboration of the RSSH components and funding request guidelines, as well as supply chains in WCA.

### **Follow-up of the OIG Report on WCA countries and the decisions made by the Global Fund Secretariat to Implement the OIG's recommendations**

Following the publication of the [OIG Advisory Report](#) on grant implementation in WCA in May 2019, the Global Fund Secretariat launched a new initiative, 'Accélérons le Mouvement en AOC' (Accelerating the Movement in WCA). This initiative produced country-based analyses on four main pillars: (a) grant governance; (b) RSSH investments and partner alignment; (c) implementation arrangements; and (d) areas for improvement in the impact of Global Fund grants. Peer analysis took place in 14 countries; however, its completion was delayed due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic control measures.

We did publish one article in December 2020 with regard to the foregoing. In 2021, we will focus on five countries that have introduced the OIG's main recommendations into the 2020-2022 funding cycle activities.



Participants of Aidspan's second training for the General Audit Commission of Liberia held from 17 to 21 February 2020

## **AIDSPAN STRENGTHENS THE CAPACITY OF SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTIONS**

In 2020, Aidspan continued to strengthen the capacity of SAIs, which are the national-level institutions constitutionally mandated to audit public revenue and expenditures in Sub-Saharan Africa. In February 2020, Aidspan held a workshop to train the General Audit Commission (GAC), Liberia's SAI, on how to conduct financial, compliance, and programmatic audits of Global Fund grants. This was our second training for the GAC (the previous one took place in April 2019). Through the two workshops, we strengthened the capacity of 22 auditors to audit Global Fund grants in Liberia.

Also in 2020, Aidspan strengthened the information technology (IT) capacity of the SAIs of Burkina Faso, Liberia, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Togo by providing them with laptops. We participated in talks between Burkina Faso's SAI and the OIG on the possibility of

jointly conducting audits and investigations of Global Fund grants in Burkina Faso. Such an arrangement will facilitate in the country's ability to investigate fraud, and strengthen accountability and good governance.

Aidspan finalized the first phase of the SAI project in March 2020 and embarked on the second phase in August 2020. During this phase, Aidspan and partners will train five more SAIs on how to conduct financial compliance and undertake audits of Global Fund grants. The additional five SAIs are in Ethiopia, Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria and South Africa. We will also provide backstopping for the SAIs trained during the first phase of the project.

## **AIDSPAN STRENGTHENED ITS OPERATIONS**

*Aidspan adopts remote working methodology and virtual working modalities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic*

When the first case was announced in Kenya in early March 2020, where Aidspace's office is based, we responded in line with the Kenyan government's directives ; by switching to working remotely and adopting virtual modalities of working. We also suspended all travel, as Kenya closed its borders, and replaced roundtable stakeholder meetings with webinars. Aidspace staff worked remotely for the remainder of the year.

### ***Aidspace secures key strategic and technical partnerships***

Strong partnerships are a key driver for achieving Aidspace's mission. We strive to maintain our existing partnerships while working to bring more partners on board; to increase our effectiveness as the independent watchdog of the Global Fund.

Aidspace also entered into new partnerships with CSOs.

- We worked with the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition MENA ([ITPC-MENA](#)) on civil society issues in the MENA region.
- Towards the end of 2020, Aidspace signed an agreement with Frontline AIDS to work together to intensify the voices of civil society and communities. In line with this agreement, Frontline AIDS will regularly publish analyses and commentaries in the GFO newsletter.
- RBM Partnership to End Malaria;
- Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN);

Furthermore, at the invitation of [AIDS Watch Africa](#), Aidspace became a member of the Communications and Advocacy sub-Committee of the [African Leadership Meeting-Investing in Health \(ALM\) Declaration](#). AIDS Watch Africa is a statutory entity of the African Union that leads advocacy, accountability and resource

mobilization efforts to advance a robust African response to end AIDS, TB and malaria by 2030. The ALM aims to increase domestic investments in health and re-orient health systems in Africa.

Additionally during 2020, Aidspace maintained its partnership with:

- The Global Fund's ACB;
- [RAME](#);
- The East Africa National Networks of AIDS and Health Service Organizations (EANNASO);
- The African Organization of English-speaking Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI-E); and
- Le Conseil Régional pour la Formation des Institutions Supérieures de Contrôle des Finances Publiques (CREFIAP).

### **AIDSPAN IS SUCCESSFULLY DELIVERING ITS STRATEGIC PLAN**

2020 was the half-way point for the Aidspace 2018-2022 Strategy. We commissioned an independent mid-term review of the Strategy's implementation to identify achievements, weaknesses, and whether we are on course to fully attain our objectives. Overall, the findings will help to strengthen Aidspace's performance in the remaining period of the current Strategy and its findings contribute towards the development of our new strategy beyond 2022.

The independent review found that Aidspace is successfully delivering its strategic plan. However, it did identify a number of gaps in implementation and provided recommendations.

**KEY FINDINGS**

- Aidspace has a clearly defined Strategy aligned with a robust monitoring framework.
- Through its critical analysis, Aidspace meets the needs of a broad range of stakeholders.
- Aidspace takes into account the Global Fund's priorities and stakeholder feedback to determine the direction of its work.
- Aidspace has clear targets for priority publication themes.
- Aidspace has a broad network of partnerships and alliances.
- Aidspace helps its audience to interpret complex and large data sets from the Global Fund.
- Aidspace has increased country-level reporting and analysis, making us a reference point for those who seek country-specific information.
- Aidspace has a vital role to play in ensuring the accountability and oversight of Global Fund investments in the disease programmes, RSSH and COVID-19

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overarching Recommendation: Make better use of the GFO in English and the OFM in French as vehicles to elevate the concerns of civil society and implementers.

**OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

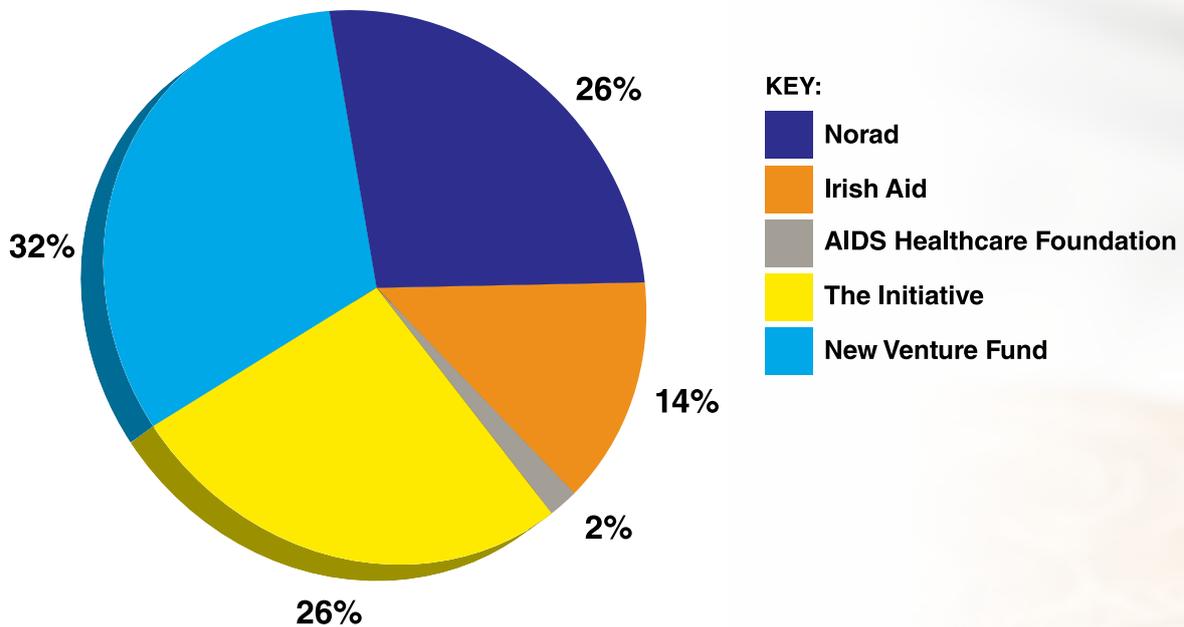
- Continue increasing analytical content.
- Better define the target audience as a way of strengthening the depth and utility of this content.
- Increase engagement with civil society audiences.
- Use non-document-based media such as podcasts, webinars and hosting discussions on key issues.
- Increase country-level focus and consultation with implementers and civil society to better understand their needs.
- Capitalize on Aidspace's niche as a convener of Global Fund stakeholders to help resolve issues in Global Fund functions.

## AIDSPAN FINANCIAL INFORMATION

### Resource mobilization

In 2020, Aidspace secured new funding from the New Venture Fund (NVF) to continue strengthening the capacity of SAIs from select Sub-Saharan African countries (see the section on Aidspace strengthens the capacity of Supreme Audit Institutions on page 21). We also received a new grant from

the French Initiative to continue supporting Aidspace’s work in Francophone Africa and MENA regions. We continued to receive funding from our traditional donors, namely: the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Irish Aid and the Norwegian government (NORAD).



### Audited Income and Expenditure

To preserve its independence, Aidspace does not accept any financial resources from the Global Fund. As a watchdog of the Global Fund, most of Aidspace’s funding comes from governments/ foundations that also fund the Global Fund

Income and Expenditure (USD)	2020	2019
Grant income	784,625	1,621,827
Other income	24,653	13,455
Programme expenditure	(775,698)	(1,398,878)
Administrative expenses	(154,449)	(179,372)
Establishment expenses	(92,822)	(108,145)
<b>(Deficit) / Surplus</b>	<b>(213,691)</b>	<b>(51,113)</b>
Tax Expense	-	(4,113)
<b>Deficit/surplus for the year</b>	<b>(213,691)</b>	<b>(55,226)</b>



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# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM AIDSPAN IN 2021

In 2021, Aidspace will build on its achievements in 2020. We will use the mid-term review findings on the Aidspace Strategy and stakeholders'

feedback in 2020; to strengthen our performance and continue to meet the needs of our diverse stakeholders.



Aidspace will continue to increase its ratio of analysis to news. We will focus on the prioritized thematic areas from 2020 but add to those with information related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the ACT-Accelerator Partnership, the COVAX facility, and COVID-19 vaccine distribution and accountability.



Aidspace will continue to strengthen civil society and community voices, as well as those of the private sector and governments from across different Global Fund regions and constituencies. We will do this by sourcing more content and commentary from country or regional-level stakeholders, including Global Fund implementers. This will further strengthen our position as a first reference point for actors seeking to understand country context and challenges.



We will continue to expand our geographic coverage by sourcing content from all Global Fund regions, including Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the Middle East regions.



Aidspace will strengthen its engagement with like-minded CSOs and other partners working within the Global Fund space.



Aidspace will continue to strengthen the capacity of accountability institutions at the country level, including civil society, governments, implementers of Global Fund grants and SAIs, to foster the increased accountability of Global Fund investments, including the Global Fund investments in the COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM).



We will continue to diversify our content delivery mechanisms, to make our content easily accessible to all our stakeholders by regularly publishing the GFO and OFM e-newsletters in English and French respectively, continuously improving the website, and adopting other non-print materials, including webinars, podcasts, and short videos.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with all our stakeholders and partners in 2021.

*In 2021, Aidspan will build  
on its achievements in 2020.*



## HOW YOU CAN CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AIDSPAN

To ensure Aidspace's continuity and strength as a watchdog, please consider taking one or more of these actions:

- Write to the Executive Director for information on how you can donate/contribute to Aidspace (see contacts on the next page)
- Sign up for the [Global Fund Observer](#) e-newsletter in English or the OFM in French
- Propose specific story ideas and write for the [Global Fund Observer](#) e-newsletter by sending an email explaining your article idea(s) to: [acampbell.white@aidspace.org](mailto:acampbell.white@aidspace.org)
- Visit our [website](#)
- Download our [publications](#) (guides and reports on the Global Fund)
- Give us feedback about our services; help us serve you better!
- Follow us on Social Media. Like, Share, and Retweet our work





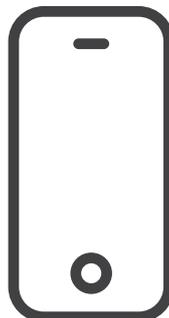
## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ACB</b>	Africa Constituency Bureau
<b>CCM</b>	Country Coordinating Mechanism
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>COVAX</b>	COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access
<b>GFO</b>	Global Fund Observer
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East & North Africa
<b>OFM</b>	Observateur du Fonds Mondial
<b>OIG</b>	Office of the Inspector General
<b>RAME</b>	Réseau d'Accès aux Médicaments Essentiels
<b>SAI</b>	Supreme Audit Institutions
<b>TB</b>	Tuberculosis
<b>TRP</b>	Technical Review Panel
<b>WCA</b>	West and Central Africa
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



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