

# Statement on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

3 December 2021

The Global Fund is deeply concerned about the impact that environmental damage and climate change are having on human health and its disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. As a leading multilateral funder of grants for HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and COVID-19 programs and to strengthen health and community systems, we have an opportunity and responsibility to minimize our impact on the environment, address the environmental and climate impact of our procurement operations, and invest in and support countries to build climate-resilient and environmentally sensitive systems for health. This statement outlines the steps we are taking today and we will continue to work across the Global Fund partnership to respond to the multifaceted threats to human health arising from climate and environmental changes.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report has brought forward the timeline to the mid-2030s for when the world will reach a 1.5 C increase in global temperatures. An increase of 1.5 C will result in more severe heatwaves, higher sea levels, more flooding and droughts, among other outcomes, all of which have a direct impact on health.<sup>1</sup> The risks posed by climate change and environmental contamination to HIV, TB and malaria programs and to the underlying health and community systems that support and deliver services to communities are real. Climate change will further exacerbate extreme weather events, forced displacement, decreased air quality and increased food, water and economic insecurity, all of which have a negative impact on health. Changes in rainfall, temperature and humidity may shift malaria transmission to areas that may not be adequately resourced or prepared to prevent, detect, and treat malaria. Climate change will also impact tuberculosis and HIV, likely through a complex array of factors that will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable. Forced displacement or migration due to climate change can disrupt diagnosis and treatment services, and economic insecurity caused by climate change can create conducive environments for increased transmission rates and increase people's

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<sup>1</sup> Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

vulnerability to disease. Air pollution – both indoor and outdoor – is estimated to kill approximately seven million people per year and plays a significant role in causing respiratory illnesses.<sup>2</sup> Poor air quality and overcrowding due to forced migration may contribute to the transmission of respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis and COVID-19<sup>3</sup>. Climate change and environmental degradation has and will continue to play a major role in the transmission and emergence of zoonotic diseases (i.e., SARS, Ebola, COVID-19), which have negatively affected influenced the Global Fund partnership’s ability to perform our mission.

The recently approved Global Fund Strategy [Fighting Pandemics and Building a Healthier and More Equitable World](#) clearly addresses the threat and impact of climate change and provides an opportunity for the Global Fund to increase our efforts in this area and look at innovative ways to address, mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. This will require a concerted effort among all stakeholders within the Global Fund partnership and with partners specifically working in this area to look for opportunities to do this as well and to leverage lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. In this statement, we outline the threat of climate change and needs for environmental sustainability related to our mission and the steps we are taking inside the Global Fund and to support the countries we serve.

## Global Fund Secretariat

In the last decade, the Secretariat has worked to reduce the environmental impact of Global Fund financing both at the Secretariat headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland,<sup>4</sup> and in the countries where grants are implemented. The Global Fund has a lean operating structure and we do not have country or regional offices. Instead, we rely on and leverage the expertise, staff and existing infrastructure of in-country partners and institutions, which reduces the environmental impact of the Secretariat’s activities. We will continue to look for opportunities to avoid, minimize and/or reduce emission-intensive activities including as it relates to our business travel, working arrangements and Secretariat sourcing activities.

In this regard we will:

- Review measures to reduce the environmental impact of our business travel, by committing to further reducing travel, where possible, and explore opportunities for offsetting travel-related emissions through high-quality, certified carbon reduction and removal projects.
- Promote and continue to enact “green practices” at our Secretariat office, including the use of public transport, light mobility options, carpooling, hybrid working arrangements (through our Future of Work Initiative) and expanded usage of “paper smart” practices.
- Launch a yearly carbon footprint assessment of Secretariat activities, starting in 2022.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution#tab=tab_1)

<sup>3</sup> <https://err.ersjournals.com/content/30/159/200242>

<sup>4</sup> The city of Geneva has made [sustainability commitments](#), including implementing an energy policy which is designed to be 100% renewable by 2050. The Global Health Campus, which houses the Global Fund Secretariat, is certified under [Minergie](#), a registered quality label for new and refurbished low energy consumption buildings.

- Introduce climate and environmental considerations as part of our procurement of purchased goods and services.

## Health Product Sourcing and Procurement

More than half of the Global Fund's yearly investments – over US\$3 billion in 2021 – are used to procure medicines and health products, both directly and through national and partner procurement channels. We are part of the UN informal Interagency Task Team on Sustainable Procurement in the Health Sector (SPHS),<sup>5</sup> which is committed to reducing the environmental and social impact of its members' procurement activities. The Global Fund expects its suppliers of health products to actively participate in the United Nations Global Compact,<sup>6</sup> an industry-led corporate sustainability initiative that outlines principles with respect to the environment.<sup>7</sup>

Over the last few years, we have been working with our suppliers of health products and mosquito nets to advance environmentally and socially responsible procurement. Our long-term agreements with manufacturers of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets (LLINs) include requirements for suppliers to comply with international environment, health and safety standards. We have taken specific actions to reduce the amount of paper and plastic associated with the procurement of antiretroviral medicines and LLINs. Since 2018, we have recommended the removal of individual plastic bags for the distribution of LLINs to reduce the environmental impact of this lifesaving intervention, which has resulted in the reduction of an estimated 2,700 metric tons of plastic waste.

In order to reduce the environmental impact of our Supply Operations, we will:

- Formalize the Responsible Procurement Framework (RPF) as an institutional operational guide for health product procurement, which will result in the setting of reasonable sustainability thresholds suppliers need to meet, make suppliers more accountable for their upstream supply chains, and incentivize suppliers to continuously strengthen sustainable practices throughout their production processes and supply chains.
- Seek to optimize upstream and downstream procurement and supply chain efforts to reduce the need for air shipments.
- Continue to support cost-effective and quality-assured local production to increase supply chain resilience, which also has a positive impact on the environment.

## Global Fund Country Operations and Supply Chain

The Global Fund supports over 100 countries with investments ranging from just over US\$500,000 to over US\$800 million over three years. As such, our approach and support, which is anchored in the principles of partnership and country ownership, is differentiated

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<sup>5</sup> The SPHS brings together seven UN agencies (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency; UNICEF; UNOPS; and the World Health Organization (WHO)) and three multilateral health financing institutions (the Global Fund; Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; and Unitaid). In 2021-2022, the Global Fund will be chair of the SPHS.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles>

<sup>7</sup> Expectations for suppliers are articulated in the [Global Fund Code of Conduct for Suppliers](#).

according to country context and portfolio size. The level of risk varies by country. To date, the Global Fund has supported countries in improving their health care waste management systems<sup>8</sup>; solarization of health and community clinics and related infrastructure; introduction of digital technologies; and demand forecasting and the strengthening of supply chain management systems, including actions related to improving supply chain efficiency. In the larger portfolios we support, and where we procure significant volumes of health products, we are aware that ineffective waste management at the country level can pose health and ecosystem hazards.<sup>9</sup>

As part of the implementation of our new Strategy, we will:

- Support countries, in coordination with partners, to invest in climate and environmentally sensitive and One Health<sup>10</sup> approaches to build climate-resilient disease programs and systems for health, in line with the mission and mandate of the Global Fund.
- Scale up our efforts to track and respond to drug and insecticide resistance and linkages to climatic and environmental changes.
- Be responsive to emergency situations caused by climate-related disasters through grant reprogramming and/or through our Emergency Fund.<sup>11</sup>
- Encourage and support countries to improve and strengthen their health care waste management systems to undertake the safe and proper disposal of health care products at both local and regional levels.
- Strengthen country end-to-end supply chain systems and capabilities in order to increase efficiency and reduce environmental footprints.
- Support countries to develop reverse logistic systems aimed at supporting collection, handling and return of unusable health products and related waste to centralized disposal sites.
- Monitor the impact of climate change on the Global Fund portfolio, in particular malaria programs, by facilitating the inclusion of relevant climate metrics in malaria data repositories to refine stratification, planning, quantification, and timing of malaria interventions and supporting local and regional strategies to address climate change.
- Increase coordination and collaboration with relevant partners to further maximize our investments.

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<sup>8</sup> The Global Fund's [Technical Brief: Sustainable Health Care Waste Management](#) provides guidance to Global Fund applicants in the area of sustainable health care waste management.

<sup>9</sup> Principal Recipients – entities that implement Global Fund grants – are required to ensure the safe disposal of unusable pharmaceutical products and other health products using methods that involve minimal risks to public health and the environment, as well ensuring that laboratories comply with applicable laws and relevant WHO guidance for the management of health care waste, including laboratory waste. For more information please see: [Guide to Global Fund Policies on Procurement and Supply Management of Health Products](#).

<sup>10</sup> One Health is a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach working at the local, regional, national, and global levels with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.

<sup>11</sup> The Emergency Fund is a separate fund that allows for the timely response and flexibility to address needs for essential prevention and treatment services during certain emergency situations. The total amount of funding allocated to the Emergency Fund in the 2020-2022 allocation cycle is US\$20 million.

Our new Strategy provides us with the opportunity to outline the Global Fund's commitment to playing our part to combat climate change and to minimize our environmental impact. These are our first steps, and we will continue to work across our partnership to respond to the multifaceted threats to human health arising from climate and environmental changes.