

Global Fund defends Rwanda spending

Written by RNA Reporters
Monday, 21 June 2010 16:08

Kigali: Rwanda is the biggest recipient of Global Fund financing for HIV/Aids, Malaria and TB compared to all its regional partners with up to a billion dollars projected to be spent, according to data compiled by a Global Fund monitoring group.

A combination of government and other recipients are estimated to get some \$923,877,060 in different grants for the three diseases. The money was approved between 2002 and 2009 but with some grants for the next three years as most grants are ongoing.

From this amount, some \$331,480,350 has already been disbursed, according to Aidspace, a non-profit agency which monitors Global Fund resources.

The group says a computation of the 12 rounds of funding combining malaria, HIV and TB suggests that implementation of the grants is eight months behind schedule.

Burundi alone has only managed to tap less than 20 percent of what Rwanda will be receiving. Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania are all getting less compared to their small partner Rwanda.

For the Global Fund itself, money coming to Rwanda is dollars well spent.

Data compiled by Aidspace also indicates the five East African Community (EAC) countries put together are getting the biggest share of Global Fund money – even when the region is not the worst affected by the three targeted diseases.

East Africa alone has been allocated \$4.76 billion – followed by West and Central Africa with \$3.13 billion. The Southern Africa region which is said to be worst affected by HIV/Aids and TB globally comes in third Global Fund allocation.

The Arab and Muslim areas of North Africa and the Middle East will be getting just \$1.05 billion.

Global Fund spokeswoman Marcela Rojo defended the large allocations to Rwanda and East Africa saying grants are requested by the countries themselves.

She said the Fund “does not implement programs directly, relying instead on a broad network of partnerships with other development organizations on the ground to supply local knowledge and technical assistance where required.”

“It is this country-ownership model that also makes the Global Fund successful as countries implement programs according to their national strategies and their needs,” said Rojo.

“Therefore, regarding your question as to why East Africa receives more funding, you should know that the Global Fund is a demand-driven model and therefore responds to requests from countries (it does not assign amounts by region),” she wrote in email exchanges with RNA from

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Geneva.

“The same applies for Rwanda: if Rwanda sends proposals to the Global Fund that are technically sound and our Technical Review Panel (a panel of 40 experts) approves them, then Rwanda receives funds according to the proposal they submit.”

The Global Fund official said the same policy applies to other countries.

There have not been any serious reported cases of fraud or corruption regarding Global Fund money but the Auditor General says in the 2008 report that there had been some cases recorded.

In Kirehe district (eastern Rwanda), the jailed ex-mayor even managed to put himself on the Global Fund payroll as a nurse, according to the Auditor General.