



**OPEN LETTER TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE WORLD BANK ON THE PROPOSED
ESTABLISHMENT OF A FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARY FUND FOR PANDEMIC PREVENTION,
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**

June 28, 2022

Dear Executive Directors and Alternates

At your board meeting on June 30, 2022, you will be asked to approve the establishment of a vitally important new financial intermediary fund (FIF) for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. We applaud the idea of a global fund against pandemics, and strongly support the goal of ensuring that the tragedy of COVID-19 is not repeated.

We are writing to express our concern about serious flaws in the proposal that has been presented in the memorandum to the board, a copy of which was reported in the media last week.

Governance

The current governance model for the new FIF proposed by World Bank staff is inherently neocolonial and outdated. The Bank should draw lessons from the successes of other FIFs. Like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the FIF to stop pandemics should have equal representation of donors and low-and-middle-income implementing countries (LMICs), from the very beginning. In addition, protected constituency seats for civil society organizations (CSOs) are needed, representing advocates from the Global South, the Global North, and a seat for Indigenous communities in zoonotic spillover hotspots. Without LMIC and CSO representation, the FIF will struggle to succeed, failing country ownership and whole-of-society buy-in tests, as well as the World Bank's own equity principles.

Operations

The biases established by the proposed governance of the FIF are further magnified by the proposed operating modalities. Funds would primarily be disbursed to the World Bank itself and to other regional development banks, with a *possible* opening to fund other major multilateral and UN agencies. Nowhere in the plan is the FIF getting funds to countries or civil society implementers directly, instead requiring further steps before money eventually reaches beneficiaries and supports action on the ground. This entails multiple layers of overhead, with slow, multi-stage decision making. Moreover, it fails to solve the problem for which a pandemic



fund is being created: existing programs and institutions have only narrow windows into the full pandemic prevention picture. A more comprehensive approach is needed that recognizes that countries and civil society are both the experts and the implementers. No existing entities have the remit or the effective mechanisms to ensure that the expertise, voices, and knowledge of affected communities, where action is most needed to achieve pandemic prevention, are included in the process. While an acting transition secretariat could be established by the World Bank, a new, purpose-built, independent secretariat is needed to fund countries and communities to fill the gaps and achieve national comprehensive pandemic prevention plans and implementation.

Scope

The importance of a One Health approach and associated upstream prevention of future pandemics is a welcome inclusion in the introductory section of the memorandum. Despite this recognition and significant feedback from experts, *no* provisions for prevention of zoonotic spillover are outlined in the memorandum, similar to the negligible inclusion of spillover prevention in the World Bank's earlier FIF documents prepared for the G20.

Recent analysis shows that upstream zoonotic disease spillover prevention approaches represent the [most cost-effective](#) and equitable approaches to pandemic prevention and preparedness. The UN quadripartite effort, which brings together WHO, FAO, OIE, and UNEP to help tackle the deeper and underlying causes of the increased rate of emergence of new infectious diseases and anti-microbial resistance is ignored, perpetuating a siloed approach (which the memorandum professes to aim to avoid).

Upstream prevention (and zoonotic spillover prevention) is not only rooted in the principles of One Health, but it also respects the principles of human rights. Focusing only on *stopping the spread* but doing nothing to *prevent the outbreak* is a profound and deadly choice, rooted in uninterrogated bias, and accepts the deaths of mostly black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) at the front lines of disease emergence and response.

Focusing only on post-outbreak actions makes a needlessly risky all-eggs-in-one-basket bet, based on the hope that sending fire trucks will stop the flames every time before the conflagration spreads. COVID-19 has revealed the folly of that assertion. No intervention is perfect. Vaccines are hoarded and acceptance is variable. Countries with some of the highest public health capacity saw the most deaths.



We urge the World Bank Board to address the deficiencies above by revising their proposal as follows:

1. Establishment of a multistakeholder governance structure that includes equal numbers of donors and representatives of low- and middle-income countries. The board should also include protected seats reserved for Indigenous Peoples and affected communities, and expertise from civil society and academia.
2. Revision of the operational design to enable funds to be disbursed directly to governments and trusted partners implementing actions on the ground without multiple layers of decision making and overheads. Those partners include the governments of low- and middle-income countries as well as non-profit organizations with relevant expertise and capacity. Country applications should be created by government and civil society consortia with participation from organizations representing Indigenous, marginalized, and stigmatized communities.
3. A clear statement of the scope of actions to be ultimately financed that reflects the latest analysis and best practice in pandemic prevention and preparedness. This must include both 'classic' global health security items, such as meeting the International Health Regulations within five years in all LMICs, as well as primary prevention of emerging zoonotic infectious diseases, as called for in multiple peer-reviewed publications in respected scientific journals.

Without revised governance, operations, and scope, the proposed FIF will struggle to be effective. If we adopt a strategy that only catches outbreaks early and tries to contain their spread, to the exclusion of cost-effective measures to stop diseases from emerging, then the risk of expensive failure is in plain sight. If the conditions proposed above are met, we would like to offer our fullest support to move ahead, and to engage and urge other governments, philanthropies, and businesses to join this vitally important effort.

Respectfully,

The coalition and secretariat for Preventing Pandemics at the Source