

Managing the conflicts between private interests and public responsibility

February 8, 2018

The Global Fund partnership is an important mechanism for transferring funds from national, multilateral, and private donors to low and middle income countries to assist in the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Most of the Global Fund's contributions come from governments, although there has long been private sector interest in engagement with the Fund for the benefits this might bring them. [1]



Since the global financial crisis of 2008, the Global Fund has experienced difficulty in sustaining the flow of donor funds, despite the continuing burden of disease associated with these three diseases.

Initiatives by the Global Fund to attract corporate funding inevitably raise important questions regarding conflicts between private interests and public responsibility. The most recent instance is the Global Fund's announcement, at the 2018 World Economic Forum, of three new partnerships with Lombard Odier, Heineken, and Unilever. [2]

The partnership with the Swiss bank Lombard Odier will develop new financial products that will allow investors to maximise the tax benefits associated with corporate philanthropy. [3] Tax avoidance and tax competition already have a punishing impact on fiscal capacity in countries dealing with AIDS, TB, and malaria. Reducing corporate tax is a further assault on public revenues and public funding for effective public health protection and universal health coverage.

The new partnership with Heineken will draw on the brewer's expertise in marketing and distributing alcohol to assist the Global Fund in its "last mile" distribution. [4] However, it has been widely criticised for legitimising the role of the alcohol industry as a partner in implementing sustainable development solutions. The alliance with the alcohol industry could undermine alcohol policy implementation in Africa and

Comment and opinion from The BMJ's international community of readers, authors, and editors

Access bmj.com
thebmj

Search BMJ

MOST READ

Abraar Karan: Why can't we accept that residents are...

Daniel Sokol: Alfie Evans and guerrilla warfare

Richard Lehman's journal review—23 April 2018

CATEGORIES

- Author's perspective
- BMJ Clinical Evidence
- Brexit
- China
- Christmas appeal
- Climate change
- Columnists
- Editors at large



interventions to reduce alcohol-related risky behaviour. It also weakens the message that harmful use of alcohol increases the risk factors of both HIV and tuberculosis. [5]

The new partnership with Unilever will assist the Global Fund in financing the protection of young women from HIV/AIDS, while advertising Unilever's soap. [6] The role of hand-washing in preventing AIDS, TB, and malaria is minor compared with sexual exploitation and gender-based violence (reflecting inequality between women and men), poor housing, a lack of urban infrastructure, and weak health systems. Unilever's stable of brands includes a huge range of junk food brands (chocolates, ice creams, and sugar rich highly processed food products) which contribute to the epidemic of non-communicable diseases and has a role in deforestation to supply palm oil. The paradox is that HIV treatment renders sufferers more susceptible to diet-related NCDs.

It seems that the Global Fund believes that it can address the challenges of AIDS, TB, and malaria while accepting funds from corporate investors and the alcohol and food industries. But are the Global Fund's important efforts in fighting AIDS, TB, and malaria worth the risks that private partnerships might bring to health systems, alcohol policy implementation, and NCDs?

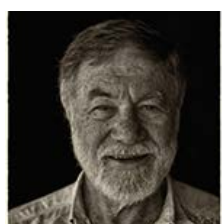
- **See also:** [Sixty seconds on . . . Heineken](#)



David G Legge, La Trobe University, Melbourne and Peoples' Health Movement.



Ronald Labonte, University of Ottawa and Peoples' Health Movement.



David Sanders, School of Public Health, University of the Western Cape, South Africa and Peoples' Health Movement.

- From the archive
- From the other side
- Global health
- Guest writers
- Junior doctors
- Literature and medicine
- Medical ethics
- Metaphor watch
- MSF
- NHS
- Open data
- Partnership in practice
- Patient perspectives
- Readers' editor
- Richard Lehman's weekly review of medical journals
- South Asia
- Students
- The BMJ today
- The King's fund
- Too much medicine
- Unreported trial of the week
- US healthcare



Consultant in Acute Medicine x2
Whiston, Prescot |

The new appointees would be expected to complement the existing services which provide rapid and high quality senior assessment

Recruiter: St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

[Apply for this job](#)

Consultant Cardiologist with special interest Cardiac Electrophysiology
Birmingham, West Midlands |

Expertise in catheter ablation and cardiac devices are required. An additional subspecialist interest

Competing interests: None declared.

References:

1. GBCHealth. Global Fund Private Sector Delegation 2017 [Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: http://www.gbchealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/PSD-Overview-Benefits_Dec-2017.pdf
2. Benn C. From Davos, the Power of Public-Private Partnerships 2018 [Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/blog/2018-01-26-from-davos-the-power-of-public-private-partnerships/>.
3. Lombard Odier. Lombard Odier and the Global Fund join forces to expand private investment in Global Health 2018 [Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: <https://www.lombardodier.com/contents/corporate-news/media-releases/2018/january/lombard-odier-and-the-global-fun.html>.
4. Heineken NV. Global Fund and HEINEKEN Enter Into Partnership to Fight Against Infectious Diseases in Africa 2018 [updated 26 Jan 2018; Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: <http://www.theheinekencompany.com/media/media-releases/press-releases/2018/01/2164014>.
5. Joint Open Letter: Concern Regarding Global Fund Partnering with Heineken 2018. [Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: <http://iogt.org/open-letters/joint-open-letter-concern-regarding-global-fund-partnering-heineken/>
6. Unilever. Five big announcements we made at Davos this week 2018 [updated 25/01/2018; Accessed 3 Feb 2018]. Available from: <https://www.unilever.com/news/news-and-features/Feature-article/2018/five-big-announcements-we-made-at-davos-this-week.html>.

Global health

<input type="checkbox"/> Nick Hopkinson: Smoking in “The Crown”	Humanising birth: Does the language we use matter? <input type="checkbox"/>
---	---

Comments

Community

Login ▾

Recommend **3**

Sort by Best ▾

Start the discussion...

within the field would be welcome.

Recruiter: University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

Apply for this job

FY2 (LAS) Doctor in Obstetrics & Gynaecology

Jersey | £28,640 plus

Experience in Obstetrics & Gynaecology desirable but not essential. The successful candidate will be joining a 1:6 rota.

Recruiter: States of Jersey General Hospital

Apply for this job

CT1/2 (LAS) Doctor in Obstetrics & Gynaecology

Jersey | £32,478 plus

Experience in Obstetrics & Gynaecology desirable but not essential. The successful candidate will be joining a 1:6 rota.

Recruiter: States of Jersey General Hospital

Apply for this job

Joint Director of Public Health

Truro, Cornwall | Up to £115,000

Be the first to comment.

[Subscribe](#) [Add Disqus](#) [Privacy](#)



Information for Authors

BMJ Opinion provides comment and opinion written by The BMJ's international community of readers, authors, and editors.

We welcome submissions for consideration. Your article should be clear, compelling, and appeal to our international readership of doctors and other health professionals. The best pieces make a single topical point. They are well argued with new insights.

For more information on how to submit, please see our [instructions for authors](#).

[Top](#) | [Home](#) | [Revenue sources](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Website terms & conditions](#) | [Contact us](#)

© BMJ Publishing Group Limited 2018. All rights reserved.