

**Statement of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**  
**12<sup>th</sup> Round Table Meeting, Thimphu, Bhutan**  
**December 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

Honorable Minister,

Dear co-chairs of the RTM,

Excellencies,

Colleagues development partners,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Global Fund would like to thank the Royal Government of Bhutan for the opportunity to be part of this 12<sup>th</sup> Round Table meeting.

Since 2005, the Global Fund has supported Bhutan's inspiring long term vision and guiding development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) which is in line with the Global Fund' core strategy to support countries to transform itself in order to sustain and accelerate gains and contribute to ambitious national and international goals.

The Global Fund would like to congratulate the Royal Government of Bhutan for remarkable progress of key health indicators. Bhutan is now close to achieving many of the health-related MDGs by 2015 and beyond. However, there still remain challenges to be addressed in particular regarding AIDS, TB and malaria:

- HIV cases detected in Bhutan remain small in global comparison and the prevalence is estimated to be below 0.01%. However, there is a rising trend of HIV infection and high incidence of sexually transmitted infections which needs to be halted. The Global Fund commends the Ministry of Health for scaling up STI/HIV diagnostic services to nationwide coverage. This will allow for greater access to prevention services for most at risk and vulnerable populations and also help the reduction of mother to child transmission.
- Prevalence and incidence of TB has been declining in Bhutan, yet it is important to note that the incidence rate of TB – according to the WHO Global Tuberculosis Report of 2013 - still is 180 per 100,000 population. Case detection and growing burden of MDR/TB remain challenged which need to be addressed.
- Malaria, once a major public health burden no longer poses a serious threat. Bhutan has made significant strides towards elimination of malaria and has achieved a

major reduction in malaria incidence. Only 11 malaria cases were detected in January - September 2013. The decline in malaria cases have also been accompanied by significant reductions in the mortality from malaria infection with only one death in 2013 as compared to 15 in 2000 and 63 in 1993. This is a major achievement and now the challenge is to sustain this remarkable progress towards malaria elimination.

Defeating these infectious diseases requires reaching the most vulnerable: women and girls, sex workers, people who use drugs, men who have sex with men, transgender people, people in prison and migrants. Bhutan has made impressive progress towards ensuring gender equity in particular in education. The Global Fund believes that further strengthening and promoting human rights and equity will allow Bhutan to achieve its collective health objectives and support the GNH vision.

The Global Fund has invested more than USD \$ 10.2 million over the last 8 years to support the national response in the fight against the three pandemics. In partnership with the Ministry of Health and other key stakeholders, the Global Fund supported programs succeeded in ensuring lifesaving treatment for 120 people living with HIV; procuring and distributing 253,989 long-lasting insecticide-treated nets (LLINs) resulting in 94% of all households with at least 1 LLIN and net utilization rate greater than 90%; targeted Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) coverage of over 90%; and increasing TB treatment success rate to 99%.

The Global Fund is committed to continue to enhance its support to the Royal Government of Bhutan in the upcoming years. In 2014, the Global Fund will implement its new funding model, which will allow for more strategic investments and more effective implementers and partners engagement to achieve greater impact. The new funding model is also intended to work in closer partnership with vulnerable communities and community-based organizations to affirm their role in the response to HIV, TB and malaria.

We look forward to continue to working together and we wish the Royal Government of Bhutan, his Majesty the King and all the people of Bhutan a happy and prosperous future.

Tashi Delek