

# **The Global Fund and the European Union's Eastern and Southern Neighbors**



[Cover] A scene from the Palanca-Maiaki-Udobnoe border crossing point on 1 March 2022. People fleeing the war in Ukraine are seeking refuge in Moldova or transiting the country on their way to Romania and other EU countries.

UN Women/Aurel Obreja

## Together with the European Commission, governments, communities and global health partners, the Global Fund is working to build a healthier, safer and more equitable world where no one is left behind.

For more than two decades, the Global Fund partnership has made extraordinary progress in the fight against HIV and tuberculosis (TB) throughout the eastern and southern border countries of the European Union. Since 2002, the Global Fund partnership has saved 869,000 lives in the European Union (EU) neighborhood and the wider region.<sup>1</sup>

But today, colliding crises – including war and conflict, climate change, debt, an alarming erosion of human rights, and deepening inequities – are threatening to reverse the collective progress we have made in the fight against these diseases. In the EU neighborhood, many people have fled their homes, causing internal displacement and movement across borders. Losing access to health care is just one devastating consequence of this displacement. Lifesaving testing, treatment and prevention services have been disrupted. Health systems are overwhelmed and understaffed.

Remaining true to our mission to end HIV, TB and malaria as public health threats, the Global Fund is actively confronting these challenges. Over the 2023-2025 period, the Global Fund is investing over US\$328 million in countries in the region.

## Fighting tuberculosis and HIV in Eastern Europe

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In the WHO European Region, progress has been made toward ending TB: Between 2015 and 2022, TB deaths declined by 32%.<sup>2</sup> But, despite this achievement, serious challenges stand in the way of reaching the collective goal to end TB by 2030. Many people – particularly children with TB, people with latent TB, and patients with drug-resistant TB – face treatment gaps. The region is also being confronted with high prices, product gaps and supply vulnerabilities.

Drug-resistant TB is also a huge obstacle in effectively ending the TB epidemic in the region. The war in Ukraine has only inflamed this challenge. Today, the Global Fund is working closely with all our partners in Ukraine to carry out critical work required to preserve, maintain and strengthen health care and community systems and ensure patients have ongoing access to prevention, testing and treatment for TB and HIV.

In Moldova, Global Fund support has contributed to an enormous reduction in deaths from TB: Between 2002 and 2022, deaths from TB (excluding HIV+) reduced by 90%. Over the same period, new cases of TB fell by 43%.

But drug-resistant TB remains a serious public health threat. Surveillance data from 2022 showed rifampicin-resistant TB in 28% of people newly diagnosed with TB in Moldova, and in 57% of people with TB who had previously been treated for the disease. To respond to the challenge of drug-resistant TB – named as a major contributor to antimicrobial resistance – the Global Fund is supporting Moldova to increase early detection of TB and improve compliance with treatment programs to ensure more successful treatment outcomes.

1 The EU neighborhood comprises the EU's closest eastern and southern neighboring countries. The Global Fund supports programs in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Egypt, Morocco, and countries included in the Middle East Response (MER) Initiative: Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen. The Global Fund launched the MER Initiative in 2017 to better respond to the complex and acute emergency situations in the Middle East.

2 World Health Organization, 2023.

## Ukraine: Maintaining TB services during the war

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Despite living under constant shelling and bombardments, Yulia Malyk has continued working as a social worker in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city. Yulia provides community-based health outreach services to prevent, diagnose and treat people with TB through the non-profit organization 100% Life, one of the Global Fund's partners in Ukraine.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has had catastrophic consequences on the country's health care system. Since the war began, more than 1,500 attacks have impacted health facilities in Ukraine, leaving health care workers and patients displaced, injured or dead.

Services provided by social workers like Yulia are vital in protecting gains already made in the fight against TB and maintaining essential services.

The Global Fund has provided over US\$27 million in emergency funding to ensure conflict-affected patients maintain access to TB and HIV prevention and treatment services. This is on top of over US\$157 million allocated to Ukraine to support the fight against HIV and TB in the country over the 2021-2023 grant implementation period and US\$54.5 million for the country's COVID-19 response. In December 2023, the Global Fund Board approved US\$157.1 million for Ukraine for the 2024-2026 implementation period, and US\$8.4 million in catalytic matching funds for HIV prevention for key populations, finding and successfully treating "missing" people with drug-susceptible and drug-resistant TB, and scaling up programs to remove human rights and gender-related barriers to care.



Yulia Malik, 29, an advocate with 100% Life for HIV and TB awareness, is at a food distribution line where she canvasses for high-risk TB patients in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

The Global Fund/Ashley Gilbertson

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The region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia has the fastest-growing HIV epidemic in the world.<sup>3</sup> Since 2010, there has been a 49% increase in new HIV infections and a 46% increase in the number of AIDS-related deaths. HIV prevention and treatment services are not reaching all who need them: In 2022, only 51% of people living with HIV in the region were receiving antiretroviral therapy. In this difficult context, the Global Fund is supporting countries in the region to overcome the many obstacles they are facing to deliver an effective HIV response.

<sup>3</sup> UNAIDS, 2023.

## Moldova: HIV prevention in prisons among people who inject drugs

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Moldova is a global leader in effective prison-based harm reduction programs, which have proved incredibly successful at preventing the spread of HIV. The highest HIV prevalence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is among people who inject drugs, who are over-represented in prisons given punitive drug policies.

Moldova initiated its prison-based harm reduction programs back in 2000 and today, with support from Global Fund investments, they have rolled out these programs in almost all prisons across the country.

The programs include daily opioid substitution therapy, psychosocial care as well as a network of 36 peer volunteers who facilitate clean needle exchanges and provide other support.

Since 2006, the Global Fund has invested approximately US\$165 million to support Moldova's efforts to fight HIV and TB and protect the human rights of people most affected by the two diseases. Over the last five years there has been only one case of HIV transmission among Moldova's entire prison population of approximately 6,000 people.

Yuri Mironov, an inmate at the Penitentiary no. 4 in Cricova, Moldova, gets his methadone treatment. Moldova has made great progress delivering harm reduction services for people living in prisons, covering almost all prisons in the country.

The Global Fund/Ioana Moldovan (VII Photo)



## The Global Fund's Middle East Response Initiative

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The Global Fund is allocating over US\$54.4 million under the Middle East Response Initiative (2023-2025) to provide essential health services to key and vulnerable populations including refugees, internally displaced people, women and children. This funding bolsters progress in TB, HIV and malaria prevention, treatment and care, and contributes to building more resilient health and community systems. Before and since the Middle East Response Initiative was established in 2017, the Global Fund has disbursed US\$280 million in funding to the countries included in the Initiative.

The Middle East Response Initiative is supporting a range of high-impact interventions, including TB elimination in Jordan and Palestine; scale-up of differentiated HIV testing; inclusion of key and vulnerable

populations in HIV prevention initiatives across the region; and malaria control in Yemen. It is also supporting data systems as part of health systems strengthening and pandemic preparedness and response.

The Initiative brings together the Global Fund's investments across the region under a consolidated grant management platform implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN migration agency. This approach aims to increase value for money, reach more vulnerable populations and support stronger regional partnerships that can deliver health services in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas.

## Resilient and sustainable systems for health

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The Global Fund partnership is uniquely placed to support countries to prevent, prepare for and respond to current and future health threats by supporting them in building resilient and sustainable systems for health. As the world's largest multilateral provider of grants for strengthening systems for health, the Global Fund is investing US\$2 billion a year in formal and community health systems. Our investments support health care workers; strengthen laboratories, diagnostics tools, supply chain management, information and financial systems; tackle antimicrobial resistance, including drug-resistant TB; and accelerate the shift toward patient-centered, differentiated models of care.

### Syria: Delivering lifesaving oxygen in hospitals as part of the Middle East Response Initiative

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At any given time, there might be 10 to 25 patients at Homs National Hospital who need oxygen every day.

"It is not possible to operate in a hospital without a sustainable source of oxygen," said Dr. Yahia Suleiman Al Shimali, head of the Anesthesia and Resuscitation Section at the hospital.

Dr. Al Shimali's patients receive oxygen pumped into Homs National Hospital by a brand-new pressure swing adsorption plant: an oxygen generator procured by the Global Fund, IOM and WHO with technical assistance from

Woroud Al Haj Hassan sits at her husband's bedside at Homs National Hospital in Syria. He was diagnosed with pneumonia and needed surgery. "Praise to God that oxygen is available, they gave it to him, and he is doing well."

The Global Fund/Tafaseel Advertising Agency



Project BOXER, part of the Global Fund's COVID-19 Response Mechanism that focuses on increasing access to medical oxygen.

Developing measurements and technical specifications for the plant, then procuring, delivering and installing all three oxygen generators was a formidable undertaking in an uncertain, rapidly changing environment.

Syria's oxygen tanks were procured as part of a US\$1 billion effort by the Global Fund and partners to expand access, negotiate for better pricing, and provide governments with what they need to deliver oxygen to the communities they serve – an essential building block for resilient and sustainable health systems.

## **A progressive shift from donor financing toward nationally funded health systems**

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The Global Fund works closely with countries to help them achieve long-term sustainability of health programs. Ending the epidemics will only be achieved with sustainable and patient-centered systems for health that are fully funded by countries through their own resources.

The Global Fund partnership takes a holistic approach to sustainability, both at the programmatic and financial level. Working with partners, we engage with all countries, regardless of their income level and disease burden, to support well-planned and successful transitions.

### **Morocco:**

## **Key and vulnerable populations are at the center of the country's efforts to provide a solid foundation for long-term health programs**

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Morocco is committed to sustaining community programs for key and vulnerable populations affected by HIV and TB by increasing national funding for health, piloting and implementing social contracts with civil society organizations, and improving supply management of health products, governance mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation programs. As part of the country's work to build resilient and sustainable systems for health, Morocco is working toward greater integration of HIV and TB services into broader health services and integrating these services into the compulsory health insurance scheme.

In Morocco, Global Fund investments are focused on health systems strengthening – including capacity building, skills transfer, and the set-up of digital information systems and connectivity solutions in the laboratory network – to ensure the enduring sustainability of Morocco's health programs, long after the country transitions away from Global Fund financing.

### Key results where the Global Fund invests in 2022:

Country	Number of people on antiretroviral therapy for HIV	Number of people treated for TB	Number of people on treatment for drug-resistant TB
Armenia	3,095	441	-
Azerbaijan	6,443	-	1,034
Belarus	21,242	1,670	761
Georgia	6,050	-	165
Moldova	7,857	2,123	491
Ukraine	121,289	18,566	4,156
Algeria	17,576	-	-
Egypt	15,454	7,967	112
Morocco	16,013	30,355	238
Tunisia	1,844	-	-
Countries covered by the Middle East Response Initiative*	6,131	21,247	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>222,994</b>	<b>82,359</b>	<b>6,957</b>

\*Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Yemen and Iraq. In 2022, 1,420,877 long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets were distributed in Yemen.



**Since 2002, the Global Fund has invested over US\$2.1 billion in the EU neighborhood and the wider region.**

### About the Global Fund

The Global Fund is a worldwide partnership to defeat HIV, TB and malaria and ensure a healthier, safer, more equitable future for all. We raise and invest more than US\$5 billion a year to fight the deadliest infectious diseases, challenge the injustice that fuels them, and strengthen health systems and pandemic preparedness in more than 100 of the hardest hit countries. We unite world leaders, communities, civil society, health workers and the private sector to find solutions that have the most impact, and we take them to scale worldwide. Since 2002, the Global Fund partnership has saved 59 million lives.