



2010 WINNING CASE STUDY
Best Public Sector Project and
International Award
Atos Consulting with The Global Fund



The Global Fund - Positioning the Fund to continue its fight against the world's most devastating diseases

Atos Consulting helped the Global Fund become a fully autonomous organisation – in seven months.

Executive summary

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is an international institution which invests the world's money to save lives. It attracts and disburses resources to fight three of the world's killer diseases.

Having been formed in 2002 under special arrangements with the World Health Organisation, by December 2008 the Global Fund needed to become an independent organisation.

This move to autonomy was vital to the future ability of the Global Fund to do its work in the most efficient, flexible and appropriate way.

When Atos Consulting arrived, the Global Fund had just over seven months and an immovable deadline to take its staff out of the familiar confines of the United Nations and into a new stand-alone organisation.

Delivering a programme that usually would have taken 18 months, Atos Consulting overcame cultural, logistical and technical challenges to create a new organisation, with:

- new administrative, finance, procurement, HR and technology systems and functions
- 33 new employment services
- the smooth transfer of all 420 staff.

All this was done without impacting the organisation's ability to disburse funds.

Problem/opportunity

Based in Geneva, the Global Fund is a unique global partnership. It has committed over US\$16.3 billion in 140 countries to support large-scale prevention and care programs against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria

The Global Fund was established in 2002 under an Administrative Services Agreement with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to bring a new approach to international health financing. While this enabled the Global Fund to start operations rapidly and fund programs within a year, the arrangement was always meant to be temporary.

In December 2007 the Global Fund Board decided to terminate its arrangement with the WHO and become an autonomous organisation by 31 December 2008. It could then manage its own corporate policies and processes.

The entire Global Fund had to establish itself as a stand-alone entity by setting up every function that was being supplied by the WHO. An added complication was that the Global Fund had also to adapt to the introduction at WHO of a comprehensive computerised management system which added complexity and strain on the Global Fund.

All this had to be done without impacting the Global Fund's ongoing disbursement of funds.

Brief background to the project

The Global Fund provides a quarter of all international financing for AIDS globally, two-thirds for tuberculosis and malaria. It requires unprecedented financial commitments from its stakeholders. As a lean funding mechanism, it is committed to achieving maximum cost-effectiveness across its operations.

Becoming administratively autonomous would give the Global Fund more flexibility to shape its own organisation and find ways of working that would be more appropriate and efficient.

The Global Fund Board comprises representatives of donor and recipient governments, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and communities. The deadline it had set for separation was immovable. To meet its commitment to optimise cost-effectiveness on behalf of all its stakeholders, the new organisation had to be created and operated with maximum efficiency.

All 420 employees were employed under the United Nations. The separation would take the whole culture and organisation outside of this familiar jurisdiction.

In April 2008 the Global Fund chose Atos Consulting as master consultant responsible for managing the separation. By the time Atos Consulting arrived in Geneva in May it had just seven-and-half months until the separation date.

The scale of the programme was huge, from designing and implementing new policies and functions, to creating new services and negotiating employment packages, and all the communication and training needed to ensure a smooth separation.

Consulting activity

The programme's wide scope and tight timeframes required an experienced consulting team.

Composition of the Global Fund reflects the nationalities and cultures of donor and recipient countries. Atos Consulting fielded a team comprising 12 nationalities speaking at least eight languages.

Atos Consulting worked alongside the Global Fund in Geneva for the whole programme. The initial team comprised seven; a core team of 20 peaked at 36 by December 2008. Atos Consulting rapidly mobilised a mix of skills including HR, IT, compensation and benefits, policies and regulations, procurement and finance.

As master consultant, Atos Consulting managed inputs from five other consultancies and providers. All had to work to extremely tight timescales – in fact many thought these could not be met. Atos Consulting invested considerable effort in meeting third parties regularly and working closely to align their plans to those of the programme.

Designing the programme

With time short, the separation process had to be managed extremely tightly.

Atos Consulting established governance processes to ensure the programme would be stewarded effectively by the Global Fund. Key was establishing a framework for the programme Steering Group comprising senior executives from across the Global Fund. This was an influential decision-making forum.

If timescales were to be met meticulous planning had to start immediately with the development of a huge 25,000-line programme plan, and all its complex risks and dependencies.

Implementing new systems

A new IT system had to be chosen and implemented to support all the new administrative functions. Atos Consulting implemented a very rapid process to select an Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning system. This would support the new Global Fund organisation and its future growth.

Understandably there was scepticism of a system that had been chosen in six weeks using a methodology that would usually have taken six months. Trust in Atos Consulting's expertise was needed, and the choice of Oracle proved key in ensuring a smooth separation.

The team had six months to develop and implement the new system – a phenomenally short timeframe. Atos Consulting stayed rigorously focused on implementing a core solution, tailoring processes to suit system functionality. These could then be adapted after go-live to ensure continuous improvement.

One major challenge was to integrate the system with others such as a separate payroll system and others from banks and pension providers.

Creating new policies and functions

Atos Consulting worked with the Global Fund to design all governance structures and functions for administering its new organisation.

The team used input from existing WHO work practices, and reviewed best practice from public and private sectors together with the functionality of the new technology to establish optimum new policies and processes.

Working groups comprising staff representatives alongside Atos Consulting and other specialists designed and implemented policies, processes and functions across HR, finance, administration, procurement and IT services.

Transferring staff

New salary, pension and grading arrangements were needed – all developed with close input from the employee representative body, the Staff Council.

Employee benefits packages had to be comparable to existing arrangements. The nature of their work means that Global Fund staff have special entitlements and immunities. Atos Consulting helped investigate whether these were the most appropriate for its needs, rationalising 28 UN allowances to 17.

As staff had 'privileges and immunities' that took them outside the Swiss state system Atos Consulting worked closely with the Global Fund's legal team. Atos Consulting worked closely with Global Fund staff and other large and niche providers to design new employment packages and establish 33 new services (for example healthcare, travel security). Each had to be scoped and tendered for by the relevant provider.

WHO had to approve termination agreements for each employee and exit of the UN pension scheme, which added extra challenges for meeting the timescales.

Managing the impact on staff

The positive involvement of all Global Fund staff was critical for success. They needed to take a series of actions, from arranging to be paid in a different currency, to having a health-check, to moving their pension fund. The immovable deadline provided no contingency for this not to happen.

With no Global Fund staff dedicated to internal communication and systematic communication channels not yet implemented, Atos Consulting implemented a comprehensive communication programme which was extremely well received. As a result the organisation is now implementing its own internal communication programme.

Before separation, all staff needed training in the new policies and new self-service online HR tools. Atos Consulting partnered with the internal training department to design and deliver training, supplementing resources when needed.

Success factors and challenges

The programme was larger and more complex than perhaps anyone had imagined at the start. Threats to success were constant and significant, and could all be attributed to three over-arching challenges.

- **Timescales.** Effectively this was an 18-month programme delivered in seven months. A huge amount of interdependent activities had to be got right first time, with a focus on maximising resources.

- **Cultural shift.** The entire Global Fund was moving out of the familiar, safe and prestigious environment of the UN into the unknown. This had been a culture in which staff traditionally felt secure.
- **Complex stakeholder environment.** Atos Consulting had continually to negotiate and gain agreement across a raft of different stakeholders:
 - the Staff Council – which was naturally wary at the start
 - WHO – which needed assurance that staff would not be disadvantaged by the separation
 - staff across the organisation.

To meet these challenges, Atos Consulting had to be relentless and resilient – with a constant eye on timeframes and continually lobbying key decision makers. By introducing the Global Fund to new working practices, they were contributing to a model for the culture of the new organisation:

- **To what extent were objectives met?** The separation took place with no impact on business continuity or on staff. The Global Fund is now an administratively autonomous organisation which has since grown to nearly 600 employees. It managed its operations efficiently, with the flexibility and independence it needs to evolve and meet the future challenges it faces.
- **Intangible benefits.** The Global Fund demonstrated how much it values its employees' commitment in helping to resource the prevention and treatment of major diseases. It proved its ability to deliver large-scale organisational change with maximum efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Lessons learned.** Atos Consulting learned the importance of ensuring that the client team felt involved and recognised for their achievements. The Global Fund learned:
 - the value of change management in transformational programmes
 - the need for good planning and to maintain control at all times.

Client/consultant relationship

The success of the programme was due to the quality of the relationship between the Global Fund and Atos Consulting – and the level of trust that the Global Fund had in the consulting team.

As master consultant Atos Consulting had to take a very strong programme management lead throughout – particularly given the unusually tight deadlines. In effect, Atos Consulting orchestrated the decision-making environment while ensuring that decisions were then owned and driven by the Global Fund.

“Thanks to the hard work and commitment of Atos Consulting’s excellent team, this was a very successful programme.”

Helen Evans, Deputy Executive Director, Global Fund

“Atos Consulting was sensitive to the dynamics between staff and management and provided the leadership, vision and sheer determination needed to safely transition the organisation in an impossibly short timeframe.”

Alex Lang, Vice Chair, Staff Council 2008

“Atos Consulting achieved an enormous amount in an impossibly short timescale. The success of this programme was a vital step forward in the ongoing evolution of the Global Fund.”

Heather Allan, Corporate Services Cluster Director, Global Fund

“We could not have managed the transition without the drive and energy from the incredible Atos [Consulting] team.”

Ines Garcia, Program Manager, Global Fund