

Headline **Global health funds not all wisely spent**  
Date **20. Jun 2009**  
Media Title **Borneo Post**  
Section **World**  
Circulation **57529**  
Readership **166173**

Language **ENGLISH**  
Page No **A4**  
Article Size **227** cm2  
Frequency **Daily (EM)**  
Color **Black/White**  
AdValue **1308.18**



## Global health funds not all wisely spent

**PARIS:** Global health funding boosted by private donors has quadrupled since 1990, but the extra money has not always gone to the right countries and diseases, according to a pair of studies released yesterday.

At the same time, the United Nation's once overwhelming role in administering international health assistance has shrivelled, with potentially serious consequences, the studies warn.

Aid earmarked for health in developing countries doubled in the 1990s and then again from 2001 to 2007, climbing from US\$5.6 to US\$21.8 billion over 17 years.

But the distribution of those extra dollars, euros and yen have disproportionately favoured nations whose health needs are not among the world's most urgent, the research shows.

"Three of the countries among the top 30 with the highest disease burden — Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali — are nowhere near the top 30 in terms of the money they receive," said Christopher Murray, head of Washington University's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation and main architect of one of the

studies.

"The gap has become more pronounced over time" even as more money flowed into all of these countries, he told AFP by phone.

The first comprehensive analysis of global health aid from all sources suggests that money flows are often linked to historical or geo-political factors, not just levels of illness and premature death.

"In some cases, health aid seems to coincide with defence spending or drug interdiction efforts," said lead author Mirmala Ravishankar, a researcher at the same institute.

Columbia ranks 23 for disease burden, for example, but 16th for development assistance, much of which comes from the United States.

Two other Latin American countries — Nicaragua and Peru — also receive a greater share of the health funds pie than conditions in each country would seem to dictate.

Iran, subject to UN and bilateral sanctions for its alleged support of terror and its push for nuclear technology, is 22nd on the disease burden list, but ranks only 135th for per capita health aid.

The study, published in the

British medical journal *The Lancet*, also found that funding has shifted substantially from public to private channels.

In 1990, UN agencies and development aid banks accounted for more than half of assistance dollars for health.

By 2007, that share had dropped to 21 per cent.

Two private-public hybrids — the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, created in 2002, and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), set up in 2000 — handled more than 12 per cent of assistance aid by 2007.

The share of resources moving through NGOs nearly doubled from 13 to 25 per cent over the same period.

Several new private donors entered the arena as well, notably the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which disbursed more than nine billion health dollars from 1998 to 2007, four per cent of the global total in that year.

"It is good that we have a more diverse set of actors and institutions in global health — we would not have seen a growth of US\$22 billion if it was all flowing through the UN system," said Murray. — AFP