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# Setting the Record Straight on WHO Funding

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Debating the Money Behind the Global Public  
Health Agenda

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*By Christy Feig and Sonia Shah*

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## AN ERRONEOUS CALCULATION

Christy Feig

Sonia Shah's recent piece on [ForeignAffairs.com](https://www.foreignaffairs.com), "[How Private Companies Are Transforming the Global Public Health Agenda](#)," makes a number of erroneous statements about how the World Health Organization (WHO) is financed and the sources of its funding. Chief among them is the following claim:

*"Voluntary contributions from private interests and others now bankroll four out of every five dollars of the WHO's budget."*

The fact is that WHO has two main sources of funding. All member states pay assessed contributions (the dues calculated relative to a country's wealth and population), which, since 2006, make up around 25 percent of the WHO's revenues. Assessed contributions are, by definition, government funds. The second source of funding indeed comes from voluntary contributions. These make up about 75 percent of WHO's annual income. But Shah misrepresented the case in stating that such voluntary contributions come primarily from private interests.

## **Read more at *Foreign Affairs'* Special Report: *Global Public Health.***

To set the record straight: Eighty percent of WHO's budget now comes from governments. For the two-year budget period 2010-11, 53 percent of the voluntary contributions came directly from governments that chose to go beyond what their annual dues require; 21 percent came from other UN bodies (such as UNICEF, UNDP, and UNAIDS) and other multilateral bodies (such as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization); 18 percent from philanthropic foundations (such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the UN Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation). Of the remainder, seven percent came from nongovernmental organizations, by far the largest of which was Rotary International for work on polio eradication.

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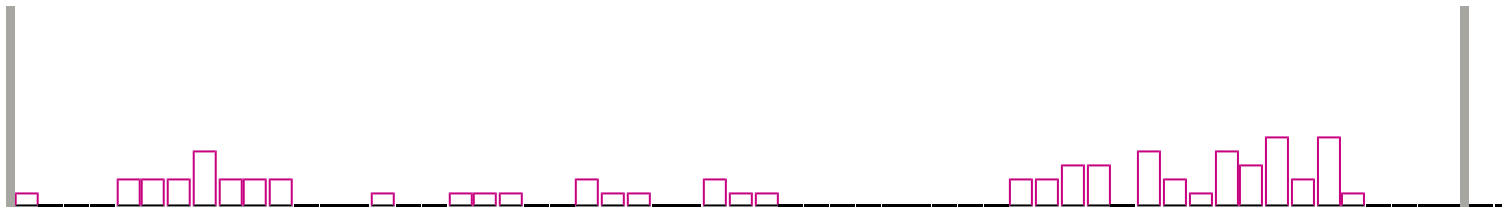
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