# **It’s politics, stupid! A political analysis of the HIV/AIDS Trust Fund in Uganda**

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## **Abstract**

The question of the fiscal sustainability of the HIV/AIDS response is on top of the political agenda in Uganda. Recognising that economics and politics are closely intertwined, this paper analyses how politics affected fiscal policies that led to the establishment of the HIV/AIDS Trust Fund (ATF). As good policy analysis requires good political analysis, the analysis is guided by *policy life cycle* as a conceptual and analytical framework for practical political analysis and action. The findings illustrate the interplay between domestic and international actors in the context of HIV financing and provide a rich insiders’ perspective on the machinations around the ATF. The paper concludes that national-level politics was the most fundamental driver for the establishment (at least in legislation) of the ATF. To this end, we argue that the ATF needs to be operationalized, as an instrumental AIDS diplomatic strategy, to effectively boost Uganda’s public health as well as foreign policy images. This, in turn, has potential to galvanize a global project of emancipation – in the context of global solidarity and shared responsibility. Finally, regarding lessons for fiscal practice as it relates to HIV and universal health coverage (UHC), the findings suggest a need for policy analysis to understand politics as each policy alternative has political effects, costs and benefits, key factors that affect the political feasibility of enacting the alternative and the ensuing political sustainability of the alternative over time.