**Best Practices to Accelerate Implementation of CERF Projects**

**DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION ONLY**

*19 August 2014*

Preparedness

*In the Field*

* *Map potential NGO partners*: Map potential NGOs and CSOs for emergency partnerships as part of early warning/emergency preparedness exercises (UNICEF, WFP).
* *Annual NGO consultation:* Hold annual consultations/contracting with current and prospective NGO partners instead of on an as-needed basis to prepare for anticipated or possible crises in the coming year (UNHCR).
* *Create a contingency Agency-NGO agreement*: This is an agreement with an NGO partner agreeing to provide supplies and money up to a certain threshold. It is reviewed and renewed annually. Once the agreement is activated, the NGO provides a detailed budget during an initial rapid assessment, and the agreement can allow for reimbursement of expenses prior to activation (UNICEF – WASH Cluster Lead).
* *Add contingency plans to development Agency-NGO agreements*: Emergency preparedness and response activities can be included as part of regular humanitarian/development-type agreements in the regions where the partnership is active. These portions of the agreements would only be activated in the case of emergencies (UNHCR, UNICEF – WASH Cluster Lead).

*Headquarters*

* *Create e-resource toolkit (HQ level activity)*: Create a toolkit on the intranet to assist offices with best practices to respond rapidly to emergencies, including guides and sample contingency agency-NGO agreements (UNICEF).
* *Training:* Provide training to all CO Representatives and cluster coordinators on country-based pooled funding and CERF (UNHCR).
* *NGO Guidance on Agency Website:* Place standard UN Agency-NGO agreement templates and guidance in multiple languages on agency website to allow NGOs to gain familiarity with agency practices (WFP).

Early in Emergency/Escalation

*NGOs, in clusters, the inter-cluster group and the HCT, should participate in CERF prioritization processes. In addition, UN agencies should engage partners early in identification and prioritization of projects for a CERF submission. The following steps can help speed up project implementation.*

* *Consult early and often with partners on the proposal*: Ensure projects are planned jointly. Set expectations around CERF requirements and clarify that the project may not be funded even if it is included in a CERF application (NRC, World Vision and InterAction)
* *Work out contract details with partners and create system profile:* Document detailed project proposal and budget, determine currency of agreement, create profile of NGO in agency payment system (WHO).
* *Share agency-NGO agreement template for NGO HQ review:* For international NGOs that require HQ approval of agreements, share blank agency-NGO template with HQ for early review if these agreements are not already publically available (WHO, WFP share on their external websites).
* *Start projects before CERF approval:* Because CERF funding represents only a small portion of UN agency emergency response funds, projects that will be undertaken without CERF funding can begin while waiting for CERF fund approval (UNHCR, WFP).

UN HQ disburses CERF funds to UN CO

* *Streamline UN HQ processes:* Some agencies are able to counter-sign CERF letters immediately, while others take longer. Processes will be specific to each agency, but ideas to accelerate include: delegating signature authority, setting clear steps for the approval process, involving fewer people (UNHCR and UNICEF).
* *Pre-financing:* Allow agency to advance money to the NGO as soon as the CERF approval letter is received in HQ before the money is actually received by the agency. Agency can work with donors to use incoming contributions to offset internal advances (UNHCR, WFP). Implementation of CERF projects can start up to six weeks before disbursement.

CO negotiates Agency-NGO Partnership Agreement

* *Short form Agency-NGO Agreement*: During L3 emergencies, CO Representatives can authorize a shortened form of the Agency-NGO Agreement (UNICEF).
* *Initial contracting mechanism*: Use a simpler, faster partnership contracting mechanism for the initial response period to allow for fast initial response while longer-term arrangements are negotiated (under discussion at WFP).
* *Amend existing Agency-NGO Agreements with current partners*: If activities are in the same sector, these will not need an additional technical assessment (UNICEF in L3s, WFP).
* *Track disbursement rates*: Track speed of disbursement of CERF sub-grants to NGOs and start of NGO implementation of CERF-funded activities. Set benchmarks to reduce the number of working days for sub-grant disbursement (WHO).

Project implementation

* *Provide detailed budget:* For contingency agreements, NGO provides detailed budget to UN agency[[1]](#footnote-1) after initial rapid assessment (using the agreed upon supply and financial maximums). This allows for the activation of the Agency-NGO Agreement and the start of project activities before the detailed budget is available (UNICEF, WFP).
* *Reimburse emergency expenses:* Contingency agreements can allow for reimbursement of emergency expenses that were incurred prior to activation of Agency-NGO Agreement (WFP).

**Points for Discussion**

* *Differing UN agency requirements create confusion:* Each agency has different requirements and procedures for implementing CERF projects. In practice, NGOs must treat each UN agency’s onward disbursement of CERF funds as a separate donor.
* *Annual NGO reviews:* UNHCR has shortened disbursement-to-implementation times, at least in part because they issue NGO agreements on an annual cycle. How does this work in practice, and how can they predict what funding they will receive? How do these partnerships take crisis escalations/rapid-onset emergencies into account?
* *Relationship Building and Communication:* How do we incentivize relationship building with potential partners so that the right relationships are in place when a crisis/escalation occurs? How do UN agencies involve NGOs early in the CERF discussion process and how can UN agencies, as well as the HC, HCT and OCHA, better notify NGOs when CERF money is allocated?
* *Prepositioning vs.* *Transparency:* How can we balance the needs of responding quickly to emergencies by leveraging existing relationships with NGOs and ensure that agreements are transparent?
* *Cluster vs. Agency:* How can we ensure that cluster leads can adequately and appropriately represent cluster needs, particularly if these are in conflict with their agency’s rules or programming?
* *Local vs. International NGOs:* CERF funding can be a powerful way to increase the capacity of national and local NGOs. In at least one case, an RC required agencies receiving CERF funds from a UFE envelope to implement through local partners. How can local NGOs be included in the CERF process?

1. Detailed budgets for sub-grants are not required for CERF proposals. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)