**UNICEF Actions to Improve CERF Efficiency**

For nearly ten years, CERF has proven to be an effective tool in saving and improving the lives of children in humanitarian settings. In rapid onset emergencies, this early source of funding helps to jumpstart an immediate response and attract additional resources. CERF also highlights neglected crises that may not receive the attention they deserve.

In 2014, CERF was one of UNICEF’s top 5 humanitarian funding sources, providing more than $115 million dollars in 44 countries. UNICEF CERF grants in 2014 included the following sector breakdown: $45.6 million or 40% for WASH; $26.4 million or 23% for Nutrition; $19.4 million or 17% for Health; $11.2 million or 10% for Protection and $7 million or 6% for education.

As part of the work plan of the IASC Task Team on Humanitarian Financing, UNICEF co-led an effort with InterAction to identify best practices in CERF disbursements to NGO partners. The findings were presented by InterAction and UNICEF to the CERF Advisory Group in October of 2014. Since the last CERF Advisory Board meeting, UNICEF moved forward on a number of initiatives to improve the disbursement of funds to partners.

**UNICEF Senior Management message to UNICEF field offices:** the Deputy Executive Director, Programme, and the Deputy Executive Director, External Relations sent a strong message to CERF-recipient offices highlighting the importance of CERF to UNICEF’s emergency response. They provided specific suggestions for prioritizing preparedness measures, such as contingency agreements and set internal benchmarks for disbursement times to partners.

**Internal benchmarks for disbursement:** Senior management encouraged country offices to institute a benchmark of 30 working days for disbursing CERF funds to implementing partners. Country offices are also encouraged to set a “trigger date” of 20 days to trigger remedial action to ensure funds are disbursed by the 30 day benchmark.

**Updated Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) & Small Scale Funding Agreements (SSFAs) with Implementing Partners**: In March 2015, UNICEF launched a new procedure on working with civil society organizations. The new procedure streamlines processes and enables fast-track response in humanitarian situations. Global benchmarks on finalization of partnerships and disbursement of cash have been established. The roll-out of the CSO procedure is accompanied by a complete set of training materials and resources and dedicated online/onsite capacity building events for UNICEF staff.

**Training sessions on new PCA agreement:** UNICEF has heldin-person trainings with NGO partners in London; with InterAction in Washington; and with ICVA in Geneva. Planning is underway to hold regional training events for partners in Amman, Nairobi, Bangkok and Dakar. A partnership manual was developed to facilitate understanding of the new UNICEF approach and provide information on all new and existing templates used to formalize partnership and transfer resources. An e-learning course for both staff and partners will be developed later this year.

**CERF training with country and regional offices:** This winter, in coordination with the CERF Secretariat, UNICEF conducted a series of webinars to increase awareness amongst UNICEF country offices on the importance of timely disbursement of funds to partners.

The webinars reached a total of 25 countries that regularly receive CERF funds, and the discussions provided the country offices a platform to outline their experiences and propose key areas for improvement. Since the webinars, there has been increased coordination and collaboration with the regional and country offices in tracking timeliness of CERF disbursements.

**Updated UNICEF-CERF guidance:** To enable consistency and accuracy by country offices in their engagement with CERF in the field, UNICEF updated its CERF guidance. New information includes the benchmarks for disbursing CERF funds and additional guidance to help country offices report timelines on CERF sub-grant disbursement to partners.

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