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GLOBAL FUND LAUNCHES ROUND 8, WITH FOCUS ON "DUAL-TRACK" FINANCING

The Global Fund's "Round 8", launched on March 1, is expected to be the biggest Round thus far. No previous Round has involved two-year commitments by the Fund of more than \$1.1 billion. Yet the Fund says that currently, approximately \$2 billion is forecast to be available for Round 8, and that this amount may increase as additional pledges from donors are made.

The most significant new feature in Round 8 is that the Global Fund is recommending that applicants specify one (or more) Principal Recipients (PRs) from the government sector and one (or more) from the various non-government sectors. (This concept is known as dual-track financing.) Applicants that choose not to do so are required to provide reasons.

"Programs supported by the Global Fund are already making a difference worldwide, but much more needs to be done," said Dr Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Fund. "Antiretroviral therapy reaches only 30 percent of those in need, and multidrug-resistant TB looms as a serious threat in many countries. A lot of people at risk of malaria still do not sleep under a bed net or do not have access to treatment. Now is the time for nations to aim high by mobilizing government, NGOs and international partners and submitting even more ambitious proposals for Global Fund financing."

The Round 8 proposal form and various support documents are available in six languages at www.theglobalfund.org/en/apply/call8. Applications must be submitted by 1 July 2008.

The major changes to the Round 8 proposal form compared to the form used for Round 7 are as follows:

- Dual-track financing is recommended, as discussed above.

- The proposal form has been somewhat shortened and simplified – though it will still involve enormous amounts of work by applicants.
- There is now one version of the proposal form for single-country applicants and a different one for multiple-country applicants (i.e. for regional applications).
- Some applicants have to meet certain eligibility criteria before their proposals can be considered by the Fund. There are criteria relating to (a) the income level of the country, (b) the disease burden, (c) the focus of the proposal, and (d) the functioning of the CCM. With respect to the income level of the country, the Fund has adopted a “cost-sharing” formula to replace the concept of “counterpart financing” used in previous rounds. With the new system of “cost sharing,” the Fund has decided to use “national needs” and not “national contributions” as the basis for calculation.
- Proposals from upper-middle income countries must, as in earlier rounds, demonstrate a sufficiently high level of disease burden in order to be eligible for consideration by the Global Fund. But the specific criteria used have changed.
- As was the case in the last two rounds of funding, Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) activities may be included in the proposal, so long as they are integrated into one or more of the disease elements (formerly known as “disease components”) of the proposal. For Round 8, however, applicants may, if they wish, include cross-cutting HSS activities – i.e., activities that impact more than one disease – within one (and only one) disease element, using a separate section of the proposal form reserved for cross-cutting HSS activities.
- If a disease element contains HSS cross-cutting activities, the TRP will be able to recommend for approval (a) both the disease-specific interventions and the cross-cutting HSS activities; or (b) only the disease-specific interventions; or (c) only the cross-cutting HSS activities.
- Several references to community systems strengthening (CSS) have been added to the proposal form in order to (a) stress the importance of the role of the non-government sector in grant implementation, and (b) encourage applicants to include in their applications measures to strengthen community systems necessary to implement Global Fund grants.
- The Round 8 proposal form provides each applicant with an opportunity to identify existing grants that it would like to consolidate with its Round 8 grant (should its Round 8 proposal be accepted for funding).
- The Global Fund has taken several steps to encourage applicants to include gender-sensitive approaches in their Round 8 proposals.
- Round 8 proposals can no longer include requests to cover the costs of operating CCMs, because the Fund has established a separate funding stream for CCM operations.

All proposals submitted by the closing date will be reviewed by the Global Fund Secretariat to ensure that they meet the Fund’s eligibility criteria. Eligible proposals will then be forwarded to the Technical Review Panel (TRP) for consideration. The TRP will make recommendations to the Global Fund Board, which will make its decisions at its board meeting scheduled for 4-5 November 2008. (In the past, all proposals recommended by the TRP for approval have indeed been approved by the Board.)

When the TRP members review the proposals, they will do so in their personal capacities – they must not share the information with or accept any instructions from their employers or their national governments.

In deciding whether to recommend each proposal for approval, the TRP will take into consideration only technical factors, such as whether the project described in the proposal is technically sound, whether it is one that the specified organization(s) are capable of implementing, and whether it represents good use of the money. The TRP is required to ignore the question of whether it believes the Global Fund has enough money to pay for all of the proposals that it is recommending.

Once a proposal is approved by the Board, the Secretariat will enter into a lengthy and complex process of: (a) ensuring that the applicant answers, to the satisfaction of the TRP, any questions that the TRP asked regarding the proposal; (b) assessing the ability of the proposed PRs to perform the roles that the

proposal assigns to them; and (c) negotiating grant agreements with the PRs. It is only after this multi-month process that the first cash disbursement will be sent. Thus, although proposals have to be submitted by 1 July 2008, it is unlikely that the first funding will be sent for successful proposals before the middle of 2009.

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