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## New "Country Team Approach" Adopted for Managing Grants

The Global Fund is making some changes to the way the Secretariat manages grants. A new “country team approach” is being adopted, initially in 13 countries, but it will encompass a further 29 countries by the second quarter of 2011.

The country team approach (CTA) involves creating teams that will bring together operations-focused staff (fund portfolio managers and programme officers) and monitoring and compliance staff (legal, procurement, finance and M&E) to take shared responsibility for grants throughout the entire grant cycle. The Global Fund says that the current approach – whereby grant management functions and monitoring, compliance and legal functions tend to occur separately and sequentially – contributes to delays in signing grants and processing disbursements.

The Global Fund believes that the CTA will produce the following benefits:

- earlier “upstream” identification and joint resolution of potential implementation challenges and compliance issues;
- simplified and better coordinated communication between the Secretariat and implementers;
- increased standardisation of practices across grants and countries; and
- increased Secretariat capacity to support partnership functions at the country level, such as strengthening the CCM’s oversight role and helping to mobilise technical assistance.

The Global Fund also believes that the country team approach will help to enhance the Secretariat’s responsiveness to the findings of audits and investigations by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

The CTA will be applied to what the Global Fund calls “high impact” countries – i.e., countries with large volumes of funding, a multiplicity of grants, complex operations or other challenges. The CTA is being

implemented now in 13 countries. After three months, implementation in these countries will be evaluated, before the approach is expanded to an additional 29 high impact countries.

In the last few months, about 5% of Secretariat staff have been redeployed to support implementation of the CTA.

Because the Secretariat has been asked to propose a zero-growth operating budget for 2011, certain IT projects have been postponed, and cuts have been made in all clusters of the Secretariat and in most activity areas. “Even a major corporate priority such as Resource Mobilization will be subject to a cut of roughly 10 per cent,” said Michel Kazatchkine, the Global Fund’s Executive Director.

#### Other internal reforms

The Secretariat is also instituting other changes to make it more efficient and more responsive to applicants and implementers. These changes include the following:

- The Secretariat is implementing quality control mechanisms for key decision-making processes, including disbursements and periodic reviews. As a result, implementers can expect more consistent decision outcomes, particularly for disbursements.
- The Secretariat is codifying existing best practice into documented Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to provide portfolio managers with technical guidance to manage Global Fund operations. The SOPs will complement the Operational Guide, which was recently released. In addition, the Secretariat will publish Operational Policy Notes (OPNs) on its website by the end of September 2010. The OPNs will provide more details on certain policies and procedures than what is contained in the Operational Guide.
- The Secretariat is working on improving how the Global Fund pro-actively manages risks and responds to OIG requests and findings. The responsibility for this work will reside with the new Country Teams. In addition, a full-time risk management officer in the Country Programs cluster will actively follow up on OIG recommendations.

Most of the information in this article was derived from “An Agenda for a More Efficient and Effective Global Fund,” produced by the Global Fund, which should be available shortly at [www.theglobalfund.org](http://www.theglobalfund.org).

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