

Guidance Note on Responding to COVID-19

4 March 2020

The new coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, can pose a serious threat to vulnerable countries, both through its morbidity and mortality risks and possible knock-on effects on wider health systems. The latter may also affect implementation of Global Fund core programs on HIV, tuberculosis and malaria – epidemics with a combined mortality of almost 3 million patients per year.

While minimizing risks to our core programs, and working within the Global Fund’s mandate to fight HIV, TB and malaria and to strengthen systems for health, the Global Fund is also mindful of its responsibility as a major actor in the broader health and development ecosystem. As was the case with Ebola, the Global Fund is therefore committed to a swift, nimble and pragmatic approach in supporting implementing countries in their fight against COVID-19.

The Global Fund strongly encourages countries to consider and take prompt action to mitigate the potential negative consequences of COVID-19 on existing programs supported by Global Fund grants. Particular attention should be given to health worker protection, communication to affected communities, maintenance of essential services, supply chain coordination, early replenishment of stocks, disinfection of assets, waste management. Related costs may be approved by the Global Fund as eligible expenditure.

To give countries further flexibility in responding to COVID-19, the Global Fund will consider, subject to prior approval:

- Timebound reprogramming of savings under existing grants (up to a limit of 5% of total grant value) and/or;
- Redeployment of resources procured through existing grants, particularly infrastructure and capacities that become under-utilized because of COVID-19.

Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Epidemic preparedness assessment;
- Laboratory testing;
- Sample transportation;
- Use of surveillance infrastructure;
- Infection control in health facilities;
- Information campaigns.

Where there are no savings possible in existing grants or in other exceptional circumstances, an existing grant may be re-programmed up to an additional limit of another 5% of its total value. All activities must follow WHO guidance on COVID-19 preparedness and response. Any request for Global Fund assistance must consider potential negative effects on grant implementation and suggest mitigation actions.

Speed is of the essence in confronting COVID-19 and in managing its potential impact on the fight against HIV, TB and malaria. The Global Fund will therefore deploy a fast-track decision making process with a response time of a maximum of five working days for COVID-19-related requests for support. Any use of Global Fund assets for the COVID-19 response is subject to prior written approval from the Secretariat.