GUIDANCE TO UNITAID GRANT IMPLEMENTERS
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

About this Guidance

1. People in all parts of the world are facing new and unforeseen challenges due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Unitaid remains firmly committed to continuing its ongoing work and to contributing to global efforts to tackle the spread of COVID-19, together with our partners and the international community more broadly.

2. This Guidance provides Unitaid grant implementers direction on how to manage the financial and operational impact of the pandemic on project implementation. It applies with immediate effect through the end of July 2020. We rely on our lead grant implementers to ensure that third-party sub-implementers and contractors are aware of this Guidance.

3. As the situation is evolving, we will continue to monitor and assess the pandemic and will periodically prepare and circulate amended Guidance as the situation requires.

General measures to ensure staff safety and business continuity

4. Unitaid strongly encourages its grant implementers to consider and take prompt action to mitigate the potential negative consequences of COVID-19 in Unitaid project countries. Particular attention should be given to health worker protection, communication to affected communities and maintenance of essential services.

5. During implementation of Unitaid project activities, grant implementers must follow any relevant World Health Organization guidance on COVID-19 preparedness and response. Furthermore, Unitaid requires that its implementers strictly adhere to the policies and laws of the local and national authorities with respect to COVID-19 in Unitaid project countries.

6. We fully support all Unitaid grant implementers that want to take reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their own staff, as well as the staff of third-party implementing partners and contractors who also are working on Unitaid-funded projects. Human health and well-being are a priority, and, within this context, we encourage all implementers to be particularly attentive to the need to protect staff members, particularly those at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

7. In light of this, grant implementers may use funds from current Unitaid project budgets to buy masks and hand sanitizing gels, as well as any protective equipment reasonably required for staff supporting Unitaid grant activities in project countries.

Periodic situation reports

8. Unitaid knows its grant implementers will make their best efforts to monitor and maintain business continuity and operational readiness during these extremely difficult times, with a view to minimizing disruptions to the implementation of projects. We appreciate grantees informing us of any key project activities that are being delayed (or likely to be delayed) due to COVID-19.

9. Unitaid project teams will continue to closely engage with grant implementers through regular communication and touchpoints during the coming weeks and months. Recognising operational and financial challenges, Unitaid implementers are requested to prepare and share periodic situation
reports during these touchpoints that describe at a minimum A) current/anticipated programmatic and financial impacts of the pandemic and B) current/planned mitigation strategies.

10. We encourage grant implementers that have any questions about this Guidance or about Unitaid support during the COVID-19 pandemic to reach out immediately to their Unitaid project team for a rapid response.

**Continued funding of critical project activities**

11. During this challenging period, Unitaid continues to operate virtually and will ensure continuity of funding to sustain project activities throughout its project portfolio.

12. If critical activities are delayed or interrupted, Unitaid will support and fund programmatic and grant management costs to maintain operational readiness during this period, with a view to project implementation activities being resumed at a later date. Specifically, fixed running costs will be eligible for continued funding by Unitaid in the event that project implementation activities are unavoidably suspended during this period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

13. Fixed costs in the current approved budget that are eligible for continued funding during this period include a) staff costs, even for staff who are unable to continue work on the project as a result of the pandemic; b) general administrative costs, using recovery rates agreed in the approved budgets; and c) any other significant costs reasonably required to maintain ongoing critical activities.

14. Activities that a) are not essential to achieving specific time-sensitive deliverables committed to under the grant or b) cannot be feasibly implemented given local/national policies related to COVID-19 should be postponed to the second half of 2020, in order to mitigate the risk of losses and ensure resource deployment is focused and allows the prioritisation of critical project activities.

**Insurance and mitigation of financial losses**

15. Unitaid grant implementers will take all reasonable steps to mitigate unnecessary expenses and losses to their Unitaid-funded project(s). Implementers are expected to actively seek reimbursement (including through any relevant insurance policies) before claiming costs from Unitaid. In the event such necessary costs cannot be successfully reimbursed through insurance, Unitaid will cover costs arising from commitments entered into in good faith prior to the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may include, for example, event cancellation costs (e.g. travel-related costs) or commodity losses (e.g. expired stock).

16. In the event that costs are reimbursed by Unitaid and insurance payments (or other financial support from national governments) covering the same costs are subsequently received, grant implementers are to promptly inform Unitaid of the amount received, and these costs will be offset against future disbursements.