MEASLES RUBELLA OUTBREAK RESPONSE FUND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

A. Introduction:

In June 2012, the GAVI Board has approved 55 million US$ for measles outbreak response and other emerging measles needs in GAVI eligible countries. Measles outbreaks should be addressed through a comprehensive approach that aims to reduce morbidity and mortality by providing appropriate case management and vaccinating individuals at risk. In addition, it should include measures to:

- identify and correct weaknesses in immunization and surveillance;
- identify high-risk groups/areas for implementing strategies to improve vaccination coverage;
- raise awareness in the community about the disease and its prevention.

This document describes the standard operating procedures proposed by the Measles and Rubella (MR) Initiative for the use of these funds.

B. Management and decision making

The MR Initiative core founding partners (Founding Partners) 1 will be responsible for the management and decision making regarding the allocation of the outbreak response funds. The WHO headquarters, Expanded Programme for Immunization (HQ EPI) will provide secretariat support for the management and reporting of the use of the outbreak response funds. If measles outbreaks occur in countries where MSF is present, an MSF representative will be invited to participate in the discussions to improve coordination of the response.

C. Eligibility for use of funds:

All GAVI eligible countries that have a significant measles outbreak of national public health importance AND cannot respond to the outbreak fast enough with local funding (domestic epidemic response funds or donor funding) are eligible to request funding for outbreak response provided they submit the following three documents:

1. A report of the outbreak investigation and risk assessment that should include evidence of a laboratory confirmed measles outbreak that is large and of national public health importance.

2. A plan of action that describes outbreak response activities including:
   - Plans and budget for vaccination activities including identification of the target regions and population.
   - Plans and budget to identify and address causes of the outbreak.
   - Plans for the evaluation of the outbreak investigation and response

3. A cover letter demonstrating commitment from the Ministry of Finance that they can provide or locally raise the remaining needed operational costs.

Countries are also encouraged to officially declare measles outbreaks prior to applying for these funds as this will help in mobilizing domestic and donor emergency funding.

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1 The Measles and Rubella Initiative five core founding partners are ARC, CDC, UNF, UNICEF and WHO
Countries that fulfill the above requirements, and subject to assessment by partners, the request, will be funded for bundled measles vaccine needed for selective vaccinations and/or non-selective vaccination campaigns, plus a maximum of $0.33 as contribution towards the operational costs per targeted person.

In addition to outbreak response immunization activities, the outbreak response funds may be used to support the following as appropriate:

- Funds to WHO Regional offices for technical assistance for outbreak investigation, and response activities.
- A country-level meeting at the end of the outbreak to evaluate the quality of investigation and response and to develop a plan to address causes of outbreaks.
- Catalytic/seed funds to support linkages of outbreak response activities to other ongoing routine and surveillance strengthening activities.
- Development of a national outbreak preparedness plan to improve rapid response and management of future outbreaks.

The outbreak response funds will not support any of the activities listed above if local funding (donor or domestic) is available. Case management and treatment costs will not be covered by the outbreak response funds. In general, these funds will not be used for measles outbreak response in humanitarian emergencies because other partners and funding sources can be mobilized for such purposes.

D. Procedure to access the measles outbreak response fund:

1. The National Health Authority in the affected country requests support for outbreak response through the WHO or UNICEF country office, by submitting the three documents listed in section C (above). The application cover letter should be signed by the national outbreak response committee or its equivalent. The country request is simultaneously submitted to the WHO and UNICEF Regional offices with copy to EPI in WHO headquarters.  

2. HQ EPI alerts UNICEF Supply Division (SD) and the UNF of the country request to allow for rapid transfer of funds and vaccine shipments. This is for information only and no action is needed.

3. The WHO and UNICEF regional offices, with support from the HQ EPI, technically evaluates the request and ensures all the required information for decision making is included in the request documents.

4. Completed requests are submitted by the WHO and UNICEF Regional office to HQ EPI along with the regional focal point’s recommendation and reasons for approval or disapproval.

5. HQ EPI circulates the request on the day of receipt to the Founding Partners and requests a response within 48 hours.

6. Upon the Founding Partners decision on the request, HQ EPI immediately sends an email to UNICEF SD (copying all Founding Partners and WHO and UNICEF regional focal points) with all required information so that UNICEF SD can immediately place an order and ship the vaccines and devices to the country within the required timeframe.

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2 In most countries, the WHO country office will take the lead in the request. However, there might be circumstances where UNICEF takes the lead, and the request will be channeled through UNICEF regional office.
7. UNICEF SD processes the requested supplies to arrive in the country within 10 working days from the date of receipt of funds.\(^3\)

8. The WHO and UNICEF headquarters transfers funds for operational costs to the UN country offices to ensure arrival of the funds within 7 days after approval of the request.

9. The country closely monitors measles surveillance data and progression of the outbreak and adjusts plans according to the epidemiology. The country sends any revised plans to the WHO and UNICEF regional offices and to HQ, EPI.

10. Country MOH staff implements, evaluates and prepares a report on the outbreak response and the country’s plan to address the cause of the outbreak. This report should be completed within 3 months of the disbursement of funds to the county and sent to the WHO regional office and HQ, EPI. In this report the country includes the following information:
   - An Epi curve of the outbreak with the timing of the index case and start of the SIA indicated numbers vaccinated, coverage achieved and impact on the measles outbreak the reasons for the outbreak and why children have been missed for vaccination prior to the outbreak
   - An action plan to address the issues to avoid future outbreaks and to strengthen routine immunization and SIAs.
   - A breakdown of resources used for the outbreak response by source and by activity

11. HQ, EPI reports back to the Founding Partners at the quarterly calls.

At the end of each year, the Founding Partners will carefully evaluate the SOPs, fine tune them to allow the most efficient, and rapid deployment of the outbreak response funds. Any changes to the SOPs will be communicated by the UNF to GAVI, with clear justifications, as part of the annual report to GAVI.

E. Roles and Responsibilities:

**WHO and UNICEF Country Office:**
- Participate in the national outbreak response committee.
- Provide technical assistance to MOH to investigate the outbreak, conduct the risk assessment, prepare the plan of action for outbreak response and prepare the request for outbreak response support.
- Coordinate the submission of the request for MR Initiative outbreak response funds.
- Support the MoH to develop the final country report on the outbreak response and the country’s plan to address the cause of the outbreak. Ensure that this report reaches the MRI within no more than 10 weeks of the disbursement of the outbreak response funds.

**WHO and UNICEF Regional Office:**
- Provide and coordinate external technical support for outbreak investigation, response and evaluation, as well as for the strengthening of measles elimination activities in general following the outbreak.

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\(^3\) This response time applies to vaccine quantities up to 1 million doses for Measles monovalent and 100,000 doses of MR vaccine. This response time also applies to devices in case of air shipment. The lead-time of 3 months is required for sea shipment of devices.
• Coordinate and provide support to countries for the preparation of the request and ensure that the request is complete and contains all the required information for the Founding partners to evaluate the request and make a rapid decision.
• The WHO and UNICEF regional focal point will provide recommendations and reasons for approval or disapproval of the request.

WHO HQ EPI:
• Inform the Founding partners and UNICEF SD of all expected and submitted requests.
• Support the regional offices in evaluating the requests submitted by the country.
• Inform requesting country, UNICEF SD and the Regional offices of the Founding Partners decision regarding the request and actions needed.
• Monitor the status of all requests and report back to the Founding Partners.
• Provide technical support for outbreak investigation and response as requested.
• Keep records of all documentation and correspondence to and from countries relating to the use of these funds.
• Monitor and produce an annual report of the use of the outbreak response funds to the Founding Partners (reports should include a summary of the numbers of requests, amounts requested, outcome of requests, numbers vaccinated and other use of funds given to countries).

Founding Partners (WHO, UNICEF, ARC, UNF, CDC):
• Assess the request to determine if the criteria of using the measles outbreak response funds have been met.
• Within 48 hours of receiving the request, decide by consensus or, if consensus is not achieved, by majority whether or not to accept or reject the country request.
• Provide technical support to countries through their technical partner’s offices and their organization’s networks to improve and to facilitate national preparedness and response to the measles outbreak.

UNF:
• Hold the outbreak response funds on behalf of the MR Initiative.
• Ensure that funds are timely available to UNICEF and to WHO for purchase of supplies and outbreak response activities.
• Report back to GAVI on annual basis (reports should include a summary of the numbers of requests, amounts requested, outcome of requests, numbers vaccinated and other use of funds given to countries).

UNICEF SD:
• Ensures the availability of supplies for use in measles outbreaks.
• Ships bundled measles vaccine within 10 days of receiving the funds from UNF (see footnote 3).