

# The NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project

A chance to influence the humanitarian system



*These agencies collaborate with the Project Steering Group in Afghanistan*

## **Urgent call for donors to resource the Afghan Emergency Response Fund**

The NGO and Humanitarian Reform Project (NHRP) has as its main objective to strengthen the effective engagement of local, national and international humanitarian NGOs in reformed humanitarian financing and coordination mechanisms at the global and country levels. As such, the NHRP highly welcomed the establishment of the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) as an addition to the various humanitarian funding mechanisms in Afghanistan. The ERF is managed by OCHA and has as its primary function to facilitate NGO response to new or newly identified emergencies. The need for increased humanitarian funding has long been expressed by the NGO community in Afghanistan and the establishment of the ERF is a step in the right direction.

The initial target for the ERF in Afghanistan was 5 million USD and the intention has been to have a regular replenishment to ensure a consistent NGO response capacity to smaller emergencies. Since the establishment of the fund in January 2010 the NGO response has been enthusiastic, especially among Afghan NGOs who traditionally experience constraints in accessing direct funding for their operations despite their advantages in accessing insecure areas. A total of 20 proposals have been received by OCHA representing 2 INGOs and 17 NNGOs requiring funds for the areas of Health, Food, Shelter, Protection and WASH. The high number of proposals received in this short time shows that the ERF is filling an important gap in humanitarian NGO funding and ultimately in the assistance provided to communities in need.

Globally donors have been keen to encourage the establishment of ERFs and to subsequently fund them; past reviews have evaluated ERFs as an effective and welcome tool for responding to unforeseen needs and small program gaps.

Despite this excellent opportunity to channel funding to Afghan and International NGOs in an effective, cost efficient way and ultimately meeting desperate humanitarian needs of the population, donors in Afghanistan have yet to meet the initial target of 5 million USD. In fact only one donor has so far supported the fund, SIDA, with a total of 3.5 million dollars and no donors have at this stage pledged a confirmed commitment to support the fund. As a consequence the fund lacks the capacity to meet some of the urgent needs currently created by the Samangan earthquake in which 3.000 families were badly affected and the widespread floods effecting over 10.000 families in 20 provinces. The 20 proposals received so far total the amount of 6.4 million USD, seriously outnumbering the funds available and ultimately complicating the coordinated humanitarian response, leading to potential gaps and urgent, unmet needs, in addition to the risk of fuelling local tensions due to inconsistent and inadequate support. Whether all the proposals would be accepted should the funds exist can be debated but none the less 4 months into becoming operational the fund is being depleted.

The recent quick onset emergencies are only a fraction of what the fund is intended to support, the intensification of the conflict has lead to increased humanitarian needs among conflict affected populations and upcoming military surges will require the humanitarian community to be prepared to respond.

**We urge the donor community to apply the Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship. We also urge donors to not only meet the target size of the ERF budget, but to also ensure the consistent replenishment of the fund and thereby resource the operational humanitarian community to uphold the humanitarian imperative and respond accordingly to the urgent needs of the Afghan population.**