Fast Track

Introduction

1. Please note that this section presents programme and operations policies related to fast track. In order to activate fast track policies and procedures please visit the main fast track decision centre site.

2. The speed with which UNDP can deliver programmes and projects, or provide services, is highly contingent on the key operational procedures that need to be followed in order to procure goods and services, recruit short-term or long-term human resource capacities, or to make financial payments. The speed at which these operations are carried out becomes even more critical when responding to a crisis, or to a situation where UNDP’s relevance and credibility are highly dependent on a time-bound delivery. The policy for fast-track procedures makes specific provisions to enable a significant reduction in the time it takes to carry out some of these key operational procedures.

3. The strategy for fast-tracking UNDP’s crisis response contains three categories of provisions, namely:
   a) A set of Policies and Procedures that would come into effect during well-defined Fast Track situations (FTP)
   b) Fast Tracking of UNDP’s response through Preparedness
   c) Changes in policies and procedures which could be implemented ‘across-the-board’ for all situations

Activating Fast Track

4. This content presents information relating to the following areas for the Fast Track Policies (FTP):
   a) Activation
   b) Duration
   c) Limitations and scope
   d) Extension
   e) Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
   f) Exceptional requests

5. The following text from the “Strategy for Fast-Tracking UNDP’s Crisis Response” (March 2010) relates to activation and limitations of the FTP and forms a basis for the procedures that follow.

Fast Track Policy: Section II, parts 1 and 2:

1 – FTP activation triggers
The FTP may be triggered and formally activated online by the Resident Representative if at least one of the following three events has taken place:

a) A crisis has been declared by the Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) or the UN Country Team (UNCT);

b) An emergency grant has been approved by BCPR;

c) SURGE support has been activated.

The FTP may also be formally activated by the Resident Representative outside the context of an acute crisis, e.g., when a strategic and/or time-critical response is needed to maintain UNDP’s credibility and relevance. In such a case, the respective Regional Bureau (RB) is informed by the Resident Representative that the Fast Track procedures are initiated, and the RB would have 48 hours to object if necessary. If the Regional Bureau does not concur with the Resident Representative’s assessment of the situation, direct contact must be made by the Bureau with the Resident Representative within this 48 hour period. Fast Track Procedures will then be put on hold pending approval or rejection by the Regional Bureau, which retains full oversight accountability.

The following definitions apply for the terms ‘strategic’ and ‘time-critical’;

Strategic:
Used in this context to describe situations where UNDP involvement in a crisis, or rapid expansion of UNDP programmes in a specific context, is considered essential for delivering development results, to remain relevant, and to maintain or build the organization’s reputation;

Time Critical:
Used in this context to denote the need to deliver development results within a very short or medium-term timeframe within which UNDP must make a contribution or impact in order to remain a relevant player in the development arena.

2 – FTP limitations and duration

The FTP apply to the entire UNDP operations in programme and management areas, as in the case of a crisis affecting the entire country such as an earthquake. The FTP may also be applied to projects which are specific to a crisis response, or those projects that fall within the framework of the ‘strategic and time-critical’ response. In rare circumstances, they may be applied more broadly to a specific business area when a crisis has affected Country Office (CO) operations or national mechanisms (e.g., no operational banking system, in which case FTP may apply to all payments). The FTP scope and limitations must be specified at the time of activation, while also taking into account any potential impacts on UNDP’s role and relationships within the UN Country Team. It should be noted that an ongoing focus on crisis

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1 A global system has been developed for activating FTP, which requires completion of an FTP Activation Form, and a CO Capacity Assessment Form. It enables on-line tracking and monitoring of the use of this facility.
preparedness by country offices will ensure an accurate assessment of the required scope and duration of FTP at the onset of any Fast Track situation.

The FTP may initially be activated for any period of time up to 12 months, with the RB having the authority, in consultation with BMS, BCPR and the CO, to discontinue it at any point, as part of its oversight role. At the end of 12 months, a joint review between the CO and the RB must take place, based on which the RB, in consultation with BMS and BCPR, may approve an extension if required.

6. On Activation, Country Offices are required to complete a Fast Track Activation Form. This form contains essential information regarding the triggering condition for fast track along with information summarizing the current capacity of the Country Office.

7. The inputs required for the Fast Track Activation Form are;

a) Fast Track Activation – Main Section
   i) Location – (Country Office)
   ii) Trigger – (Please select which Fast Track activation trigger(s) apply. i) Crisis Declared; ii) An emergency grant has been approved by BCPR; iii) Surge support has been activated; iv) Strategic and/or time-critical response is required.)
   iii) Brief Description - (Please provide a brief description of the situation including any information relating to the trigger specified above. Additional documentation, if required, may be attached using the “Attach File” option above.)
   iv) Activation Date v) Expiry Date
   vi) Limitation Projects (Please specify the programmes and projects to which Fast Track Policies and Procedures will be specifically restricted. All other programmes and projects will continue to apply standard policies and procedures. If the FTP are to be applied to all programmes and projects this should be clearly stated.)
   vii) Limitation Business Areas (Please specify any business area to which Fast Track Policies and Procedures will be specifically restricted, only if FTP applies across the board to a given functional area instead of a specific programme or project. All other business areas will continue to apply standard policies and procedures. If the FTP are to be applied to all business areas please select ‘None’.)
   viii) Limitation Geographical Areas (Please specify any geographical areas to which FTP will be restricted. e.g. certain project sites or areas affected by localized natural disasters).
   ix) Single Signatory Bank Account (Please specify if single signatory is required for any locally domiciled and Zero Balance Accounts. Please note that Treasury will act on this to inform the bank of requirements and the Country Office must update Treasury on a monthly basis of any continuing need for this facility. Please include detailed reasons and justification for single signatory operation of bank accounts and the proposed safeguards to be taken to ensure adequate control.)

b) Country Office Capacity Assessment Section
This section requires the input of some basic information about staffing levels in the Country Office. The information is intended to serve as a reference if any specific capacity gaps exist. Please select the options that describe the Country Office. Additional relevant information can be added in the final textbox.

i) Assessment Date (Please list the date for which the below information is valid.) ii) RC/RR Position Vacant (Yes/No) iii) CD Position Vacant? (Yes/No/Doesn’t Exist) iv) Deputy CD/Deputy RR Programme Vacant? (Yes/No/Doesn’t Exist) v) Deputy CD/Deputy RR Operations Vacant? (Yes/No/Doesn’t Exist) vi) Operations Manager Position Vacant? (Yes/No/Doesn’t Exist) vii) Number of filled positions for following categories;

- Procurement Professionals
- Procurement General Service
- Human Resources Professionals
- Human Resources General Service
  - Finance Professionals
  - Finance General Service
- Project Management Professionals
- Project Management General Services
  - ICT Professionals
  - ICT General Services viii) Capacity Gap Being Experienced - Please list any specific capacity gap being experienced by the Country Office. (Procurement, Finance, Human Resources Management, Project Management, ICT Professionals, ICT General Services, Specify your own value) ix) Any additional information on current CO Capacity

c) Resident Representative Approval Section

i) Approved By (Resident Representative name and email address)

ii) Submit for RR Approval? (The RR will receive an email containing a link. To approve the activation, the RR must click the link and approve online on the website presented. If you wish to save this form without the above notification to the RR, and return to it later, click 'No'.)

Activation

8. The FTP may be triggered and formally activated online. If considering activation, please review this site which includes guidance on information required to activate. The following are the key considerations for the activation process.
9. One or more of four applicable events is required to activate the Fast Track Policies and Procedures (FTP). Based on the Fast Track strategy these are defined as follows:
   a) Crisis Declared - the UNCT have agreed a common position on a crisis situation articulated by the UNRC and engaged in emergency response activities signified by one or more of the following actions: a Humanitarian Coordinator has been appointed; a Flash Appeal is under preparation; the Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has engaged in emergency response actions and activated the cluster system based on a request from the national authorities.
   b) An emergency grant has been approved by BCPR. An “emergency grant” is defined as being TRAC III, Category II. Information on TRAC III, category II, can be found in the ‘Resources for Special Development Situations’ section of POPP.
   c) SURGE support has been activated.
   d) A strategic and/or time-critical response is needed to maintain UNDP’s credibility and relevance outside the context of an acute crisis.

10. With regard to d) above, as per the Fast Track Strategy quoted above, the following definitions apply for the terms ‘strategic’ and ‘time-critical’;

   **Strategic:**
   Used in this context to describe situations where UNDP involvement in a crisis, or rapid expansion of UNDP programmes in a specific context, is considered essential for delivering development results, to remain relevant, and to maintain or build the organization’s reputation;

   **Time Critical:**
   Used in this context to denote the need to deliver development results within a very short or medium-term timeframe within which UNDP must make a contribution or impact in order to remain a relevant player in the development arena.

**Fast Track Activation and Approval Process:**

11. The online system automatically generates notifications of the activation sent to the following personnel/units;
   a) Deputy Directors for relevant Regional Bureau
b) Head of Regional Service Centre  
c) Regional Bureau Crisis Focal Point  
d) Executive Office  
e) Deputy Director BCPR  
f) Deputy Directors BMS  
g) Procurement Support Office/BMS  
h) Office of Human Resource/BMS (SAS Management, including BAS regional advisor)  
i) Organizational Development Unit/Office of Human Resource/BMS  
j) Chief of Recruitment/OHR/BMS  
k) Advisory Committee on Procurement Chair/BMS  
l) Regional Advisory Committee on Procurement Chair/BMS (for relevant region)  
m) Office of Finance and Administration/BMS  
n) Office of Information Systems & Technology/BMS  
o) Office of Planning and Budget/BMS Focal Point for relevant region  
p) Security Office/BMS  
q) Partnership Bureau (Partnership Review Group)  
r) Office of Audit and Investigations  

12. The Country Office is encouraged, unless urgency dictates otherwise, to discuss the potential use of the FTP with the Regional Bureau (RB) in advance of activation. As noted above, the RB is notified immediately once the online activation is complete. Unless there are any objections within the 48 hour period a confirmation email will be sent to note the approval of the use of FTP. If any questions are raised, the activation will be put on hold while these are addressed.

13. The online site maintains a database of FTP activations. If there are questions relating to activation please contact the BMS and BCPR Fast Track Focal Points, contacts for whom are available on the main fast track site.

14. If lack of internet connectivity prevents activating online (e.g. where whole country telecoms infrastructure have been affected by a crisis), the CO is encouraged to make contact with the Regional Bureau through other means. The RB, together with fast track focal points in BMS and BCPR will assist in registering the activation of fast track and notifying the relevant units of such activation.

**Duration**

15. During activation, the Country Office, under the authority of the Resident Representative, specifies an activation date and an expiry date for the FTP. The expiry date can be any date up to 12 months from the activation date. The online site will store all information related to Fast Track activations.
16. One month prior to expiry, an automatic email from the online system is sent to all parties noting the approach of the expiry date for the specific Country Office. In the Country Office, the Resident Representative, Deputy Resident Representative(s) and Operations Manager will be notified. The Country Office should consider whether there is a need to extend the application of FTP. If not extending, no specific action is required (apart from normal reporting requirements) and on the expiry date, an automatic email is sent to all parties to note the expiry of FTP.

**Limitations and scope**

17. During activation, any limitations of the application of Fast Track Policies and Procedures should be specified on the online site, whether along project or operational lines.

   a) Limitation Projects (Please specify the programmes and projects to which Fast Track Policies and Procedures will be specifically restricted. All other programmes and projects will continue to apply standard policies and procedures. If the FTP are to be applied to all programmes and projects this should be clearly stated.)

   b) Limitation Business Areas (Please specify any business area to which Fast Track Policies and Procedures will be specifically restricted, only if FTP applies across the board to a given functional area instead of a specific programme or project. All other business areas will continue to apply standard policies and procedures. If the FTP are to be applied to all business areas please select ‘None’.)

   c) Limitation Geographical Areas (Please specify any geographical areas to which FTP will be restricted. e.g. Certain project sites or areas affected by localized natural disasters).

18. If the FTP are to be applied to all programmes and operational areas for the Country Office, this should be stated in the **Brief Description** and **Limitation Projects** areas of the application.

19. A Country Office that requires FTP to be applied to any **remote support** received should specify this in the activation, under **Brief Description** and **Limitation Projects** to ensure that supporting units are notified and act within the FTP policy to deliver such support. This remote support, for example in procurement or recruitment services, may be extended from a Regional Service Center, Headquarters, or a neighboring Country Office. The responsibility for informing the relevant supporting unit lies with the Country Office. As with all areas of Fast Track, if the Regional Bureau or any interested party has specific concerns with the application of Fast Track to remote support units, this should be raised at time of activation.

20. If considering applying the Fast Track Policies and Procedures to the **operational and administrative services** that UNDP provides to other UN agencies please contact the Fast Track focal points at BMS and BCPR. They will confirm whether the relevant agency has agreed to have FTP apply to these services. If agreement exists, the authority to apply FTP to these services lies with the Resident Representative and any extension to services supporting other agencies must be detailed in the application in the **Brief Description** and **Limitation Projects** areas of the application. The Country Office is encouraged to obtain written agreement at the Country Team level that the agency concerned agrees to the application of Fast Track to the services.
Extension

21. One month prior to expiry, an automatic email from the online system is sent to all parties noting the approach of the expiry date for the specific Country Office. The Country Office should consider whether there is a need to extend the application of FTP. If not extending, no specific action is required (apart from normal reporting requirements) and on the expiry date, an automatic email is sent to all parties to note the expiry of FTP.

22. If the Country Office is considering extending, the following actions are required.
   a) The CO should initiate dialogue with the RB on receipt of the above system notification. The RB should include BMS and BCPR as per the policy text in the introduction above. The Fast Track focal points in BMS and BCPR should also be copied so as to prepare any adjustments to the online information.
   b) The Executive Office, and other units, will be notified as per the standard activation process. BMS and BCPR will offer guidance on applications to extend fast track as needed and on a case-by-case basis.
   c) If agreement is reached, the CO must update the relevant online form with the new expiry date, and any additional information of changes (e.g., additional projects, projects where FTP no longer applies) at least 1 week prior to expiry.
   d) This updated form follows a similar approval process as original activation, except for a five working day evaluation period given to allow for assessments, discussion, objection or “putting extension on hold”. The RR must confirm the updated information and once this is done, RB, BMS, BCPR and other parties are notified as normal.
   e) If approved, the online system sends an email to all parties to advise of the updated status.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

23. At the end of the application of the Fast Track period, the Country Office will be asked to submit a report on usage. The format for this report is available online, and will be provided to the Operations Manager on activation. Since the Fast Track Policies and Procedures are for application during crisis situations and special development situations, further reporting requirements during this period have intentionally not been added. However, compilation of notes on usage during the application of Fast Track is encouraged to ensure that lessons and feedback are captured.

24. Where it is possible to capture usage through ATLAS reporting (such as for low-value-shopping) it is not necessary to capture this information on a day-by-day basis.

25. The reporting format encourages feedback on the usefulness of the FTP, and suggestions for improvement may also be provided. Reports on Fast Track usage will be filed in UNDP Intranet.
26. This usage report should be filed with the Regional Bureau and Fast Track Focal Points in BMS and BCPR. The report will also be stored alongside activation information on the online Fast Track site.

27. The increased flexibility of the Fast Track Policies and Procedures does not eliminate the need for the usual standards of accountability which continue to apply across all actions.

**Exceptional requests**

28. Given the unique nature of different crises and special development circumstances, Country Offices may make an exceptional request for variation or suspension of specific policies and procedures as mentioned in the Fast Track Strategy (“Strategy for Fast-Tracking UNDP’s Crisis Response”). Country Offices should address such requests to their Regional Bureaux through the Fast Track mechanism, copying the Fast Track Focal Points of BMS and BCPR. These requests will then be analyzed and responded to in a timely manner, after consultation with any relevant business units at headquarters. Requests for the suspension of specific components of UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP) shall be reviewed by the Executive Team, chaired by the Associate Administrator, to evaluate the situations in countries in crisis or in protracted or prolonged crisis mode. This means that UNDP Country Offices will no longer have the decentralized authority to suspend policies and procedures as was the case in the chapter of Programming in Special Development Situations in the previous and expired Policies and Procedures Manual (PPM). Instead they now have the authority to activate the Fast Track procedures as and when justified.

29. Country Offices already designated as Special Development Situations under the previous and expired PPM should, if still required, use the Fast Track Procedures and its Exceptional Requests mechanism to seek a renewed status, once the current designation expires.

**Deliverables**

a) On completing the activation process, a record for the specific case of FTP is created and stored in the online site.

b) The online system automatically generates notifications of the Fast Track Activation sent to the relevant staff/units listed in Section “Activation” above. The steps above will ensure that this will include clear details of the duration and limitations of the application of Fast Track for each case of activation.

c) Once FTP is approved a second automatic email confirms approval and lists the increased Delegated Procurement Authority assigned to the Resident Representative. This email should be filed in the Country Office, PSO and ACP as documentation of this increased authority.

d) At the end of the FTP period, a usage report should be completed and filed with the Regional Bureau and Fast Track Focal Points in BMS and BCPR.
## Roles and Responsibilities

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| Resident Representative | - Confirmation of crisis criteria used for activation of FTP  
- Identification of strategic and/or time critical situation if this option is used to activate FTP.  
- Fast Track Activation Form completed online.  
- Online activation of FTP (via confirmation email sent from system to RR once form is complete)  
- Notification of activation and expiry date for FTP to all Country Office staff. | - Fast Track Activation Form may be completed online by Country Office staff member but must be confirmed by RR.  
- Fast Track Activation Form should include the following:  
  - Specification of limitations of application of Fast Track Policies and Procedures by project or functional area.  
  - Specification of any Operational and Administrative Services to other UN agencies to which FTP will be applied (if global agreement is in place).  
  - Specification of any remote support to which the FTP will apply.  
  - Summary figures on current Country Office capacity. |
<p>| Regional Bureau Director | - Fast Track is approved unless the activation is contested by the Regional Bureau within 48 hours. The activation may be put on hold, at the request of the Regional Bureau, if further discussion is required. | - Regional Bureau should immediately inform the CO if activation is to be put on hold pending discussion. |
| Regional Bureau Crisis Focal Point | - Notify relevant Regional Bureau Country Advisor and any other relevant Regional Bureau staff. | |</p>
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| BMS and BCPR      | · Liaise with Regional Bureau on notification of FTP activation.  
· If required, input to assessment of rational for activation in support of RB review of FTP situation.  
· BMS Fast Track focal point will ensure notification of relevant BMS units that will be required to offer specific support including PSO/BMS, ACP/BMS, OHR/BMS, OFRM/BMS, SO/BMS. Due to its key role in communications and partnerships, the Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy (BERA), the Partnerships Bureau will be notified by the BMS Fast Track Focal Point. | |
| BMS               | · Notification, in case of capacity issues, regarding access to necessary support. | · If specific capacity gaps are identified in operational areas, BMS will offer advice on mechanisms to address such gaps. This may include, among other mechanisms, training, remote support or detail assignments. |

30. As noted in Section “Monitoring, evaluation and reporting” above, the increased flexibility of the Fast Track Policies and Procedures does not eliminate the need for the usual standards of accountability which continue to apply across all actions.