Briefing: Programme Guidance on Engaging with Non-State Entities in Humanitarian Action

I. ISSUE:
The Programme Guidance on Engaging with Non-State Entities in Humanitarian Action has been finalized. The guidance has been drafted with wide consultation in the organization as well as with partners, including OCHA and ICRC.

II. MAIN POINTS:
The guidance is aimed at senior staff, but all programme staff in relevant countries should have some familiarity with the document. The guidance is meant to give managers the confidence to engage with non-state entities when this is necessary to reach programme goals, while at the same time ensure that risks arising from this engagement are managed at the appropriate level. Engagement with NSEs is often the only way to reach the most difficult to reach children, living outside of government-controlled areas. The guidance was developed as a result of demand from field colleagues, as well as following the EMOPS briefing to the incoming Executive Director in April 2010.

Applicable International Legal and Normative Framework - The guidance identifies all legal and normative frameworks that are applicable for UNICEF staff when engaging with NSEs. Being able to use these frameworks is especially important when managers are faced with political pressures. This guidance serves as a brief reference document for UNICEF staff.

Decision to engage with NSEs – The guidance examines decision-making on engagement with NSEs, including the issues that should be taken into consideration when making decisions. The guidance includes a practitioner’s checklist, with very specific steps, including who to call in Headquarters in urgent cases (the Director of EMOPS) and how to reach the Director (through OPSCEN).

Modalities of engagement - A principled approach to negotiation is not easy and may repeatedly be dismissed by NSEs wanting tangible benefits for their cooperation. However, UNICEF staff should not offer any status or legitimacy, allow any privileged treatment or promise any kind of favours or rewards in exchange for meeting UNICEF’s demands. The guidance therefore also includes a section on modalities of engagement, to help staff select the appropriate modalities.

Risk management - Engaging with NSEs entails numerous risks to UNICEF and partners, and our ability to deliver programmes for children. The guidance therefore includes a section for risk management; it includes suggested categories of risks to consider; the importance of assessing risks in a structured way, analyzing the impact and likelihood of threats, using the UNICEF Enterprise Risk Management Policy guidance.

Resources – Organizational resources are listed, including the services EMOPS can provide through partnerships, remote or in-country direct technical support, or through the Community of Practice on the UNICEF Intranet.