



Introduction

In line with the Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF) of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the CERF secretariat commissions three to five reviews annually on the value added by CERF. These reviews are conducted by independent evaluation experts. Between 2010 and 2014, 18 reviews covering 23 countries were completed (three reviews examined regional crises in West Africa, the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa).

In 2014, the CERF secretariat commissioned three independent reviews to examine the value added by CERF to the humanitarian responses in Sudan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Myanmar.

The Myanmar country review focused on 2013 and 2014 when three CERF grants (two grants for Underfunded Emergencies (UFE) and one grant for Rapid Response (RR)) were allocated totalling just under \$13.5 million. This amount was allocated to 25 projects designed to address the humanitarian impact of conflict-related displacement in Rakhine and Kachin states. According to data from the Financial Tracking Service,¹ CERF funds accounted for 8.8 per cent of the total humanitarian funding allocated to Myanmar in 2013 and 3.3 per cent in 2014. The field visits for this review took place in October 2014.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

This summary outlines the main findings and recommendations of the review and highlights the areas in which CERF added value to humanitarian action in Myanmar. Additional information is available in the report itself which can be found on CERF's website.² The views expressed in the report and in this summary are those of the consultant.

Main Findings

Key findings coming out of the review are highlighted below; the report contains a more detailed discussion:

- Availability of CERF funding recognized by recipient agencies as being fundamental to the ability to respond to life saving needs and gaps in Myanmar
- CERF added value to the humanitarian response in Myanmar in a number of ways during 2013-2014. CERF-supported activities were closely aligned with priorities identified by sectors/clusters included in Humanitarian Response Plans. CERF played an important gap-filling role, notably with regard to meeting humanitarian needs in sites for internally displaced people (IDPs) with infrastructure, food aid and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) support.
- CERF also helped leverage donor confidence for future contributions. For example, UNFPA used CERF funds under the 2014 UFE allocation as a strategic "catalyst" to reinforce their presence along with a national partner in order to scale up their activities for prevention of gender-based violence (GBV). This led to additional funding from one donor as well as likely support from several donors to a multi-year programme.
- To some extent CERF grants played a convening role in Myanmar. Good practice examples include a joint WASH and Shelter/Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) proposal for Kachin in 2014 that helped to ensure compatibility of shelter and WASH designs. CERF allocations also facilitated collaboration between UNFPA and UNICEF to prevent gender-based violence.
- There was effective communication between the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), cluster members and OCHA regarding the availability of CERF funding. For 2013 RR and UFE grants, CERF allocations, eligibility criteria and application processes were discussed during both HCT and cluster meetings, in which non-governmental organisations (NGOs) participated.
- However, in 2014 a lack of leadership of the CERF process and the hurried nature of the UFE prioritisation contributed to a shared feeling of frustration among HCT members. Most HCT members felt that the CERF prioritization processes could be significantly improved.
- Most CERF recipient agencies made genuine attempts to involve partners in proposal development, but participation of partners was at times limited by time constraints and capacity, especially of local partners working in non-government controlled areas in Kachin.

¹ <http://fts.unocha.org/>

² <http://www.unocha.org/cerf/reportsevaluations/evaluations/country-reviews/performance-and-accountability-framework>

- The sectoral coverage and division of funds among agencies was viewed to be good, taking into consideration the needs on the ground and funding from other sources.
- Agencies in Myanmar are making efforts to increase community participation and the WASH cluster has commissioned a review looking at Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). However, HCT members acknowledged more should be done to improve AAP. This issue goes beyond CERF-funded action.
- There was general satisfaction among recipient agencies in Myanmar regarding the timeliness of approval and disbursement processes at the level of the CERF Secretariat. Among other positive effects, the timeliness of the CERF RR funding facilitated a timely response to reduce risks to a vulnerable population of some 69,000 displaced people living in flood-prone areas in Rakhine state.
- According to agency reports, 40 per cent of CERF funds were sub-granted to implementing partners (compared to about 20 per cent globally). Most of these funds were contracted to national NGOs.
- The time taken for CERF funds to be transferred from recipient agency headquarters to their country office in Myanmar and on to implementing partners varied considerably. While delays occurred, timeliness of transfers did not always affect implementation, and there were several instances of NGO partners starting activities with their own funds once the CERF allocation had been approved.
- There is good coordination between CERF and the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) in Myanmar given that CERF and ERF allocation processes are managed by the same unit in OCHA. The ERF uses the CERF life-saving criteria to guide allocations. An example of complementary use of the two Funds was observed in an IDP camp in Rakhine where a NGO implementing WASH activities had used ERF funds to procure water storage tanks to improve the functioning of a water system that it had installed using CERF funds made available via UNICEF.
- A CERF After-Action Review (AAR) was carried out in December 2013 but the HCT did not find it useful. The HCT recommended that for future CERF allocations, the AAR should be done at the level of the inter-cluster coordination group.
- HCT members generally felt it was a useful approach to use the PAF to facilitate a participative reflection by the HCT to assess performance on use of CERF³.

Recommendations

The recommendations proposed by the consultant in the report are separately targeted at the RC/HC and HCT, OCHA Myanmar, the CERF secretariat and specific recipient agencies. Find below a summary of recommendations. For full details please refer to the review report.

RC/HC and Humanitarian Country Team in Myanmar:

Recommendations targeted at the RC/HC and HCT highlight the need for stronger leadership of CERF processes and suggest the introduction of user-friendly tools to facilitate decision-making. Other recommendations targeted at the HCT include covering remaining critical humanitarian needs, more systematically addressing accountability to affected populations and improving the utility of AARs:

- Strengthen leadership of CERF processes. As highlighted in the Five-Year Global Evaluation of CERF, a critical factor for effective use of CERF resources is joint leadership from the Humanitarian Coordinator, sector/cluster coordinators and the OCHA country presence.
- Request OCHA Myanmar and sector coordinators to support the development and testing of resource allocation tools to facilitate needs-based decision-making based on priorities.
- An alternative approach to AAR in Myanmar should be developed involving OCHA, CERF focal points in different agencies and cluster coordinators.
- HCT members should carry out a self-assessment of accountability to affected populations for their agencies and their partners to identify key gaps and develop an action plan to address gaps.
- Provision of cooking fuel has long been recognised as a critical humanitarian gap that would have potentially qualified for CERF support. The HCT should take appropriate action to ensure this gap is addressed, whether with CERF support or from other sources.

³ Annex 1 of the review report presents the outcome of the assessment exercise.

OCHA Myanmar:

Recommendations targeted at OCHA Myanmar suggest a key supporting role of the office to facilitate needs-based decision-making by the HCT and improve the utility of AARs; ways to increase coverage of CERF-related orientation and training; and enhancing complementarity with other emergency funding.

- Support the HCT and Inter-Cluster Coordination Mechanism (ICCM) in developing and testing appropriate resource allocation tools to facilitate needs-based decision-making on priority interventions.
- For orientation on humanitarian financing, employ a "Training of Trainers" approach targeted at cluster coordinators and CERF focal points to improve understanding of CERF processes at all levels⁴.
- Facilitate discussions within clusters on the use of funding streams (e.g. how CERF complements the ERF and other emergency funding).
- Support the HCT in finding an AAR process that maximises its added value.

CERF Secretariat:

Recommendations targeted at the CERF secretariat encourage additional support for recipient countries to facilitate needs-based prioritisation and decision-making by HCTs and improve the utility of AARs. Other recommendations relate to regularly updating CERF's PAF to ensure it remains a relevant measurement tool. Finally, with visits to project sites now becoming a routine part of CERF reviews, it is recommended that, whenever feasible, future CERF reviews attempt to look more systematically at outcomes.

- Reinforce guidance for prioritisation processes with examples of tools that HCTs and cluster leads can use when facilitating HCT or inter-cluster discussions.
- Review the AAR guidance based on lessons learned and develop a toolkit for field-based staff. Include appropriate indicators for the AAR in a future revision of the PAF.
- Improve guidance on conflict sensitivity in the PAF for application in operating contexts similar to Myanmar.
- Increase the relevance and utility of the CERF PAF by:
 - Agree on a fixed lifespan for the CERF PAF so that it can be revised periodically to ensure that it remains relevant.
 - Ensure the PAF reflects current quality and accountability commitments (e.g. the Transformative Agenda).
 - Revising CERF reporting formats to be more closely aligned with the PAF in a user-friendly "dashboard format" to make it easy to identify areas of concern, track progress, and help to raise the awareness of recipient agencies on accountability.
- Future CERF country reviews should use the PAF assessment tool to facilitate HCT discussions on CERF processes and performance, and should also allow HCT members and other key humanitarian stakeholders to provide standardised feedback and suggestions on the review process and format.
- With heightened awareness and interest amongst agency staff about CERF objectives and processes, there is an opportunity for exploring more in-depth outcome-level measurement. This could involve revising the scope of the CERF reviews to better integrate site visits.

UN Agencies in Myanmar:

Finally, the review made three agency specific recommendations related to clarification of agency strategies vis-à-vis CERF allocations, better reporting on agency funding status in support of prioritisation efforts and improving agency contracting processes to ensure timely disbursement of funds to implementing partners.

⁴ Since the review the CERF secretariat has conducted a training in Myanmar