

Introduction

Since the last update provided to the CERF Advisory Group (AG) for its spring 2014 meeting, the CERF secretariat has continued development of its Grant Management System (GMS). Developed over the course of several years and rolled out in early 2014, the GMS aims to increase efficiency, accountability, and transparency. Uniquely tailored to the needs of CERF, the GMS is both a workflow and data repository system that meets the management and accountability needs of the CERF secretariat in a comprehensive manner, replacing largely manual processes and fragmented systems of the past.

The new system makes it easier for the CERF secretariat to review and process an average of 520 proposals per year¹. The entire review, approval, disbursement, revision and reporting process takes place within the GMS, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clear at each step. Data on applications and projects, as well as on the review process including timeliness, is collected by default and stored in a database. The GMS automatically publishes real-time grant information on the CERF website and sends relevant funding data to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS). It also enables CERF to publish humanitarian financing data on all allocations and contributions according to the standards of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), and provide data for other purposes as required.

With the introduction of additional modules over the past two years, the GMS now serves as the secretariat's main tool for workflow and data management related to:

- Recording and tracking of donor contributions,
- Review and approval of applications and project proposals and disbursement of project grants,
- Generation of pre-populated Interim Update provided to Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) upon Application approval to facilitate monitoring of implementation,
- Review and decision on revision requests to existing projects,
- Generation of pre-populated reporting templates and report-related email communications to simplify RC/HCs reporting process,
- Review, revision, approval and storage of narrative reports submitted by RC/HCs on the use of CERF funds,
- Consolidated real-time data repository and reporting platform for all CERF allocation and project data from 2006 till today.

With the completion of an additional module on financial reports expected by the end of the year, the GMS will cover the entire CERF project cycle from initial application, to possible revisions as well as narrative and financial reporting. Opportunities for potential efficiency gains by opening part of the GMS up to external partners will be explored.

Introduction of the GMS has entailed considerable efficiency gains for the CERF secretariat. The system automatically generates standard emails, notifications, letters, and memoranda, and collects

¹ It should be noted that the CERF secretariat has successfully brought down the number of projects in recent years (from 588 in 2014 to 463 in 2015 and less than 400 in 2016 to date) by encouraging countries to submit a lower number of high value projects. This reduces transaction costs and increases efficiency.

data on projects and their review, thereby reducing the need for manual drafting of documents and data entry.

In addition, several features of the GMS improve accountability. Workflow processes are guided by GMS generated tasks assigned to relevant staff. This ensures that roles and responsibilities are clear at each step of the process and that the full cycle is managed and monitored in the system. Data on the review, approval, and disbursement are automatically collected by the GMS, providing a record for each application and project. The status of each project under review is displayed in a dashboard, allowing CERF to monitor the timeliness of the review. The GMS provides complete access to the data for all applications and projects. Projects and applications can be filtered by country, agency, funding window and numerous other criteria, and the resulting reports can easily be customized by selecting which information should be included. This ensures that roles and responsibilities are clear at each step of the process.

The GMS also increases transparency by making all the data on CERF grants available in one system. The system automatically sends CERF funding data to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) and to the CERF website when projects are approved and when funding is disbursed. It provides public data according to the standards of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and for other purposes, as required. Customized reports can easily be generated from the data, to give an overview of funding statistics and timeliness at both application and project level. In the future, the GMS will also provide enhanced data to the CERF website for real-time graphs, tables, and maps showing CERF allocations and for an internal business intelligence dashboard.

The remainder of this note will provide an overview of the major new developments to the system since the last update was provided to the Advisory Group.

Contribution Management

The donor contributions module enables GMS users to enter, view and track all donors and contributions as well as their respective status in the system. The GMS also exchanges donor contribution data with the financial tracking service (FTS) and publish this data on the CERF website directly through a new interface that allows stakeholders and the public easy access to GMS data².

Contribution Management								
		Contribution Code	Donor	Donor Type	Year	Status	Received (USD)	Received Date
		16-DC-FIN-049	Finland	Member State	2016	Commitment	0.00	
		15-DC-CIV-076	Côte d'Ivoire	Member State	2015	Received	10,000.00	12/09/2016
		16-DC-PER-048	Peru	Member State	2016	Received	3,972.91	03/08/2016
		16-DC-ESP-047	Spain	Member State	2016	Received	2,245,000.00	04/10/2016
		16-DC-PAK-047	Pakistan	Member State	2016	Received	10,000.00	19/07/2016
		16-DC-ITA-046	Italy	Member State	2016	Commitment	0.00	
		16-DC-KAZ-045	Kazakhstan	Member State	2016	Received	10,000.00	28/06/2016

Screenshot of contributions management module

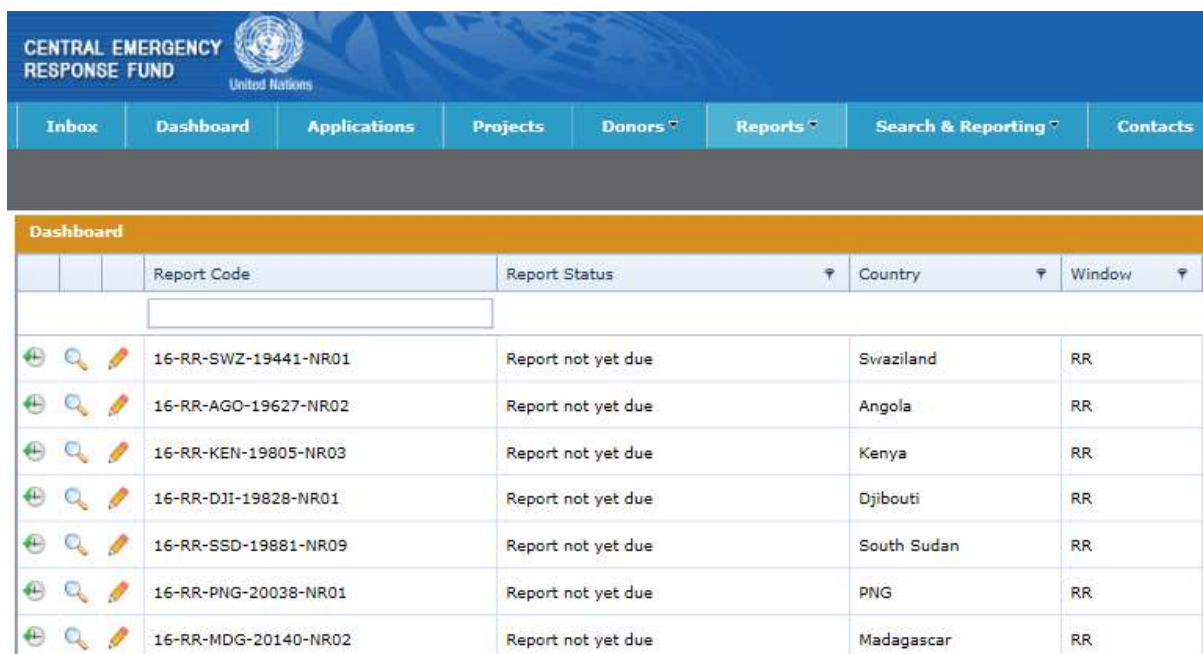
² <http://www.unocha.org/cerf/donors/donorspage>

Interim Project Update Template

The CERF secretariat recently introduced an optional interim project update template which can be submitted by RC/HCs in recipient countries. Such an interim update is a light in-country process, with the objectives of facilitating information sharing and coordination and identifying necessary corrective actions. The update can help inform discussions on the progress of implementation of CERF allocations in fora such as inter-cluster coordination group (ICCG) or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT/CT) meetings. The GMS now automatically generates a pre-populated interim update template that at the application approval stage which is attached to a summary email from the ERC customarily sent to Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators once all projects from an application are processed.

Narrative Reporting

Finalized and rolled out in mid-2016, the narrative reporting module now provides a comprehensive system for all processes surrounding CERF's narrative reporting process. Among other things, the module generates the pre-populated reporting templates that are sent to RC/HCs at the launch of the reporting process, serves as a repository for reports, tracks deadlines for submissions of reports, prompts and generates automatic notifications (e.g. of upcoming reporting deadlines) to be sent out to CERF recipients in the field as well as generates a series of standard correspondences and templates. In addition, the module allows the CERF secretariat to better extract and analyse information on sub-grants and beneficiaries reached as reported by CERF recipients. The GMS also facilitates the reporting process by automatically generating pre-populated reporting templates that can be sent to recipient countries with key application and project data from the database pre-filled. This greatly reduced the workload for field staff and the CERF secretariat and helps to ensure quality by reducing the scope for manual error.



CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND United Nations							
Inbox	Dashboard	Applications	Projects	Donors	Reports	Search & Reporting	Contacts
Dashboard							
		Report Code	Report Status	Country	Window		
			16-RR-SWZ-19441-NR01	Report not yet due	Swaziland	RR	
			16-RR-AGO-19627-NR02	Report not yet due	Angola	RR	
			16-RR-KEN-19805-NR03	Report not yet due	Kenya	RR	
			16-RR-DJI-19828-NR01	Report not yet due	Djibouti	RR	
			16-RR-SSD-19881-NR09	Report not yet due	South Sudan	RR	
			16-RR-PNG-20038-NR01	Report not yet due	PNG	RR	
			16-RR-MDG-20140-NR02	Report not yet due	Madagascar	RR	

Screenshot of narrative reporting module (test version—not actual data)

Financial Reporting

The CERF secretariat is also developing a financial reporting module for the GMS. The module will help the CERF secretariat's Finance and Administration Section (FAS) track the submission, review, and clearance of financial reports from implementing agencies. It will also assist in comparing financial expenditures against the approved budgets in the project proposals and to monitor refunds from agencies. For each project, a financial reports database form can be opened to view, edit or add data on financial reports, expenditure and refunds. In addition, data on financial reports, similar to the data from other modules, can be accessed via the Search & Reporting function of the GMS, under a new sub-page for Financial Reports. A preliminary version of the financial reporting module has been made available for user testing. It is expected that development of the module will be finalized by the end of the year and module launched.



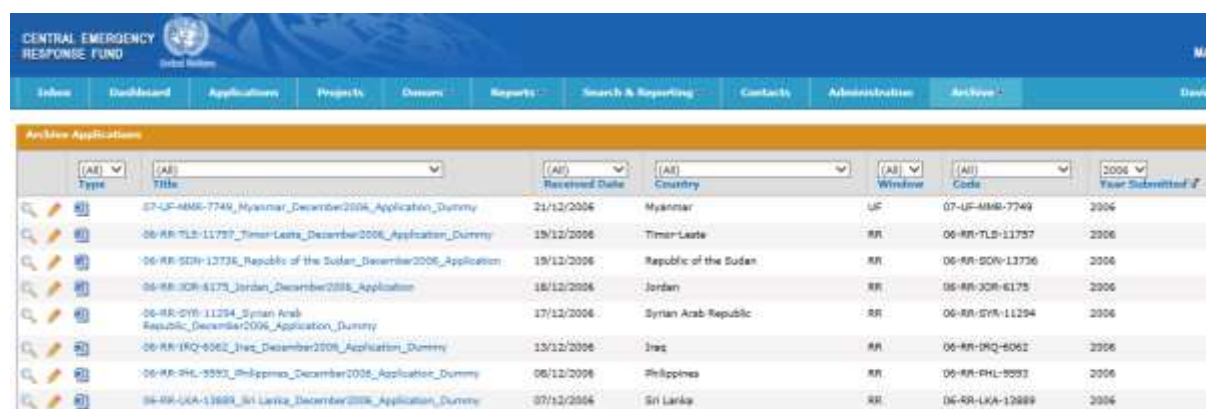
The screenshot shows the 'Reports' section of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) GMS. The table displays the following data:

Project Code	Country	Year	Agency	Window	Approved Amount	Disbursement Date
16-RR-WFP-002	India	2016	WFP	RR	58,850	23/01/2016
14-UFE-UDP-003	Myanmar	2016	UNDP	UF	1,016,500	25/01/2016
15-UF-UDP-011	Sudan	2016	UNDP	UF	0	25/01/2016
15-RR-OPS-002	Nepal	2016	UNOPS	RR	0	08/02/2016
16-RR-FAO-002	India	2016	FAO	RR	64,200	26/02/2016
16-RR-FPA-003	India	2016	UNFPA	RR	85,600	27/02/2016
16-UF-WHO-013	China	2016	WHO	UF	23,754	25/03/2016
16-RR-HCR-006	India	2016	UNHCR	RR	35,631	25/03/2016

Screenshot of financial reporting module

Data Migration

In 2016, the CERF secretariat completed the migration of all pre-2014 (the year GMS was launched) allocation data from its legacy IT system, the CERF Admin database, to GMS. This marks the end of an extended and complex process which entailed, among other things, cleaning up of historical data as well as aligning data categories across thousands of records across all the years CERF had been in operation. In addition, application-level data had to be introduced, a dimension not captured in the previous database.



The screenshot shows the 'Archive Applications' section of the CERF GMS. The table displays the following data:

Type	Title	Received Date	Country	Window	Code	Year Submitted
07-UF-AMR-7749	Myanmar_December2006_Application_Dummy	21/12/2006	Myanmar	UF	07-UF-AMR-7749	2006
06-RR-TLS-11797	Timor-Leste_December2006_Application_Dummy	19/12/2006	Timor-Leste	RR	06-RR-TLS-11797	2006
06-RR-SDN-13736	Republic of the Sudan_December2006_Application	19/12/2006	Republic of the Sudan	RR	06-RR-SDN-13736	2006
06-RR-JOR-6175	Jordan_December2006_Application	18/12/2006	Jordan	RR	06-RR-JOR-6175	2006
06-RR-SYR-11294	Syrian Arab Republic_December2006_Application_Dummy	17/12/2006	Syrian Arab Republic	RR	06-RR-SYR-11294	2006
06-RR-IRQ-6062	Iraq_December2006_Application_Dummy	15/12/2006	Iraq	RR	06-RR-IRQ-6062	2006
06-RR-PHL-9993	Philippines_December2006_Application_Dummy	06/12/2006	Philippines	RR	06-RR-PHL-9993	2006
06-RR-LKA-12889	Sri Lanka_December2006_Application_Dummy	07/12/2006	Sri Lanka	RR	06-RR-LKA-12889	2006

Detail of application archive

With the completion of this process, all funding information since the inception of the revised CERF in 2006 is available in one searchable location and will allow for more complex analysis than had been possible with CERF's previous system. Apart from facilitating the CERF secretariat's own research and analysis, this has the added benefit allowing all historical funding data to be made for corporate business intelligence tools as well as external reporting. An example of the latter is CERF's greatly expanded reporting to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). IATI is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative that seeks to improve the transparency of aid, development, and humanitarian resources in order to increase their effectiveness in tackling poverty. Here, CERF is now able to report all of its allocations through the advanced GMS reporting facility whereas previously it was limited to reporting allocations from 2014 onwards.

Next Steps

With the completion of the financial reporting module the CERF secretariat will have concluded development of the major modules necessary for the GMS to serve as comprehensive management system covering the entire CERF project cycle. In 2017, the CERF secretariat will focus increasingly on refinements to the system with a view to achieving improved performance and usability. Examples of this are likely to include the introduction of improved data analysis and visualization tools (i.e. a business intelligence module). In addition, there is likely to be increased usage of GMS-readable document templates (e.g. application and reporting templates) that can automatically import key information from documents into the GMS thereby reducing time and scope for error in manual input. The CERF secretariat will also explore options for granting limited access to colleagues in the field to the system, for example to download final project proposals and for submitting select information from the field to the CERF secretariat online. In addition, the CERF secretariat will take advantage of the availability of all historical CERF allocation data in a single place to develop a business intelligence interface for the CERF website to allow visitors to generate analyses and visualizations of CERF allocations.