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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Central Emergency Response Fund

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides a description of the activities of the Central Emergency Response Fund from 1 January to 31 December 2020, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/127](#). The Fund continued to be a global leader in humanitarian response in 2020. During the reporting period, the Emergency Relief Coordinator approved \$848.1 million in support for life-saving humanitarian activities in 59 countries, territories or areas. In addition, three loans were approved for a total value of \$40 million.

Following the record-high contributions in 2019, the Fund received a total of \$624 million in 2020 from its partners, the second highest annual income in its history. In the context of increasing humanitarian needs, continued support from Member States and other donors is crucial for enabling the Fund to meet the needs of vulnerable people worldwide and to attain its expanded annual funding target of \$1 billion as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [71/127](#).

* [A/76/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/127](#), on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the detailed use of the Central Emergency Response Fund. The report covers the activities carried out under Fund from 1 January to 31 December 2020.

II. Overview of the funding commitments of the Fund

2. With \$848.1 million provided for humanitarian activities in 59 countries, territories or areas (see table below and annex I), the Emergency Relief Coordinator approved the largest amount in a single year in the history of the Fund. In addition, three loans were approved for a total value of \$40 million. Between its inception in 2005 and the end of 2020, the Fund had provided \$6.9 billion for humanitarian assistance in over 106 countries, territories or areas. Grants were directly allocated to United Nations funds and programmes as well as specialized agencies.

A. Allocations by funding window

Central Emergency Response Fund allocations, 1 January to 31 December 2020

(United States dollars)

	<i>Rapid response window</i>	<i>Underfunded emergencies window</i>	<i>Total</i>
Amount approved	618 454 688	229 700 550	848 145 238
Number of recipient countries, territories or areas	58	21 ^a	59 ^b
Number of projects funded	205	123	328

^a Certain countries, territories or areas received allocations from both funding windows.

^b Includes the second tranche of the multi-year grant to support education in emergencies for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

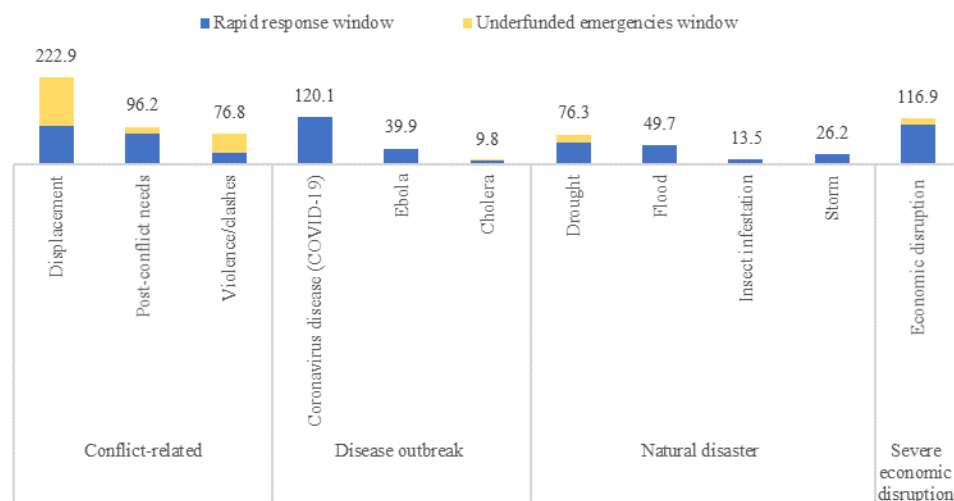
3. In accordance with Secretary-General's bulletin [ST/SGB/2010/5](#), some two thirds of the Fund's allocations are intended for disbursement through its rapid response window. Allocations from the window promote response to humanitarian needs in the initial stages of a sudden-onset crisis or in the case of a significant deterioration of an existing emergency. With \$618.5 million in 2020, the Fund provided the largest total annual funding amount through the rapid response window since the Fund's inception. Approximately one third of the Fund's allocations is typically allocated to support severely underfunded emergencies. Those allocations are normally made in two rounds during the year and help to draw attention to funding gaps and humanitarian crises where donor interest may have waned. With \$229.7 million in 2020 allocated to 21 underfunded and neglected crises, the Fund provided the largest annual funding amount through the underfunded emergencies funding window since the Fund's inception (see annex II).

B. Allocations by emergency type

4. Crises related to conflict or internal strife received most assistance in 2020, totalling \$395.8 million (47 per cent). A total of \$169.8 million (20 per cent) was allocated in response to disease outbreaks, including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Some \$165.6 million (20 per cent) was allocated to address

the humanitarian consequences of natural disasters, and \$116.9 million (14 per cent) was provided for emergencies related to severe economic disruption and other compounding factors (see figure I). More than a quarter of funding was provided to humanitarian needs related to displacement, once again demonstrating the important role of the Fund in supporting vulnerable people displaced by crises.

Figure I
Central Emergency Response Fund allocations in 2020, by emergency type
 (Millions of United States dollars)

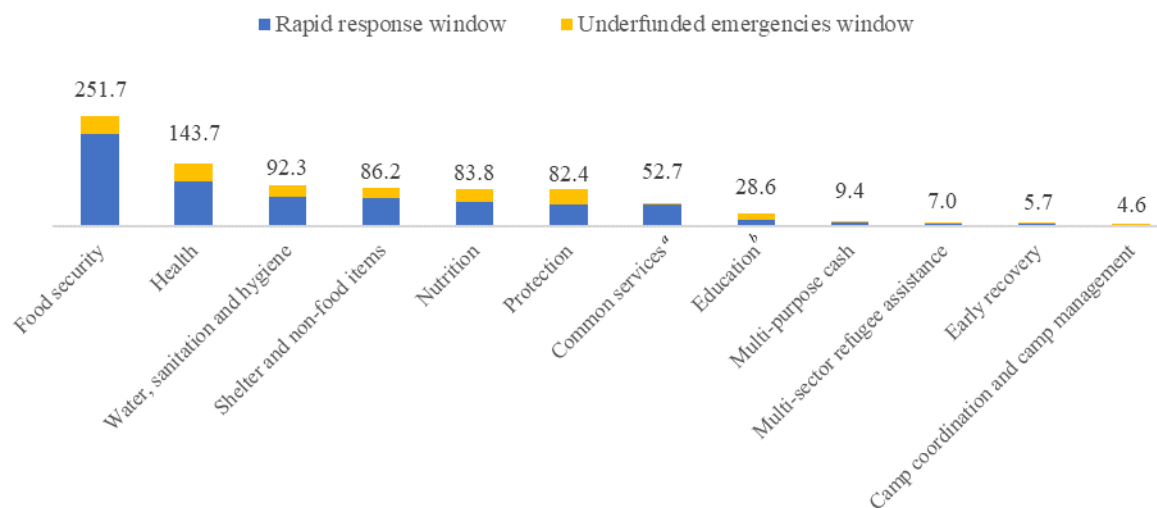


C. Allocations by sector

5. A total of \$251.7 million (30 per cent) was allocated to food security activities in 2020, an increase from 24 per cent in 2019. The increase reflects concerns over the secondary impact of COVID-19, including on the risk of famine. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, health response services received a historic \$143.7 million, which represents an increase of 49 per cent as compared with 2019. In line with the Emergency Relief Coordinator's initiative to increase support to key underfunded priority areas, funding to the protection sector reached a record high of \$82.4 million. Support for education also reached unprecedented levels, with more than \$28.6 million allocated (see figure II).

Figure II
Central Emergency Response Fund allocations in 2020, by sector

(Millions of United States dollars)



^a Common services include common humanitarian air service, common logistics, common telecommunications, and safety and security of staff and operations.

^b Protection activities include initiatives in child protection, gender-based violence and mine action.

D. Allocations by region

6. With \$496.9 million, Africa received the largest share of 2020 allocations (56 per cent), followed by the Middle East with \$178.4 million (21 per cent) and Asia and the Pacific with \$50.5 million (9 per cent) (see figure III). In Africa, funding totalling \$143.4 million (29 per cent) went to address needs stemming from conflict or internal strife. Some \$97.3 million (20 per cent) was allocated in response to natural disasters. In addition, \$93.3 million (19 per cent) was allocated for disease outbreaks. The Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia were the largest recipients of funding in Africa in 2020. The Sudan received a total amount of \$105 million to address the needs of displaced people, returnees and host communities and to support food security and social protection mechanisms, including through school feeding. To respond to the severe locust outbreaks in Southern and Eastern Africa, three allocations totalling \$13.5 million were made: two regional allocations (\$12 million) and one allocation to Kenya (\$1.5 million).

7. Of the total \$178.4 million disbursed in support of humanitarian responses in the Middle East, the majority, \$167.2 million (94 per cent), was disbursed for humanitarian needs resulting from conflict or internal strife. An additional \$11.2 million (6 per cent) was allocated in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Some \$65 million (36 per cent of Fund allocations to the region) addressed humanitarian needs caused by conflict, internal strife and displacement in Yemen, and \$56.7 million (32 per cent) was allocated to respond to the humanitarian needs caused by conflict-related displacement in the Syrian Arab Republic.

8. Of the total \$79.2 million allocated to the Asia and Pacific region, more than \$25.9 million (33 per cent) of the funding was disbursed to address humanitarian needs resulting from natural disasters and \$4.9 million (6 per cent) was allocated in response to conflict-related emergencies. As the largest recipient country in the region, some \$30.6 million (39 per cent) was disbursed for the complex humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. This included \$15 million for cash and voucher assistance

targeting severe food insecurity as part of a multi-country allocation focused on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bangladesh was the second largest recipient in the region receiving a total of \$18.3 million, including \$3.2 million to front-line non-governmental organizations (NGOs) critical to the delivery of humanitarian assistance during the pandemic and \$5.2 million for anticipatory activities ahead of severe floods.

9. Of the \$50.5 million allocated to Latin America and the Caribbean, Fund interventions totalling \$21.4 million (42 per cent) served to respond to needs stemming from natural disasters. Funding to address emergencies related to disease outbreaks amounted to \$12 million (24 per cent). Some \$18.9 million¹ (37 per cent) was allocated for needs resulting from socioeconomic disruptions, political unrest and the severe impacts of the pandemic in Haiti.

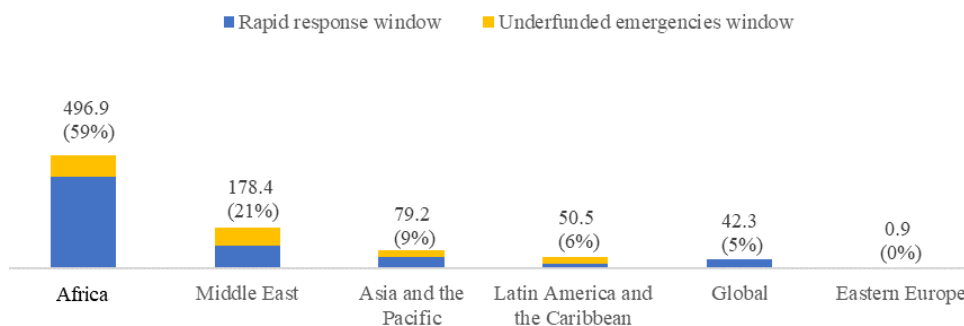
10. In Eastern Europe, \$900,000 was allocated to address humanitarian needs in Ukraine stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

11. Some \$42.3 million (5 per cent) of CERF funding went to global logistical services as part of the Fund's response to the pandemic.

Figure III

Central Emergency Response Fund allocations in 2020, by region

(Millions of United States dollars)



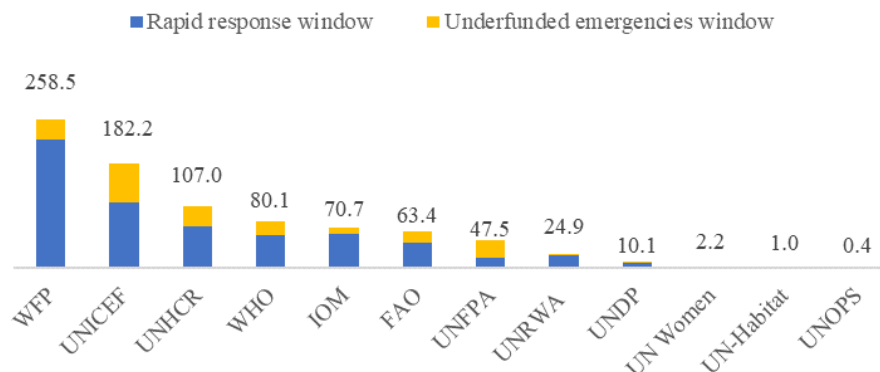
E. Allocations by United Nations entities

12. The World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund together received more than half (52 per cent) of the overall Fund allocations. The high level of funding to those entities is linked to their expertise in the most funded sectors, namely, food security, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, which accounted for \$487.7 million (58 per cent of the total amount allocated in 2020) (see figure IV).

¹ Haiti received \$12 million from the underfunded emergencies window and \$6.9 million from the COVID-19 block grant and the COVID-19-related non-governmental organizations allocation.

Figure IV
**Central Emergency Response Fund in 2020, allocations by
 United Nations entity**

(Millions of United States dollars)



Abbreviations: FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; IOM, International Organization for Migration; UNDP, United Nations Development Programme; UN-Women, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund; UN-Habitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNICEF, United Nations Children’s Fund; UNOPS, United Nations Office for Project Services; UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; WFP, World Food Programme; WHO, World Health Organization.

F. Loans

13. In March, the Emergency Relief Coordinator approved a loan of \$10 million to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to scale up desert locust control operations in the worst affected areas in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. In September and November, the Fund provided two loans totalling \$30 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to help manage a severe cash flow crisis and avert an imminent interruption of the provision of life-saving assistance and protection to 5.7 million Palestine refugees (see annexes III and IV).

III. Key Highlights on the use of the Fund in 2020

A. Overview

14. The funding allocated in 2020 allowed for the provision of life-saving assistance to an estimated 69.3² million people, of whom some 54 per cent were women and girls. The share of women and girls receiving support from the Fund was higher in some sectors, such as nutrition and protection, 65 per cent and 56 per cent respectively. The funding also provided for critical aid to 40.6 million displaced persons and host communities, representing 59 per cent of all people reached with 2020 funding.

15. Funding in 2020 included the following:

- 41.7 million people received access to health care

² This figure excludes, as far as possible, indirect beneficiaries of COVID-19 awareness-raising campaigns or other similar initiatives.

- 16.2 million people received food assistance and agriculture-based livelihood support
- 12.7 million people benefited from water and sanitation assistance
- 8.6 million people benefited from protection interventions
- 3.7 million people received nutritional support
- 2.9 million people benefited from support to access education
- 2.7 million people benefited from camp management services and the provision of shelter assistance or basic relief items
- Over 1 million people were assisted through multipurpose cash, early recovery assistance and common services.

B. Global response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

16. The Fund played a critical role in responding to COVID-19. It provided \$120 million to help to address the primary impacts of the pandemic by way of direct health and hygiene services, including over \$40 million for logistics and common services. It provided an additional \$105 million through allocations directly targeting the secondary impacts of the pandemic.³

17. In March 2020, at the outset of the pandemic, the Fund provided \$95 million in global block grants to jump-start responses by United Nations entities, focusing on health care, water and sanitation. Rather than disbursing funds directly to country teams, the Fund provided resources to nine entities, allowing them to prioritize distribution to contexts with the greatest needs. A significant portion (\$40 million) of the resources were provided to the World Food Programme to maintain humanitarian operations, including those of NGOs, by supporting the transportation of supplies and emergency workers in response to the severe disruption of international commercial supply chains. A significant portion (\$20 million) was also provided to the World Health Organization to stop the transmission of the epidemic and support the weakest health systems in detecting and treating COVID-19 patients. This first and early injection of resources was critical to supporting the bulk procurement of medical and protective equipment, and hygiene items, as well as awareness-raising at the community level regarding COVID-19 and risk mitigation. In June 2020, the Fund complemented that response with its first-ever allocation to front-line NGOs. The Fund provided \$25 million to support 24 organizations in six countries for the COVID-19 response: Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Haiti, Libya, South Sudan and Sudan. One third of the recipient organizations were national or local non-governmental organizations. The International Organization for Migration acted as a grant manager, helping to ensure necessary country-level support and oversight.

18. As the impact of COVID-19 evolved, the Fund continued to respond with speed and agility to remain in step with new needs related to the secondary impact of the pandemic. In November, it allocated \$80 million to respond to rising levels of hunger in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen through cash and voucher programmes, which were seen as particularly effective and quick in allowing affected people to best meet their needs. In November, it responded to the increasing incidence of gender-based violence during the pandemic. The Fund provided \$25 million to the United Nations Population

³ Of the \$105 million allocated to address the secondary impacts of COVID-19 (including \$80 million for food security and \$25 million for gender-based violence), \$54 million was disbursed in 2021.

Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to support gender-based violence prevention and response programming in 11 countries, including for operational capacity-strengthening of women-led and women's rights organizations.

C. The Fund and conflict-related and protracted crises

19. Crises related to conflict or internal strife received the most assistance in 2020, totalling \$395.8 million (47 per cent). Examples of notable allocations made in relation to these types of crises in 2020 are set out below.

Syrian Arab Republic

20. In response to an increase in conflict-related internal displacement in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Fund made two allocations during the first quarter of the year through its rapid response and underfunded emergencies windows, amounting to a total of \$54.9 million. The allocations were designated to help humanitarian partners meet new urgent needs and address critically underfunded areas of existing response priorities.

21. Targeting the most urgent needs of 420,000 people fleeing hostilities in the north-west of the country, \$30 million was allocated from the Fund's rapid response window to enable United Nations entities and partners to scale up the construction of shelter and facilitate the provision of critical relief items and services. The rapid response allocation in the north-west complemented funding through the underfunded emergencies window, which enabled United Nations entities to continue to provide life-saving activities across the country despite chronic underfunding. Targeting 1.3 million of the most vulnerable groups, including internally displaced people and recent returnees, the allocation played a critical role in providing assistance to women and girls (particularly survivors of gender-based violence), addressing the needs of people with disabilities, scaling up emergency education capacities and enhancing child protective services.

Burkina Faso

22. While Burkina Faso has suffered from the effects of humanitarian emergencies over the past two years, unprecedented levels of displacement, conflict and human rights violations have created a persistent and multifaceted crisis, forcing more than 1 million people to flee their homes and leaving at least 2.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

23. In response to the humanitarian needs, the Fund made three separate allocations to Burkina Faso in 2020, amounting to a total of \$22 million and targeting the urgent shelter, hygiene- and protection-related needs of more than 1.1 million people. A first allocation of \$10 million in March from the rapid response window helped to jump-start life-saving assistance to 460,000 people, including through the provision of shelter and basic household items, water, sanitation and hygiene, health and protection services. Humanitarian operations in the country received a second allocation of \$6 million through the Fund's rapid response window in December to address food insecurity through cash and voucher assistance. The special allocation allowed the World Food Programme to provide life-saving cash assistance to more than 95,000 internally displaced food-insecure persons and complemented the ongoing underfunded emergency allocation in central, eastern and northern Burkina Faso. A third allocation of \$6 million through the underfunded emergencies window was disbursed in October to provide assistance to extremely vulnerable persons in terms

of livelihood, health and nutrition; strengthen the management of temporary reception sites; and deliver multisectoral services for the management of gender-based violence.

D. The Fund and natural disasters

24. Some \$165.6 million (20 per cent) was allocated by the Fund in 2020 to address the humanitarian consequences of natural disasters. Examples of notable allocations made in relation to these types of crises in 2020 are set out below.

Locust outbreaks in Southern and Eastern Africa

25. In 2020, multiple countries in Eastern and Southern Africa were affected by the rapid spread of locusts. Massive swarms of insects threatened the agricultural production in countries where food security was already compromised by recurrent droughts, conflict, high food prices and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

26. In response to the outbreak, the Fund provided FAO with a regional allocation of \$10 million for Eastern Africa, a regional allocation of \$2 million for Southern Africa and an allocation of \$1.5 million for Kenya from its rapid response window. Activities supported by the Fund, including increased pesticide aerial spraying operations, contributed to protecting the food security of an estimated 24.3 million people while also preventing the potential loss of more than \$1 billion worth of agricultural outputs. In March, a loan of \$10 million to FAO helped to bridge a gap in donor contributions to ensure timely scale-up of locust control operations.

Consecutive hurricanes in Central America

27. In November 2020, over the course of two weeks, back-to-back hurricanes made landfall in Central America, affecting more than 8 million people in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua and causing devastation and a dramatic increase in humanitarian needs. The hurricanes brought further devastation to a humanitarian situation already characterized by multifaceted needs amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the Fund allocated \$8.4 million from its rapid response window to support regional relief efforts, with Honduras receiving \$3.9 million, Guatemala \$2.5 million and Nicaragua \$2 million. The Fund facilitated the provision of critical life-saving support to more than 483,000 people across the three countries, including immediate food assistance, and access to potable water, personal hygiene facilities and critical health-care services. Given the relatively high incidence of sexual- and gender-based violence in the region, activities supported by the Fund were used to fill critical protection gaps in contexts in which women, children and sexual minorities faced significant protection risks.

IV. Strategic initiatives of the Fund

A. Support to underfunded priority areas

28. At the beginning of 2019, the Emergency Relief Coordinator invited resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators in countries with ongoing humanitarian operations to leverage funding from the Fund to ensure that greater attention was focused on four priority areas that remained chronically underfunded despite international commitments and that were critical to the provision of quality assistance: (a) support for women and girls, including tackling gender-based violence, reproductive health and empowerment; (b) programmes targeting people with disabilities; (c) education in protracted crises; and (d) other aspects of protection.

29. Using the Fund to increase the focus on the four priority areas also helps to draw attention to these underfunded areas at the country and global levels. Building on momentum from 2019, further positive results were achieved in 2020, with a record level of funding going towards these important priorities.

30. Approximately 54 per cent of the 69.3 million people targeted with life-saving assistance through the Fund in 2020 were women and girls. At least \$65 million in funding went towards efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in 2020.⁴ In 2020, United Nations entities assisted 8.1 million persons with disabilities through Fund allocations. The year 2020 saw the highest level of absolute Fund allocations to the education sector since the establishment of the Fund in 2006, with close to \$28.6 million allocated to emergency education projects, up from the previous record of \$19.3 million set in 2019. Funding to the protection sector reached \$82.4 million in 2020, the highest amount to date, and a significant increase over the previous record of \$52.4 million set in 2019.

31. The Fund commissioned a review in early 2020 to independently assess progress in the underfunded priority areas and to identify steps to further integrate them in its allocations. According to the review, progress had been made with regard to the inclusion of provision of funding to the four areas in Fund allocations. The review also identified several areas in which further action could have positive impact, which the Fund has sought to address.

B. Anticipatory action

32. Since 2018, when it initially started promoting a more anticipatory response to predictable humanitarian shocks, the Fund has been involved in the development and roll-out of three anticipatory action frameworks, namely in Somalia and Ethiopia for severe drought shocks and in Bangladesh for riverine flooding. In 2020, the Fund allocated a total of \$33.4 million to anticipatory action frameworks. Each framework combines three elements: (a) a robust forecasting mechanism linked to a clear decision-making process; (b) a set of pre-agreed actions that can alter the trajectory of a crisis; and (c) pre-arranged funds that can be released to immediately initiate time-critical activities.

33. In June, the predefined threshold for anticipatory action was reached in Somalia, projecting that 22 per cent of the population would be facing crisis-levels of food insecurity if no action were taken. In response, the Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated \$15 million from the Fund to support a multisectoral package of activities.

34. At the beginning of July, the framework in Bangladesh was triggered when severe flooding was forecasted, enabling agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance to more than 220,000 people before the peak of the floods. With projects and funding mechanisms already agreed, the Fund was able to approve \$5.2 million within four hours,⁵ the fastest disbursement ever.

35. The Emergency Relief Coordinator had planned that up to \$20 million would be provided by the Fund for anticipatory activities in Ethiopia in 2020 to mitigate the humanitarian impacts of failed rains and drought. Given the slow evolution of the climatic situation, the Fund disbursed \$13.2 million in December 2020 for the initiation of time-critical activities in response to the failed rains and another \$6.8 million in February 2021.

⁴ This record amount is most likely an underestimation as it only captures interventions to combat gender-based violence that are clearly budgeted in projects funded by the Fund.

⁵ In Bangladesh, \$2.8 million of the initial \$5.2 million allocation was used for anticipatory action, while \$2.4 million was reprogrammed for life-saving response after the floods.

36. Each of the three anticipatory pilots has provided some preliminary lessons, as well as initial evidence of the merits of multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral anticipatory action at scale. An external evaluation showed that, overall, people were reached earlier, faster and at a lower cost than a comparable regular response, and in a manner that people found more empowering. Preliminary findings from the allocation to Somalia, which included funding for locust control measures, the rapid rehabilitation of boreholes, large-scale vaccination of livestock, cash transfers and protection monitoring, indicate that anticipatory activities helped to reduce outbreaks of diseases (compared with similar periods in previous years), and had a positive effect on household finances, mental health, livestock productivity and intercommunal conflict over water resources.

V. Management and administration of the Fund

A. Central Emergency Response Fund Advisory Group

37. The Advisory Group was established following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 60/124 to advise the Secretary-General, through the Emergency Relief Coordinator, on the use and impact of the Fund. In 2020, as part of the regular membership rotation, the Secretary-General appointed 10 new members to the Advisory Group, bringing the total number to 19 and ensuring a representative diversity of membership. Two official Advisory Group meetings were held in 2020, along with three informal webinars focusing on the Fund's COVID-19 response, anticipatory action efforts and annual results report. All meetings were virtual owing to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

38. During its official meetings in June and December, the Advisory Group commended the Fund for its global response to the pandemic, and the pace and agility with which grants were disbursed. The group also discussed the Fund's role in the humanitarian landscape and new Fund initiatives in 2020, which were aimed at enhancing the strategic and operational impact of funding and at encouraging positive system change. The Advisory Group acknowledged the challenges relating to growing humanitarian needs and the limited availability of resources and praised the Fund for being a catalyst for efficiency and effectiveness in the humanitarian system.

B. Global reach of the Fund's partnerships

39. While the Fund is mandated to provide grants solely to United Nations entities, many of its grants are implemented by United Nations entities in partnership with NGOs, host governments and Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

40. Owing to the increasing need for urgent funding to front-line NGOs in the context of the global pandemic, the Fund explored ways to support them more directly. In this regard, an innovative allocation of \$25 million was made in March to support responses by NGOs in six countries. In December, global grants of \$25 million to two United Nations entities were provided, with the condition that at least 30 per cent of overall funding would go to local women-led or women's rights organizations to tackle gender-based violence.⁶

41. Of the total \$538.6 million provided by the Fund in allocations in 2019 (the latest year for which complete partnership data is available),⁷ \$126 million (23 per cent) was sub-granted by recipient United Nations entities. In 2019, United Nations entities entered into partnerships with 735 non-United Nations organizations in 46 out of 49 countries, territories or areas supported by the Fund. Of those, a record

⁶ The funding was disbursed in early 2021.

⁷ It normally takes up to nine months to implement projects funded by the Fund and three months to report on their results.

number (588) were local and national partners, including 377 national or local NGOs, 196 government entities and 15 Red Cross/Red Crescent societies. The remaining 147 partners were international NGOs. This is the broadest partnership network recorded in a single year in the history of the Fund.

C. Transparency

42. During 2020, the Fund continued to enhance its transparency and accountability. Grant decisions continued to be available in real time through the Fund's website and to be published on several platforms, including the Financial Tracking Service, the Humanitarian Data Exchange and the International Aid Transparency Initiative. In 2020, the transparency score of the Fund on Initiative platform remained at 95 per cent, placing the Fund among the top 15 of the 1,200 organizations publishing their data to Initiative standards.

43. In March 2020, the Fund launched an online allocation tracker that, for each Fund allocation, provided information in real time on the humanitarian emergency, the rationale for the funding and the assistance provided through entity projects. Another transparency milestone, the Central Emergency Response Fund Data Hub, was developed in 2020 and launched in early 2021. In conjunction with the Fund's website, it provides a wide array of interactive visuals, allowing easy access to data on allocations.

44. In 2020, together with the country-based pooled funds of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Fund also worked to improve the visibility of funding across the two funding mechanisms and to develop a Pooled Fund Data Hub. The Pooled Fund Data Hub was launched in early 2021 and has increased the transparency of the Office's funds by providing a one-stop gateway to consolidated funding data for Fund and the country-based pooled funds.

D. Risk management

45. The Fund continued to track and communicate information related to cases of potential fraud involving its funds in 2020. In keeping with its communication guidelines and standard operating procedures, the Fund secretariat continued to liaise with entities and donors regarding potential fraud cases.

46. In 2020, partners reported eight new cases of possible fraudulent use of funds under projects using a Fund grant. In addition, partners provided updates on seven previously reported cases. Evidence gathered during recipient entity-led investigations showed that in 7 of the 15 cases the allegations could not be substantiated or that the Fund's funds were not involved. Investigations are ongoing in the remaining eight cases.

E. Strategic added value of the Fund

47. The Fund provides significant added value as a global funding mechanism, enhancing its strategic impact beyond its role as a source of humanitarian funding. When asked to assess the strategic added value of 2019 funding according to four core strategic dimensions, 94 per cent of resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators stated in their reports that the funding led to fast implementation of humanitarian response, 96 per cent said that the funding helped to respond to time-critical humanitarian needs and 84 per cent stated that funds helped to improve the

coordination of humanitarian action.⁸ The funding also has an important multiplier effect, acting as a catalyst for further action. A total of 76 per cent of resident coordinators/humanitarian coordinators noted that funds provided by the Fund in 2019 had helped to improve resource mobilization from other sources, and 24 per cent stated that the Fund had partially contributed to leveraging additional financing.

F. Independent reviews commissioned by the Fund

48. In order to provide the Emergency Relief Coordinator and Fund stakeholders with assurance of the Fund's achievements, its secretariat commissions annual independent reviews of the contribution of the Fund to the humanitarian response in selected countries or regions.

49. In 2020, the Fund secretariat concluded two studies. The first served to assess Fund support to the four underfunded priority areas identified by the Emergency Relief Coordinator; the second was focused on the role of the Fund in smaller emergencies that often attract limited donor funding, leaving the Fund as the only or main source of emergency funding in a humanitarian response. According to the second study, in the countries reviewed, the Fund provided a reliable source of funding for each new shock and was seen as a trusted source of last resort funding in resource-scarce environments. Also noted was the fact that while supporting life-saving humanitarian action, Fund allocations had helped to enhance the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approaches.

50. In 2020, the Fund secretariat launched three other studies that are ongoing: to review the Fund's first-ever NGO allocation through the International Organization for Migration; to review Fund support to cash and voucher assistance; and to review Fund support for programming aimed at the prevention of and response to gender-based violence.

G. Update of the Secretary-General bulletin

51. Secretary-General's bulletin [ST/SGB/2010/5](#) on the establishment and operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund serves to guide the management of the Fund. It was initially issued in 2006 and updated in 2010. Upon the request of the Secretary-General, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs started a process to update the Secretary-General's bulletin, which is expected to be finalized in 2021.

H. Update of the life-saving criteria of the Fund

52. In its resolution [60/124](#), the General Assembly sets out the Fund's mandate and the life-saving criteria that determine the types of activities that are eligible for Fund grants. The document providing an outline of the life-saving criteria was initially developed in 2006 and updated in 2010. Although the mandate conferred on the Fund by the Assembly has not changed, the humanitarian landscape in which the Fund operates has evolved significantly, necessitating an update of the life-saving criteria. Throughout 2020, the Fund continued to consult United Nations entities, the Global Cluster Coordinators and the Advisory Group to identify key aspects and areas of the criteria that required further refinement, in accordance with Inter-Agency Standing Committee agreements in place since 2010. The updated version of the Life-Saving Criteria was approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in October 2020.

⁸ From reports on all funding provided by the Fund in 2019 and implemented in 2019 and 2020.

VI. Funding levels and donor base of the Fund

A. Funding levels

53. Global humanitarian needs have increased exponentially since the Fund was established in 2005, with the funding requirements of United Nations-coordinated humanitarian response plans having increased eightfold by end of 2020. In the face of the ever-growing demands on the Fund, it is critical that the Fund reach the \$1 billion annual funding target endorsed by the General Assembly in December 2016.

54. In 2020, the Fund received its second-highest level of annual contributions, \$639 million, eclipsed only by the record-high income of \$834.6 million in 2019. The record income in 2019 was attributable largely to the exceptional one-off contribution from a key donor received in December 2019, which was not repeated in 2020. Notwithstanding that contribution, the annual income of the Fund continued its upward trend, with 16 Member States and 2 regional governments increasing their contributions from 2019. In addition, several donors provided new or additional contributions to the Fund to support its early and effective response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable people across the globe.⁹

55. Predictable and timely funding remains of critical importance. Thanks to the support of donors, an increasing proportion of the Fund's annual income comes through multi-year agreements. Three new multi-year commitments were signed with Denmark, Iceland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. As of the end of 2020, CERF had 12 active multi-year agreements with a total value of \$401.6 million, accounting for over 63 per cent of total contributions received. First quarter payments of pledges have also increased in the last three years, from \$117.7 million received in the first quarter of 2018 to \$181.7 million received in the same period in 2020.

B. Diversifying and deepening the donor base

56. Since its establishment, CERF's donor base has grown to 131 Member States and observers, and 5 regional and local authorities, as well as numerous private sector organizations and individuals. Most of them have been irregular donors providing small contributions, partly because of changes in domestic budgetary constraints.

57. A total of 56 Member States and observers and three regional authorities, as well as a number of private sector donors contributed to the Fund in 2020 (see annexes V and VI). The largest contributions were received from Germany, followed by the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Norway. In 2020, eight Member States (Austria, Cyprus, France, Montenegro, Morocco, Poland, Slovenia and South Africa) returned as donors, and two Member States (Cambodia and Turkmenistan) contributed to the Fund for the first time.

58. Fifteen previous recipients of funding provided by the Fund contributed a combined \$1.3 million to the Fund in 2020. They are part of the 55 Fund recipient countries that have given back in solidarity to crisis-affected people globally.

59. The Fund continues to rely on key donors for most of its income, with the top 10 donors accounting for 90 per cent of all contributions in 2020; the top 20 donors accounted for 98.6 per cent of total income.

⁹ They include Andorra, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation (Spain), the Government of Flanders (Belgium) and the Baha'i International Community.

60. To maximize the level and predictability of funding, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continues to call on all Member States to provide new and additional contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund, in compliance with General Assembly resolution [71/127](#).

Annex I

Total grants allocated from the Central Emergency Response Fund, 1 January to 31 December 2020

(United States dollars)

<i>Country, territory or area</i>	<i>Rapid response</i>	<i>Underfunded emergency</i>	<i>Total</i>
Afghanistan	15 000 000	12 999 965	27 999 965
Angola	3 501 693	–	3 501 693
Bangladesh	10 201 131	4 890 052	15 091 183
Burkina Faso	16 005 433	6 001 148	22 006 581
Burundi	–	5 000 231	5 000 231
Cameroon	8 716 990	–	8 716 990
Central African Republic	1 000 994	–	1 000 994
Chad	4 505 172	12 020 162	16 525 334
Colombia	–	5 000 000	5 000 000
Congo	6 926 981	–	6 926 981
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	–	4 999 689	4 999 689
Democratic Republic of the Congo	39 947 117	29 983 890	69 931 007
Djibouti	1 727 350	–	1 727 350
Eastern Africa (Locust) ^a	11 500 000	–	11 500 000
El Salvador	2 999 884	–	2 999 884
Ethiopia	34 224 654	–	34 224 654
Fiji	1 002 748	–	1 002 748
Global COVID-19 block grant ^b	120 074 574	–	120 074 574
Guatemala	2 522 190	4 993 677	7 515 867
Haiti	–	11 999 405	11 999 405
Honduras	3 901 926	5 000 038	8 901 964
Jordan	–	6 000 400	6 000 400
Kenya	3 006 018	–	3 006 018
Lebanon	5 999 480	12 988 434	18 987 914
Lesotho	750 002	–	750 002
Madagascar	3 999 919	–	3 999 919
Mali	6 999 805	–	6 999 805
Mauritania	–	5 999 380	5 999 380
Mozambique	7 003 079	6 999 888	14 002 967
Namibia	3 000 029	–	3 000 029
Nicaragua	2 000 000	–	2 000 000
Niger	11 020 470	10 951 371	21 971 841
Nigeria	–	13 001 946	13 001 946
Pakistan	5 999 902	5 974 274	11 974 176
Philippines	3 113 674	–	3 113 674
Sudan	103 374 841	–	103 374 841
Rwanda	1 000 000	–	1 000 000
Somalia	22 090 543	–	22 090 543

<i>Country, territory or area</i>	<i>Rapid response</i>	<i>Underfunded emergency</i>	<i>Total</i>
South Sudan	26 599 346	–	26 599 346
Southern Africa (Locust) ^c	2 000 000	–	2 000 000
Syrian Arab Republic	29 995 744	24 887 327	54 883 071
Uganda	3 951 312	4 999 336	8 950 648
Vanuatu	2 605 385	–	2 605 385
Viet Nam	2 999 889	–	2 999 889
Yemen	30 000 000	34 999 937	64 999 937
Zimbabwe	34 893 136	–	34 893 136
Occupied Palestinian Territory	22 293 277	–	22 293 277
Total	618 454 688	229 690 550	848 145 238

^a The regional Eastern Africa Locust allocations targeted Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

^b A total of 36 countries, territories or areas benefited from the COVID-19 block grant: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Djibouti, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Occupied Palestinian Territory.

^c The Southern Africa Locust Allocation benefited Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Annex II

**Total grants allocated from the underfunded emergencies window
of the Central Emergency Response Fund, 1 January to
31 December 2020**

(United States dollars)

<i>Country, territory or area</i>	<i>Round I</i>	<i>Round II</i>	<i>Total</i>
Afghanistan	–	12 999 965	12 999 965
Bangladesh	–	4 890 052	4 890 052
Burkina Faso	–	6 001 148	6 001 148
Burundi	–	5 000 231	5 000 231
Chad	12 020 162	–	12 020 162
Colombia	–	5 000 000	5 000 000
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	4 999 689	–	4 999 689
Democratic Republic of the Congo	29 983 890	–	29 983 890
Guatemala	4 993 677	–	4 993 677
Haiti	6 999 405	5 000 000	11 999 405
Honduras	5 000 038	–	5 000 038
Jordan	6 000 400	–	6 000 400
Lebanon	12 988 434	–	12 988 434
Mauritania	5 999 380	–	5 999 380
Mozambique	–	6 999 888	6 999 888
Niger	10 951 371	–	10 951 371
Nigeria	–	13 001 946	13 001 946
Pakistan	–	5 974 274	5 974 274
Syrian Arab Republic	24 887 327	–	24 887 327
Uganda	–	4 999 336	4 999 336
Yemen	–	34 999 937	34 999 937
Total	124 823 773	104 866 777	229 690 550

Annex III

A. Central Emergency Response Fund loan element: statement of financial performance from 1 January to 31 December 2020

(United States dollars)

Revenue	
Investment revenue ^a	–
Total	–
Expenses	
Total	–
Surplus for the year	–

Note: Statement was prepared in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

^a Net investment revenue of \$88,135 was reflected in the grant element of the Central Emergency Response Fund in accordance with General Assembly resolution 66/119.

B. Central Emergency Response Fund loan element: statement of changes in net assets from 1 January to 31 December 2020

(United States dollars)

	<i>Net assets</i>
Net assets as at 31 December 2019^a	30 000 000
Change in net assets	
Surplus for the year	
Total changes in net assets	–
Net assets as at 31 December 2020^a	30 000 000

Note: Statement was prepared in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

^a Represents outstanding loan of \$30 million.

Annex IV

Central Emergency Response Fund loans from 1 January to 31 December 2020

(United States dollars)

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Country, territory or region</i>	<i>Year of disbursement</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Outstanding loans as at 1 January 2020			
UNRWA	Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza Strip)	2019	20 000 000
UNRWA	Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza Strip) and Syrian Arab Republic	2019	10 000 000
Total			30 000 000
Loans disbursed from 1 January to 31 December 2020			
FAO	Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia	2020	10 000 000
UNRWA	Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza Strip)	2020	10 000 000
UNRWA	Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza Strip and West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem), Jordan, Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic	2020	20 000 000
Total			40 000 000
Loans repaid from 1 January to 31 December 2020			
UNRWA	Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza Strip)	2019	20 000 000
UNRWA	Occupied Palestinian Territory (Gaza Strip) and Syrian Arab Republic	2019	10 000 000
FAO	Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia	2020	10 000 000
Total			40 000 000
Outstanding loans as at 31 December 2020			
Total			30 000 000

Abbreviations: FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Annex V

A. Central Emergency Response Fund grant element: statement of financial performance from 1 January to 31 December 2020

(United States dollars)

Revenue	
Voluntary contributions ^a	703 326 738
Other transfers and allocations	86 653
Other revenue ^b	24 594 180
Investment revenue ^c	7 399 216
Total revenue	735 406 787
Expenses	
Grants and other transfers	813 960 710
Other operating expenses ^d	15 783 544
Total expenses	829 744 254
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(94 337 467)

Note: Statement was prepared in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

^a Represents voluntary contributions in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards. See annex II for contributions pledged.

^b Represents foreign exchange gain.

^c Includes net investment revenue of \$88,135 earned on the loan component of the Central Emergency Response Fund in accordance with General Assembly resolution 66/119.

^d Includes programme support costs (United Nations) of \$15,759,916.

B. Central Emergency Response Fund grant element: statement of changes in net assets from 1 January to 31 December 2020

(United States dollars)

	<i>Net assets</i>
Net assets as at 31 December 2019	967 391 935
Change in net assets	
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(94 337 467)
Total changes in net assets	(94 337 467)
Net assets as at 31 December 2020	873 054 468

Note: Statement was prepared in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

Annex VI

Central Emergency Response Fund grant element: contributions pledged from 1 January to 31 December 2020

(United States dollars)

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Pledged contributions^a</i>
Member States and observers	
Andorra	41 347
Armenia	5 000
Australia	8 184 524
Austria	1 216 545
Bangladesh	20 000
Belgium	24 282 561
Bhutan	1 500
Cambodia	20 000
Canada	22 528 736
China	500 000
Cyprus	16 502
Denmark	30 787 345
Estonia	111 111
Finland	15 460 252
France	1 137 656
Germany	125 326 699
Guyana	3 000
Iceland	708 324
Indonesia	220 000
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	10 000
Ireland	11 415 525
Italy	5 500 550
Japan	263 636
Kuwait	1 000 000
Liechtenstein	200 200
Luxembourg	5 470 460
Monaco	111 111
Mongolia	10 000
Montenegro	3 282
Morocco	50 000
Myanmar	10 000
Netherlands	98 788 057
New Zealand	8 338 312
Norway	56 910 952
Pakistan	10 000
Peru	2 936
Philippines	50 000

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Pledged contributions^a</i>
Poland	254 453
Portugal	192 519
Qatar	1 000 000
Republic of Korea	5 823 817
Russian Federation	1 500 000
Saudi Arabia	150 000
Singapore	50 000
Slovenia	35 253
South Africa	85 305
Spain	3 409 091
Sri Lanka	10 000
Sweden	88 826 881
Switzerland	24 038 748
Thailand	20 000
Turkey	450 000
Turkmenistan	100 000
United Arab Emirates	5 000 000
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	87 376 696
Viet Nam	10 000
Total, Member States and observers	637 048 884
Regional and local authorities	
Basque Agency for Development Cooperation (Spain)	220 386
Government of Flanders (Belgium)	1 352 237
Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation (Spain)	329 920
Total, regional and local authorities	1 902 543
Others	
Baha'i International Community	10 000
Private donations through United Nations Foundation (under \$10,000)	86 653
Total, others	96 653
Total	639 048 081

^a Contributions are based on the pledged year of the donors and differ from the amount reported as revenue under International Public Sector Accounting Standards. Actual received contributions may differ from the originally recorded pledges, owing to fluctuations in exchange rates.