

Accountability of Humanitarian Coordinators in Planning/Coordinating the Use of CERF Resources

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A. Background

During its meeting in October 2011 in New York, the Advisory Group discussed the roles, responsibility and accountability of the Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HC) in establishing the priorities for a CERF request, guiding the planning process and coordinating the use of CERF funds. While the RC/HC's role in prioritizing and submitting a CERF request has been clearly articulated, Advisory Group members requested the CERF secretariat to provide a short update on the most recent discussions regarding the role of the RC/HC's role in monitoring and reporting on the use of the CERF funds. The following paper will take a more critical look at the individuals performing the Humanitarian Coordination Leadership function, including a Resident Coordinator (RC), a RC/HC, a separate HC or a DSRSR/RC/HC.

B. Legal Documents

1. The main document to be used as reference in the Secretary General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2010/5 dated 20 April 2010 (which replaced the bulletin ST/SGB/2006/10) concerning the Establishment and the Operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund. This bulletin lists the role and responsibility of the HC at different stages in the use of CERF resources. The SGB states that, as an element of the Secretary-General's humanitarian reform package, the CERF should reinforce the realization of the other elements of the reform related to the strengthening of humanitarian leadership, partnership, coordination and response.
2. One of these elements is the reinforcement of the key role of the RC/HC in coordinating the responses to a humanitarian crisis and the financing of this response. In this regard, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) shall consult with RC/HC on matters relating to the utilization of funds in order to obtain guidance and support when determining priorities for their use.
3. Regarding the prioritizing and planning elements of the process, the SGB indicates that the grant element of the Fund shall be used to provide grants to eligible organizations so as to ensure a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies, based on demonstrable needs and on priorities identified

by the RC/HC in consultation with the humanitarian country team (HCT), and the affected State, as appropriate.

This paragraph establishes clearly the accountability of the RC/HC regarding the identification of projects and activities to be prioritized for CERF funding. Whilst the process should be done in consultation with the HCT, the final decision remains with the RC/HC who is therefore responsible and accountable for this task. However, the RC/HC is best able to carry out his/her responsibilities when the members of the humanitarian country team work together to foster collective results.

RC/HCs, in consultation with HCTs, need to determine the priorities for the grant request based on recent needs assessments and on the response priorities as identified in consolidated or flash appeals and after taking into account funding levels and operational capacity for implementation. This is reinforced in the “IASC Handbook for RCs and HC’s on Emergency Preparedness and Response” under Chapter 7 Funding Instruments. The Handbook provides guidance and a timeline of the RC/HC’s responsibilities.

4. The RC/HC is responsible for sending the CERF application to the ERC; no applications will be accepted unless endorsed and sent by the RC/HC of the concerned country. In very exceptional circumstances the ERC may consider a request directly from an agency, provided that adequate consultations have taken place with RC/HCs of the affected countries. This has occurred with trans-boundary crises affecting multiple countries. In 2009, for example, FAO submitted a regional CERF rapid response request for Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique to mitigate a red locust outbreak. In 2011, UNHCR submitted a regional request for the protection of CDI refugees in Togo, Benin and Guinea. In both cases, these single agency submissions were endorsed by the respective RC/HCs in these countries.
5. The RC/HC also plays an important role in ensuring CERF submissions do not replace the humanitarian appeal mechanisms or duplicate funding that could have been previously received through other processes.
6. According to the SGB’s section on accountability and oversight, the RC/HC is responsible for compiling field inputs on the use and results achieved with CERF allocations. The RC/HC, however, does not have formal oversight of agencies’ use of the funds. Accountability for performance monitoring and reporting rests with the agencies. RC/HCs, therefore, frequently have little insight into the use of the funds until the agency reporting is submitted. The 2010 CERF Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF) identified this as a key challenge. The PAF country reviews act as a verification mechanism for RC/HC and agency reporting. Based on the PAF, the CERF is similarly developing a template for a “Humanitarian Action After Reviews” (AAR). It is anticipated that such an AAR

at country level could help improve performance and encourage greater accountability with the HCT.

C. The IASC Transformative Agenda

7. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Transformative Agenda has focused on enhancing the accountability of the RC/HC, specifically seeking to empower HC leadership to respond to a humanitarian crisis of exceptional magnitude (a “Level 3” emergency). However, it has been clearly recognized that the stronger leadership role of the RC/HC must be accompanied by a stronger collective role for the HCT. This stronger leadership will have direct consequences on the accountability of the RC/HC regarding the use of and control over the CERF in case of a Level 3 response.
8. In conclusion, there are some developments which will lead to a greater accountability for the RC/HC in Level 3 situations. The broader impact of the Transformative Agenda should also yield a stronger role for the RC/HC in the non-Level 3 countries, and for enhanced mutual results accountability. The CERF secretariat will continue to follow these discussions closely.