

## CERF After-Action Guidance

A CERF After Action Review (hereafter AAR) is a discussion that allows a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to reflect on the overall CERF process, how the HCT and the broader humanitarian community worked together, what was learned, what was achieved with the grant, what follow-up actions should be taken and what can be done better next time. AARs should be a routine part of the life-cycle of any CERF grant (whether rapid response or underfunded) and a key component of the in-country Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) narrative reporting on CERF.<sup>1</sup> A well-executed AAR will provide a sound foundation for the preparation of the RC/HC CERF report and ease finalization of the report for all parties involved.

### I. Purpose of CERF AARs

*The purpose of the AAR is threefold:*

- To provide an opportunity to collectively analyze the results achieved with the CERF grant and assess CERF's added value.
- To facilitate joint lesson learning in benefit of future CERF processes.
- To provide a basis for the RC/HC report and a roadmap for the RC/HC reporting exercise.

The AAR is the cornerstone of the RC/HC reporting process in that it helps identifying key points and strategic issues to be raised in the RC/HC report, and as such provides the foundation for drafting the main parts of the report. The AAR should be a light and informal exercise that allows for open and frank learning-focused discussions about achievements and challenges related to the CERF allocation. With the objective of identifying key issues for the RC/HC report, it should function as a forum where the HCT (or similar) and key CERF stakeholders have the opportunity to reflect on the overall CERF process, including how the HCT and the broader humanitarian community worked together, what was learned, what was achieved with the grant and what follow-up actions should be taken.

Based on these discussions, the AAR should focus on identifying joint lessons learned and provide actionable recommendations on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of future CERF allocations. AARs are owned by country level partners and should not be considered a compliance exercise for the benefit of CERF. AARs are not performance reviews and should not be conducted in order to allocate blame (or credit), but rather to encourage honest reflection by practitioners on in-country CERF processes and on key challenges and results achieved. The formal assessment of agency performance vis-a-vis CERF funded activities remains the prerogative of the recipient agencies via their own internal oversight procedures.

### II. Who should Participate

The participation in the AAR is ultimately at the discretion of the RC/HC. It is however suggested that the meeting be facilitated by the RC/HC, and that participants should include the recipient UN agencies and IOM, cluster/sector leads and implementing partners.

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the CERF website for additional information on CERF narrative reporting process:  
<http://cerf/resources/guidance-and-templates>

### III. When to Conduct the AAR

The AAR should be conducted soon after the conclusion of CERF grant implementation. This will help ensure involvement of grant implementation stakeholders while the relevant experiences are fresh in memory. It will also place the AAR as the starting point for the preparation of the RC/HC narrative CERF report due three months after grant completion. For more details on the timing of the overall reporting process please refer to guidance on the CERF website<sup>2</sup>.

### IV. Format of the AAR

The length of an AAR meeting can vary, depending on the size of the grant and the number of partners involved. It is estimated that an AAR will take on average half a day. It is important that participants come prepared. Four weeks prior to expiration of the grant package, the CERF secretariat will have mailed a tailored and prefilled RC/HC report template and related guidelines to the RC/HC's office. It is recommended that the RC/HC's office shares the template and guidelines with all AAR participants prior to the AAR meeting along with a copy of the full CERF submission.

It is suggested that the AAR starts with a recap by the RC/HC of the background for the CERF allocation where after each recipient agency provides a short debrief on the status of CERF grants, the results achieved and any important challenges encountered or lessons learned during implementation. In order to make the meeting more efficient, CERF recipient agencies could in advance prepare and share a brief status update on the implementation of their CERF grants.<sup>3</sup>

To ensure maximum synergy with the CERF reporting process the remainder of the AAR meeting can be structured around the sections of the RC/HC CERF report template. As per the template, key discussion areas should include: quality of the in-country CERF consultation process, appropriateness of allocations,<sup>4</sup> CERF's added value and relevance, overall results achieved and beneficiaries reached (versus planned). For each issue discussed the focus should be to establish lessons learned or best practices (at the levels of the HCT, clusters, recipient agencies and implementing partners) and to identify opportunities for strengthening of in-country CERF processes and enhancing the strategic use of CERF.

In countries with a country-based pooled fund (i.e. a CHF or an ERF) it is recommended to include a discussion about the complementarity use of CERF and the local fund.

### V. Documenting the AAR and Sharing the Lessons

A note-taker summarizes the learning identified in the AAR session and key action points. The note-taker should share the notes with the RC/HC and team members to ensure that the learning is accurately reflected. To maximize the synergy with the CERF narrative reporting exercise it is recommended that the AAR note mirrors the RC/HC CERF reporting template in structure.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unocha.org/cerf/resources/guidance-and-templates>

<sup>3</sup> Ideally this status update would follow the format of table 8 in the RC/HC reporting template (the project sheets) and thus serve as a first draft of the project inputs for the CERF report.

<sup>4</sup> It is recommended to include a discussion about whether – in retrospect - the right activities were prioritized and selected for the CERF proposal and if there are any lessons to be learned in this respect for future CERF submissions.

## **VI. Use of AAR Outcomes**

The results of the AAR should form a strong basis for developing of the RC/HC report as it would provide key pieces of analysis and content needed for the RC/HC report. It is also hoped that the results of the AAR will assist in streamlining future CERF submissions at country level and that lessons learned may help inform the CERF secretariat in improving processes, guidance and training.

## **VII. Information and Support**

For further information please refer to the CERF website at <http://cerf.un.org> or contact CERF at [cerf@un.org](mailto:cerf@un.org).