

CERF COVID-19 ALLOCATION SUMMARY PAPER

CERF Advisory Group Meeting, 1 June 2020



Overview

On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization declared the Coronavirus Immune Disease (COVID-19) outbreak a ‘public health emergency of international concern.’ On 11 March, COVID-19 was recognized as a pandemic. **In line with its objectives, CERF has been at the forefront of the response to the crisis, allocating some \$95 million, in record-time, to support critical life-saving efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19.** CERF has also approved the reprogramming of \$7 million of ongoing projects, increasing its overall contribution to \$102 million as of mid-May.

In all, CERF has made three allocations to the COVID-19 response. A first allocation of \$15 million was made on 1 March to support WHO’s and UNICEF’s response plans and allowing these agencies to jumpstart their operations, in the case of WHO just days after COVID was declared a ‘public health emergency of international concern.’ A second allocation, of \$60 million, was made at the launch of the COVID-19 global humanitarian response plan on 25 March, allowing 9 UN agencies to kickstart the plan. A third allocation was made on 9 April, providing \$20 million to WFP to help set up its global logistics support. *A real-time overview is available at pfb.unocha.org/COVID19*

\$95M	Allocated through global block-grants
\$7M	Reprogrammed from ongoing projects
66M	People targeted, including indirectly through awareness-raising campaigns
36	Countries
9	UN agencies
11	Sectors
\$40M	for global logistics support, including logistics hubs, cargo flights and medevacs
\$21M	for procurement of critical supplies, including personal protective equipment

CERF funds are supporting time-critical life-saving efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, to ensure the continuity of critical health and humanitarian supply chains, to transport humanitarian workers and supplies, and to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance and protection to the most vulnerable people affected by the pandemic, including women and girls, disabled and elderly people, refugees and internally displaced people.

Flexibility and Speed

For the first time in CERF’s history, funds were disbursed to UN agencies as global block-grant allocations rather than country-specific grants. This provided agencies with maximum **flexibility** to decide where to use the CERF funding, within the parameters of the global response plan.¹ CERF’s approach enabled UN agencies to prioritize 36 countries across different regions.

To disburse funds **quickly**, CERF relied on a fast-tracked approval process based on light project proposals, followed by post-allocation project documents, containing detailed

information on the projects. This enabled CERF to approve most project proposals in 1-2 days from original submission, while also maintaining transparency and accountability. Funds disbursement was also accelerated with most agencies receiving funds within 3-5 days of original project submission, compared to an average of 14 days for other Rapid Response projects in 2020. In addition, some agencies took advantage of using an early start date; thus WHO’s first project started on 3 February. UN agencies have highlighted their overall appreciation for CERF’s global block-grant approach, particularly the flexibility and speed of disbursement.

¹ An exception to this was the WFP allocation, which focused exclusively on securing the continuity of supply chains for essential commodities. Also, the initial grant to WHO and UNICEF (\$15 million) did not specify GHRP counties, as the allocation was made prior to the GHRP launch.

Impact on the lives of 66 million people

The CERF funding primarily supports two sectors: common logistics (\$40 million) and health (\$34 million), which together account for almost 80 per cent of the allocations. Agencies are also using the funding to support 9 other sectors including water, sanitation and hygiene, refugee assistance, protection (including child protection and sexual and gender-based violence) and food security.

CERF funding will enable assistance to at least 59 million people in the area of health, which includes the direct provision of medical assistance and also more “indirect” support by way of awareness raising campaigns. It is estimated that nearly \$1 in every \$4 of the CERF allocations will be used to procure supplies, including personal protective equipment, medical equipment, and WASH and dignity kits. Many agencies used CERF funding to jump-start procurement, while using funding from other sources to cover staffing, operating costs, etc.

SECTOR	# PEOPLE
Total (incl. indirect beneficiaries)	66M
Health (incl. indirect beneficiaries)	59M
Education	7.6M
WASH	2.2M
Child protection	1.2M
Camp coordination/management	800K
Agriculture	140K
Multi-sector refugee assistance	70K
Sexual and gender-based violence	60K
Shelter/Non-food items	7K

CERF funding will enable direct assistance for over 10 million people in education, water and sanitation, protection, camp management, agriculture, multi-sector refugee assistance and shelter.

Finally, the CERF allocation has supported WFP in setting up three logistics staging areas, conducting cargo airlifts and passenger flights, establishing three 100-bed medical treatment centres, and providing medical evacuation capacity.

Agencies have taken into account gender, age and disability in the design of their projects. Of the 66 million people assisted, 19 million are women, 14 million boys and 14 million girls. For instance, UNICEF will ensure that risk communication materials for children consider the needs of children with disabilities, including children with hearing impairments. In Nigeria, IOM will install handrails and elevated seats in latrines and showers to improve conditions for the elderly and persons with disabilities in camps and camp-like settings in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Excluding logistics, procurement of supplies and support costs, nearly \$1 in every \$3 (about \$9.4 million in total) will be used for **frontline implementation** by local and international NGOs, government partners and Red Cross/Red Crescent societies.

UNHCR will transfer \$1 in every \$3 of its \$6.9 million CERF allocation as **cash assistance** directly to refugees in Jordan. FAO and UNICEF will also provide assistance to vulnerable communities through unconditional unrestricted transfers.

Complementarity with Country-Based Pooled Funds and other funds

As of mid-May, country-based pooled funds had allocated \$102 million (including reprogramming) to COVID-19 programmes. In all countries where a Country-Based Pooled Fund allocated funds, **agencies used CERF funds in a complementary manner**.² For example, in the Central African Republic, WHO and UNICEF used \$1.8 million in CERF funds to support a hospital, water and sanitation, and risk communication, while \$3 million in CBPF funding mainly went to NGO frontline responders.

Of the 36 countries targeted through the CERF global block-grant allocations, three will also receive support through the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Djibouti, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. These three countries will receive a total of \$1.7 million (of which \$1.3 million for Pakistan) through the first CERF block-grant allocation, which was made in early March prior to the launch of the GHRP.

² With the exception of DRC, which did not receive any CERF funding through the global block-grant allocations, but which has received \$70 million from CERF since January 2020.

Reprogramming and No-Cost Extensions

As of mid-May, CERF had approved \$7 million in requests for reprogramming of existing projects in 17 countries for COVID-19-related activities. CERF recognized the need for agencies to adapt their humanitarian assistance to this new operational environment, and developed streamlined processes to extend deadlines on existing projects, and to allow flexibility in the use of funds. Agencies received approval to reprogramme CERF funds to:

- Procure basic personal protective equipment, such as gloves and masks, and hygiene items such as hand sanitizer, soap and handwashing stations
- Adapt on-going CERF projects to adhere to social distancing guidelines, for instance by increasing the frequency of distributions to reduce mass gatherings
- Raise awareness among both implementing partners and beneficiary communities about infection prevention and control measures

For more information:

CERF, the country-based pooled funds and other parts of OCHA have worked together to provide information about the COVID-19 allocations. This includes a real-time dashboard (pfb.unocha.org/COVID19), a regularly updated infographic and press releases (available on the CERF website, cerf.un.org). OCHA and several UN agencies, such as FAO and UNHCR, have also published stories related to CERF-funded COVID-19 response, e.g., about cash assistance to refugees in Jordan or WFP's global logistics support. CERF gathers these and use them as part of telling the story of results and impact achieved through CERF funding.

Snapshot: CERF helps maintain urgent humanitarian air services during pandemic

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is severely hampering humanitarian operations. Border closures, reduced import/export and travel restrictions are limiting the movement of humanitarian workers and the availability of food, equipment, relief items and other essential needs. In countries where the world's most vulnerable rely on humanitarian aid and supplies to fight the pandemic, cancelled flights and disrupted supply chains hit disproportionately hard.

CERF is helping to make sure that humanitarian operations can continue and aid workers are equipped to respond to the humanitarian consequences of the pandemic in some of the world's most severe crises. Of the \$95 million that CERF has allocated to UN agencies to kickstart efforts towards the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, \$40 million was allocated to support the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in establishing essential international air services and supply chains in the absence of commercial service providers. These services will benefit the entire global humanitarian community and complement WFP's ongoing in-country UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) operations to sustain existing humanitarian operations and scale up new relief efforts.

This CERF funding enables WFP to carry out passenger air services to transport aid workers, conduct medical evacuations, transport health supplies and relief equipment, and establish vital logistics hubs. One of these new hubs is situated inside Addis Ababa's Bole International Airport in Ethiopia, from which COVID-19 supplies, equipment and humanitarian workers are being transported by air across Africa, in partnership with the Ethiopian government. The first cargo flight arrived in Ethiopia on 14 April, carrying aprons, face shields, gloves, goggles, gowns, masks and thermometers procured by the World Health Organization (WHO) for distribution to 32 African countries.

For more, see <https://cerf.un.org/news/story/cerf-helps-maintain-urgent-humanitarian-air-services-during-covid-19-crisis>



Figure 1: The new humanitarian air hub at Bole International airport in Addis Ababa is transporting relief workers and humanitarian cargo across Africa. Credits: WFP/Erik Forsman

Snapshot: Cash-based transfers to support refugees in Jordan

UNHCR will leverage the existing cash-based transfer architecture in Jordan to transfer \$2.2 million of CERF funding to vulnerable refugees. The Common Cash Facility provides a secure, efficient and innovative cash transfer approach that has enabled predictable cash payments at scale to refugees, while accommodating multiple organizations' cash transfer programmes. It has reduced costs and duplication, and has resulted in improved efficiency, accountability and coordination of cash assistance activities. The CCF currently has 26 partners from the UN, NGOs and the Government of Jordan.

Cash is provided through the Cairo-Amman Bank via iris-equipped ATMs. All refugees undergo an iris scan upon registration. Data captured at the ATM is transmitted by a secure and encrypted network to the UNHCR iris database for verification, thereby eliminating the possibility for fraud.

The cash-based transfers will be coordinated through a Basic Needs and Food Security COVID-19 Response Task Force. UNHCR will stagger distributions to avoid overcrowding and to ensure that refugees are able to collect their assistance despite pandemic-related movement restrictions. Refugees are informed about where and when to access their cash through SMS. UNHCR provides individual follow-up for those refugees who are unable to make a withdrawal at their allotted time. Refugees experiencing technical difficulties withdrawing their cash can call UNHCR's helpline.