

Introduction

This note provides an overview of the **monitoring and reporting requirements** for recipients of funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and **clarifies roles and responsibilities in the interim and final reporting process**. The objective of CERF monitoring and reporting is to give the RC/HC and the HCT, as well as OCHA Senior Management and its donors assurance that CERF-funded activities are implemented as intended, and to enable corrective actions to be taken if necessary.

CERF allocations are collectively prioritized under the leadership of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) who therefore has the **main responsibility to ensure quality and timeliness of monitoring and reporting of CERF-funded activities**. However, the humanitarian country team or UN country team (HCT/UNCT), sector/cluster leads, other actors in the humanitarian community, and especially agencies receiving CERF funds are collectively accountable for a CERF allocation and should jointly oversee project implementation. Regular updates on the progress and potential challenges around the implementation of CERF projects should be provided in cluster, inter-cluster and HCT/UNCT meetings, with involvement of implementing partners. In this, the RC/HC is supported by a designated CERF in-country focal point (hereafter CERF focal point), usually from the OCHA country office, regional office or the Resident Coordinator's Office.¹

Monitoring

The HCT/UNCT should agree on monitoring arrangements at the beginning of the CERF process, communicated by the RC/HC to relevant stakeholders and documented in the CERF application to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). **The HCT/UNCT is collectively accountable for a CERF allocation, and is expected to jointly follow the implementation of CERF projects**. To enhance accountability and transparency, updates by recipient agencies on implementation of CERF projects should be included in the HCT/UNCT agenda. Regular updates on progress of implementation of CERF projects should be provided in cluster, inter-cluster and HCT/UNCT meetings, preferably with the involvement of implementing partners when relevant.

Collective Monitoring: Since funding from CERF and other pooled funds is collectively prioritized by the humanitarian community at country level under the leadership of the RC/HC, it is different than funding from other sources. In humanitarian operations where system-wide monitoring processes are in place at sector/cluster level, CERF's contribution to the response should also be reflected through these processes. Assessing CERF's contribution through overall response monitoring will help promote strategic assessment of CERF's added value, ensure adequate visibility and enhance collective accountability for CERF allocations. In addition, if feasible and relevant, the RC/HC in consultation with the HCT may decide to complement agencies' own regular monitoring efforts with collective monitoring of CERF projects. Such collective CERF monitoring could be led by clusters or use monitoring frameworks from country-based pooled funds (CBPFs) where these exist. If collective monitoring of CERF projects is undertaken, the objective should be to gather additional information that will help foster joint learning, advance good practices, inform future allocations, and enhance accountability.

The responsibility for monitoring of individual CERF projects lies with the recipient agencies. CERF recipient agencies shall describe their plans for project-level monitoring in the relevant section of the CERF submission template. CERF projects should be monitored as part of agencies' overall programme monitoring arrangements in a given country. Monitoring of CERF projects is necessary for agencies to report on the achievement of project targets and the number of people reached, and it should enable early detection of potential challenges, allowing agencies to take timely corrective measures and ensure completion of activities within the CERF-specific implementation period. During the implementation period, agencies are required to keep the RC/HC informed about the status of project implementation, including any challenges or delays in the projects. As part of reporting on CERF projects, agencies should share any **evaluation reports** that include CERF-funded projects or activities with the RC/HC and the CERF secretariat. CERF regularly commissions independent reviews of the Fund's added value at regional or country level. During these reviews, and any other kind of review, evaluation or audit related to CERF, agencies should provide relevant information on

¹ In countries without OCHA presence, the OCHA regional office usually provides a focal point or the RC designates a focal point in the RC Office. Under exceptional circumstances, a specific lead agency may be asked by the RC/HC to support the reporting process. A focal point is assigned at the beginning of the CERF application phase and supports the allocation through the implementation and final reporting phase.

CERF projects to the evaluators or auditors. This may include relevant non-public information from agencies' internal monitoring systems, including monitoring reports. With prior consultation and agreement, agencies shall also allow site visits to CERF-funded projects when deemed necessary.

The RC/HC is responsible for overseeing the overall implementation of CERF funding, and ensuring that implementation is on track towards the achievement of the pre-defined strategic objectives. In this respect, the RC/HC should institute periodic check-ins within the HCT to discuss progress of the CERF-funded interventions. This will help ensure collective ownership of the allocation and allow the RC/HC to monitor that the overall implementation is on track, and if not, agree with the HCT on corrective measures if required. These check-ins are not intended to be detailed technical reviews – but a high-level assessment of progress/ability to meet the strategic objectives of the CERF allocation. It is up to the RC/HC to decide the number of required check-ins based on the nature of the grant and its duration, but it is suggested that at least one to two of these are conducted during the grant implementation period.

Reporting

In addition to these informal check-ins, **reporting on CERF allocations includes four elements:**

- 1. Country-level Interim Update**
- 2. Country-level Allocation Report, including After-Action Review**
- 3. Agency Headquarters Financial Reports**
- 4. Agency Headquarters Annual Narrative Report**

The **CERF secretariat provides tailored templates for the interim update and the final narrative report of each allocation** to the RC/HC who, supported by the CERF focal point, is responsible to distribute these templates to all relevant partners, to collect quality inputs and to send the interim update and allocation report to the CERF secretariat.² For the final report process, the RC/HC holds an after-action review (AAR, see guidance at the end of this document).

1. Country-Level Interim Update

The **interim update** is a light report undertaken at the halfway mark of the grant implementation, and the **main tool for the RC/HC to assess the implementation status of projects under a CERF allocation, including challenges**, and to communicate this information to the CERF secretariat. The template features project-specific sections for which agencies provide inputs and an overview at allocation level. This is then consolidated by the RC/HC with support from the CERF focal point. The objective of the interim update is to give the RC/HC and the HCT assurance that CERF-funded activities are implemented as intended and to enable corrective actions to be taken if necessary.

The in-country monitoring process through the interim update is led and overseen by the RC/HC. The tailored template for the update is usually shared along with the Emergency Relief Coordinator's (ERC) 'allocation summary email' after the application has been approved and funds for all projects have been disbursed. The **RC/HC**, supported by the CERF focal point, coordinates the process and ensures all relevant partners are well informed of timelines and requirements. **Agencies** are responsible to complete and submit their part of the interim update with meaningful, high-quality inputs in a timely fashion to the RC/HC. To consolidate the interim update, the RC/HC **adds relevant information** (a summary of implementation status, and potential actions and follow-up) before discussing the report with the HCT and **sharing the finalized update with the CERF secretariat** by the deadline indicated in the ERC allocation summary email.

The **deadline for the interim update** is calculated for every allocation and set half-way between the first project start date and last project end date. Four weeks before the interim update due date, the CERF secretariat sends a **reminder** to the RC/HC and the CERF focal point.

2. Country-Level Allocation Report

CERF allocation reports (final reports) are the RC/HC's **primary narrative reporting document on the use of CERF funds**. The information in the report may be quoted or otherwise used in CERF advocacy, communications, reports and publications. For this reason, the **accuracy of the inputs from all relevant partners is very important**, and the

² For non-standard CERF allocations, reporting requirements, timelines and templates may be adjusted and communicated by the CERF secretariat accordingly.

leadership of the RC/HC of the reporting process is crucial to ensure a quality and timely report. **Final reports are published** on CERF's website upon review by the CERF secretariat.

At **allocation level**, the report highlights whether the original **strategic vision** and response objectives have been achieved and targets met, describes CERF's added value, and explains how funds have been used for life-saving action to respond to humanitarian needs. At project level, **recipient agencies should report programmatically to the RC/HC, and by extension to the ERC and CERF secretariat**, on results achieved with CERF funds.

The **RC/HC**, supported by the CERF focal point, **consolidates and submits the report** to the CERF secretariat. However, the preparation of the report should be a **collective effort by all relevant stakeholders at country level**. The process should not only aim to produce a quality report on the use of CERF funds and the results achieved, but also help foster a collective reflection on the CERF process and establish lessons learned for improving future allocations.

The RC/HC or CERF focal point on their behalf shares the templates with the recipient agencies at country-level and coordinates the submission of inputs from all partners. Recipient agencies are **requested to provide quality and timely inputs**. However, the **RC/HC remains overall responsible** for adherence to the **CERF reporting requirements** and should therefore specifically **oversee the consolidation of strategic and operational inputs at allocation level** and should chair the **after-action review**.

CERF allocation reports are due within three months after expiration³ of a CERF allocation. After the interim update is completed, the CERF secretariat shares the tailored reporting templates for the final allocation report.⁴ Four weeks before the final report due date, the CERF secretariat sends a **reminder** to the RC/HC and the CERF focal point.

While the management of the reporting process lies at the country level, there are key steps that support the preparation of high-quality reports. Based on CERF's experience and informed by feedback from country teams, it is recommended to structure the process as described in the next section.

Proposed In-Country Final Reporting Process

1. Distribution of tailored template and confirmation of project end-dates:

After the interim update process is completed, the CERF secretariat shares a **tailored report template** and the **final report due date** along with a list of all project end-dates⁵ and an overview of the reporting requirements:

- In case of already approved no-cost extensions,⁶ the CERF secretariat also clarifies if these will affect the reporting deadline
- Following the notification from CERF, the RC/HC informs recipient agencies about the upcoming project end-date for CERF grants, and asks for confirmation that all CERF projects will be implemented by the deadline. **If implementation is delayed, the RC/HC informs CERF as soon as possible** and, if relevant, no-cost extension requests are prepared and submitted no later than two weeks prior to grant expiration

2. Process Preparation (around project end-dates):

For a thorough preparation, the **RC/HC and CERF focal point**:

- **prepare a schedule** that: a) includes deadlines for cluster/sector-leads and recipient agencies for their provision of inputs (narrative and data) to be submitted to the RC/HC; and b) accommodates the time required by the RC/HCs' offices for drafting and consolidation of narrative inputs and data following the submission of these inputs.

3. Preparation of Report Inputs and After-Action Review (within 5 weeks after project end-dates):

The **RC/HC**, supported by the CERF focal point, **sets up an After-Action Review (AAR) meeting** and shares an agenda (see guidance below). To use the AAR to its fullest potential, it should be clarified to all stakeholders which **inputs** are to be **submitted to the CERF focal point already before the meeting**. This may include:

- **Recipient Agencies**: Information on project results and information on sub-grants to implementing partners (this is part II – project level in the report template)

³ If one or more approved no-cost extensions (NCEs) exceed this original due date, the due date is rescheduled for one month past the latest NCE. Other extensions may only be granted in consultation with the CERF secretariat if clearly justified by the RC/HC.

⁴ Should any project revisions, such as amended figures of targeted people or added/removed indicators and activities, not be properly represented in the tailored template, agencies should update the prepopulated information in the template in tracked changes for review by the CERF secretariat.

⁵ Project start and end-dates are also available on the CERF website: <https://cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-summaries>

⁶ No-cost-extensions (NCEs) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and only if the request is submitted a minimum of two weeks prior to the expiry date of the grant.

- **Sector/Cluster Leads:** Best estimates on ‘people reached’ at sector level per project and suggestions for aggregations at allocation level (if there is more than one project per sector)
- **CERF focal point:** Drafts basic elements of the report informed by the provided inputs from partners (part I – allocation level)

4. Zero Draft following the AAR (within 7 weeks after project end dates):

Based on the submitted inputs and the outcome of the AAR the CERF focal point prepares and circulates a zero draft to the HCT/UNCT (or similar forum), recipient agencies and sector/cluster leads for review and comments. Sector/cluster leads circulate the draft within the sector/cluster and consolidate relevant comments. Feedback should be provided within two weeks.

5. Final Report Reminder

The CERF secretariat sends a final reminder to the RC/HC and CERF focal point on the upcoming deadline for the report. The RC/HC, in turn, confirms the deadline as the report should be close to finalization at this time, or informs the CERF secretariat of any challenge or delay encountered in the process.

6. Draft 1 Circulated (within 11 weeks after grant expiration):

The CERF focal point prepares the final draft based on the comments and the RC/HC circulates it to the HCT/UNCT (or similar forum), recipient agencies and sector/cluster leads for a final review.

7. Report Finalization and Submission (within 12 weeks after grant expiration):

The RC/HC finalizes and submits the final report to the CERF secretariat.

8. CERF Review and Publishing

The CERF secretariat reviews the report and, if necessary, seeks additional information from the RC/HC on issues that need clarification. Once the report is finalized it is published on CERF’s website. The RC/HC shares the final report with all relevant stakeholders at country-level.

CERF After-Action Review

The CERF After-Action Review (AAR) is a meeting to reflect on the overall CERF allocation, including the cooperation of the HCT/UNCT with the broader humanitarian community during planning and implementation stage as well as achieved results, challenges and CERF-added value for the overall response. **AARs are a routine part of managing any CERF allocation at country-level and a key component of the in-country final narrative reporting process.**

Value

1. **AARs provide an opportunity to collectively analyze the results achieved with CERF funding and assess CERF's strategic added value:**

The AAR should be a light and informal exercise that allows for open and frank discussions focused on learning. With the objective of identifying key inputs for the CERF final report, it should function as a forum where the HCT/UNCT (or similar) and other CERF stakeholders can jointly reflect on strategic and operational aspects of the allocation. **The core objective of the AAR is to assess how well the strategic vision for the allocation has been achieved, and to reflect on collective performance in meeting the agreed response objectives.** AARs are not performance reviews and should not be conducted to allocate blame or credit, but rather to encourage honest reflection by practitioners.

2. **...facilitate joint learning in benefit of future CERF processes:**

Discussion during the AAR should focus on identifying strategic achievements and the added value of the CERF allocation. Best practices and challenges from the prioritization and implementation stage should be transferred into actionable recommendations on improving the efficiency and effectiveness on the use of future CERF allocations. Recommendations should be directed to the CERF secretariat as well as to the country team.

3. **...provide a basis for the CERF final allocation report and a roadmap for the reporting exercise:**

The AAR is the cornerstone of the CERF final reporting process in that it helps to identify strategic considerations and key results to be highlighted in the final report, and as such provides the foundation for drafting part I (allocation overview) of the report. The RC/HC, supported by the designated CERF country focal point, should use the AAR to collect meaningful contributions and accurate data. A well-executed AAR provides a sound foundation for the preparation of the final CERF allocation report.

Timing

The AAR should be conducted soon after the expiration of all grants under a CERF allocation. This helps ensure involvement of grant implementation stakeholders while the relevant experiences are fresh in memory. It also places the AAR as the starting point for the preparation of the CERF final report due about three months after grant expiration.

Participants

The participation in the AAR is at the discretion of the RC/HC. It is, however, suggested that the meeting is facilitated by the RC/HC or an external facilitator, and that participants should include all recipient UN agencies, cluster/sector leads and implementing partners. While considered mandatory, AARs are owned by country-level teams and should not be considered a compliance exercise for the benefit of CERF.

Format

The length of an AAR meeting can vary, depending on the scope of the allocations (number of grants) and the number of partners involved. It is important that participants come prepared. It is recommended that the RC/HC, supported by the CERF country focal point and a potential external facilitator, develops questions on strategic and operational achievements and challenges applicable to the country context and the scope of the overall response and distributes these questions along with the template and guidelines to all AAR participants prior to the meeting.

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 project reports on the status of CERF grants, the achieved results and any challenges or lessons learned. To make the meeting more efficient, CERF recipient agencies could be encouraged to submit project reports in advance of the ARR, or if not possible to provide full reports, to prepare and share a brief update with key point and issues related to the implementation of their CERF projects.¹

To ensure maximum synergy with the CERF reporting process, the remainder of the AAR meeting can be structured around the sections of the final allocation report. As per the template, key discussion areas should include:

- Achievement of original strategic vision of this CERF allocation
- Various aspects of CERF strategic added value as a collective funding mechanism, as indicated in the report template
- Appropriateness of prioritized activities (in retrospect, was the prioritization and selection activities appropriate to achieve the strategic vision for the allocation, and are there any lessons learned in this respect for future CERF submissions)
- How well CERF funds strategically complimented other funding, including bilateral donor funds and other pooled funding, in particular Country-based Pooled Funds, where applicable
- Strategic consideration of achievements through the CERF allocation related to cross-cutting priorities, including the 'ERC Underfunded Priority Areas' (gender, people with disabilities, protection, education)
- Reflection on overall results achieved, including people reached (versus planned), with focus on reasons for potential under- or over-achievements.

Documentation

It is suggested to nominate a notetaker who summarizes AAR discussion and captures all learnings and action points. The notetaker, in liaison with a potential external facilitator, should share the notes with the RC/HC and team members to ensure that all inputs are accurately reflected. To maximize the synergy with the CERF narrative reporting exercise, the AAR note could mirror the structure of the CERF final report.

¹ Ideally this status update would follow the format of the individual project report templates under part II of the CERF allocation report template (the project sheets) and thus serve as a first draft of the project inputs for the CERF report.

3. Agency Headquarter Financial Report

All financial reports are submitted in standard templates provided by the CERF secretariat, which are also available on the CERF website. The financial reports are normally prepared by the headquarters of the implementing agencies. In line with the [Secretary-General's 2020 Bulletin on CERF](#), the following reports are required.

End-Year Financial Reporting as of 31 December

A final certified financial report for each grant with status as of 31 December of each year is due on **15 February**.

Mid-Year Financial Reporting for Rapid Response Grants as of 30 June

A midyear financial reporting requirement specific to funds disbursed for rapid response will be specified for each grant.

4. Agency Headquarters Annual Narrative Report

The annual narrative HQ reports are the recipient agencies' reporting tool for informing the ERC about the overall strategic impact of CERF funding for each organization's global emergency programmes. They describe how CERF programme results fulfil the mandate of the fund to facilitate the timely implementation of time-critical, life-saving activities in new crises or strengthen humanitarian response in underfunded emergencies. The reports feed into the annual Secretary-General Report on CERF that is shared with the General Assembly and the CERF annual report.

The reports are due during the first quarter of every year. CERF will send out a template and information on the deadline during January each year.