

Background

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) manages CERF on behalf of the UN Secretary-General. The ERC allocates CERF funds to humanitarian crises based on needs assessments in the field and in order to “promote early action and response to reduce loss of life, enhance response to time-critical requirements and strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises”.¹

In the last few years, **the ‘strategic use of CERF’ has been pursued so as to maximize the impact of a limited CERF funding in meeting the immediate life-saving needs of affected people**, in an increasingly complex operational environment.

In each country that applies for a CERF allocation, the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) leads a process by the (humanitarian) country team to develop submissions that prioritizes essential life-saving activities in a strategic, focused and coherent manner, aiming to achieve specific common objectives – be they in terms of advocacy, creating an enabling environment for humanitarian response, or mobilising resources. The ERC has taken the opportunity of a CERF allocation to highlight a new or emerging crisis, or draw attention to regional implications of a crisis or an underfunded situation. In this sense, CERF funds can act as a catalyst for global advocacy. Below, some examples of strategic use of CERF funds are highlighted.

CERF funding in the IASC designated Level 3 emergencies

When the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) declares a Level 3 (L3) emergency for a major crisis requiring system wide response, the CERF plays a key enabling function in terms of funding and advocacy. Given the complexity and high level of need, **such an L3 crisis response is likely to receive CERF funding throughout its life-cycle of the crisis, irrespective of timing of the L3 emergency declaration**. Since the adoption of the L3 protocol in 2012, this has been the case for CERF support in Syria, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Iraq.²

For example, the humanitarian country team in Iraq made several submissions to the CERF over the course of 2014 both prior to, and after, the L3 declaration in August. CERF allocated a total of US \$25.7 million to Iraq in 2014 - in February, May, July and December – as effects of on-going violence spread from Anbar province to North, Central and South Iraq ultimately affecting over two million people. CERF rapid response funding in February supported the initial response to violence in Anbar province, while a May allocation help agencies to respond to a polio outbreak among displaced population and host communities. In response to massive population movements throughout the country, humanitarian agencies used CERF funds to provide protection and basic assistance to newly displaced Iraqis first by scaling up activities in July and then further expanding them in December. The CERF-funded humanitarian actions maximised windows of opportunity to access displaced population in key target areas, as the situation on the ground evolved. Strategically used, CERF funds can enable immediate scale-up of action even when a humanitarian situation deteriorates to the crisis-level.

Responding to regional crises

While CERF funds are allocated by country, **the ERC has encouraged a regional approach when a crisis has significant regional implications, and when there is an opportunity to have greater humanitarian impact by doing so**. Such a regional approach was taken in dealing with rapid response crises in CAR, South Sudan and West Africa (Ebola crisis),

¹ General Assembly Resolution 60/124 (A/RES/60/124)

² CERF also supported the L3 a sudden natural disaster in the Philippines ; this crisis only required CERF support at the on-set of the crisis.

as well as underfunded situations in Syria and neighbouring countries, the Great Lakes, the Sahel and Horn of Africa in 2014 and 2015.

In 2014, the ERC allocated \$61.9 million in total for South Sudan and neighbouring Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda to deal with the emerging crisis in South Sudan and displacement of an estimated 1.9 million people. Similarly, CAR and neighbouring Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo received \$35.3 million between December 2013 and the end of 2014 to help respond to the needs of over three million people affected or displaced by the conflict. In West Africa, CERF funds were used to enable start-up responses to the emerging Ebola crisis in Liberia, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. In early 2015, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel brought together submissions from Nigeria and neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger in response to the growing regional Boko Haram crisis.

During CERF's underfunded emergencies second round allocation in July 2014, two regions were highlighted for their inter-connected regional problems of food insecurity and conflicts. The ERC allocated \$30.5 million to seven countries in the Sahel (Niger, Cameroon, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Nigeria and Gambia) and \$44.5 million to four countries in the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia). For the underfunded first round of 2015, two regions were highlighted in its allocations – the Syria crisis (\$77.5 million to Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey) and cross-border population movements in the Great Lakes (\$14 million to DRC, Burundi and Rwanda).

The regional approach has encouraged regional coordination on humanitarian programming, and has called attention to those regions which are affected by entwined complex humanitarian problems and facing funding shortage.

Creating an enabling environment for humanitarian assistance

CERF funds can be used as an enabler for humanitarian assistance, such as allowing humanitarian activities to take place where they have been limited due to constraints on access, logistics and security.

Throughout 2014, CERF funds were allocated to partners in South Sudan in response to the most pressing needs and in support of agencies on the ground identified priorities at that stage in the crisis. The first CERF rapid response allocation in February was used for camp management to deal with the urgent and immense displacement emergency and for humanitarian air services and security to enable humanitarian workers and supplies to reach affected people in need in a safe manner. As the situation continued and worsened, an April allocation allowed agencies to preposition critical relief supplies to remote locations and ensure supplies were available throughout the rainy season when roads and airstrips are inoperable. In November, as large-scale violence against civilians continued, the ERC granted an additional rapid response allocation in order to address emerging humanitarian needs in the "Protection of Civilian" sites and further strengthen safety and security for humanitarian staff. UN agencies in South Sudan faced a fluid and unpredictable situation, as well as large humanitarian requirements and lack of funds. By accessing CERF at key moments, the agencies on the ground were able to scale-up operations in a timely and effective manner.

Another example is the Ebola crisis. At the early stage of the crisis, aid workers were unable to reach affected people due to quarantines and the breakdown of transportation networks. In order to get much-needed staffing and supplies to the right places, the country teams of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone received allocations from the CERF to establish the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS). As a result, a range of agencies could assist people-in-need on the ground. The CERF funds were allocated to those three countries on three occasions in 2014, in addition to an allocation to Nigeria, for a total of \$15.2million.

Advocacy

Used coherently, CERF funds have great potential to help advocacy efforts by demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action and bringing attention to urgent humanitarian needs.

By clearly focusing its submission on two refugee camps, the humanitarian country team in Ethiopia was able to provide a range of core assistance such as food, non-food items, shelter and water to displaced people from South Sudan. They were then able to point to the success of assistance efforts in those camps in their advocacy with Government of Ethiopia during 2014. In the case of Uganda, the country team used CERF funds to showcase assistance to displaced people from South Sudan and their Ugandan host communities and thus encouraged the government of Uganda to continue hosting displaced population in communities rather than in refugee camps.

Five years following the start of the Syria crisis, the conflict continues to affect over 12 million people in Syria, in addition to three million refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Even though there is a continuing international support to the Syria crisis, data analysis for the first underfunded emergencies round in 2015 pointed to the critical funding gaps in this region as the crisis has turned into an increasingly protracted. Thus, the ERC decided to highlight the continuing unmet and urgent humanitarian needs of the Syrian people by allocating \$77.5 million to the region, which are used as an advocacy tool to highlight the ongoing, urgent needs. For example, in Egypt, the UN country team is advocating with the Egyptian Government by bringing further awareness to the critical food and nutritional needs of the Syrian refugee population through CERF funds. In Turkey, more robust support from the international community is sought to supplement the efforts of the State, which can no longer be expected to manage and sustain displaced Syrians with the existing resources and national capacity.

Leveraging funds

CERF funds represent only a small portion of the ever increasing humanitarian requirements. However, if a CERF application takes into account the larger humanitarian financing context, it can leverage other funds.

In late 2014, in South Sudan, the CERF was the first funding source that contributed to equipping IDP camps in a "Protection of Civilians" area; other donors followed suit. In Uganda, CERF funds were used to ensure the coherence of activities among the UN and NGOs working together in targeted geographical locations. Such a successful implementation of the CERF funded projects helped to motivate other donors to contribute funds to agencies in Uganda. Previously, in 2013, in Yemen, the CERF funds helped agencies to establish a presence on the ground, which helped bring donor attention and additional funds to the crisis. Similar experiences have been reported in Guatemala, Sudan, Myanmar, the Philippines, Madagascar, among others.

Responsibilities for strategic use

The respective RC/HCs are responsible for the strategic use of CERF and, to this end, a well-coordinated coherent submission must be put together by the (humanitarian) country teams. The CERF secretariat provides support and guidance for the strategic prioritisation process, as well as training for decision-makers and process-facilitators. The ERC is ultimately responsible for allocating funds as well as providing direction for advocacy through CERF funds.

CERF secretariat, 10 April 2015