



Overview of CERF field reporting

CERF Secretariat
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A. Introduction

Reporting is important to the CERF's accountability - not only to its donors, but also to its beneficiaries. The CERF field reports are the main source of reporting on the CERF. Detailed field reports are submitted annually by UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators on behalf of Humanitarian Country Teams in all CERF-recipient countries, in accordance with a template and guidelines developed by the CERF Secretariat¹.

This paper analyses the 47 CERF field reports covering CERF funded activities in 2010, as well as references made to reporting from the six Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF) reports carried out to date, and findings from the recent Five-year Evaluation of the CERF. The paper begins with a review of the progress made with reporting to date, provides a brief overview of information provided by the field reports, and concludes with a summary of planned improvements to CERF reporting.

B. Progress made with reporting to date:

The quality of the CERF field reports has improved considerably during the five years the Fund has been in operation. More than two thirds of the 47 reports covering 2010 activities were considered to be "good" or "reasonable" on initial submission, which is an improvement from previous years. The CERF Secretariat works closely with Humanitarian Country Teams to finalise the field reports, which are then made publicly available on the CERF website².

The overall quality of the reports is assessed on the basis of criteria such as the extent to which they correspond with the reporting guidelines, the number of changes needed, and the number of work hours required by the CERF Secretariat. The reports are also cross-referenced against the original project proposals to compare expected results with actual results.

'Good' reports have generally been completed in close accordance with the guidance provided by the CERF Secretariat. They contain comprehensive, accurate and concise information that has clearly been prepared in a consultative manner by the Humanitarian Country Team.

The 13 'weak' field reports were found to be missing important basic information such as beneficiary figures, financial information, and project results. They required considerable changes and significant work by the CERF Secretariat. The Secretariat has a dedicated reporting unit, which works closely with Humanitarian Country Teams to fulfil their CERF reporting obligations. Special attention is given to countries that provide weaker inputs.

The Secretariat's close working relationships with Country Teams have also benefited the timeliness of report submission. Nearly 94 per cent of the reports had been received by the end of April 2011, which is another improvement on previous years.

¹ Less detailed reports, submitted by UN agencies at the headquarters level, have not been reviewed in this paper.

² Field reports describing every CERF allocation since 2006 are available at :

<http://ochaonline.un.org/cerf/FieldReports/CERFNarrativeReports2010/tabid/7556/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Reporting guidance and templates have been made clearer and more straightforward since the CERF's inception, responding to feedback from the field. The current reporting format and guidance materials are generally well-accepted by Humanitarian Country Teams. The PAF review in Chad reports that Country Teams find the CERF reporting requirements straightforward to comply with (Chad PAF, p11). The PAF review in Colombia found that UN agencies had become well-accustomed to the CERF reporting process, which they had been able to align effectively with their own internal systems (Colombia PAF, p.24). The PAF review in Bolivia remarked that the CERF reporting formats were sufficiently detailed, and UN agencies expressed a high level of familiarity and comfort (Bolivia PAF, p.22).

C. Information provided by the field reports

The field reports provide useful data on how the CERF has been used, which cannot be easily obtained elsewhere. The field reports provide information about the beneficiaries of the CERF. We know for example that CERF funding in 2010 contributed to reaching 113 million people, 44 per cent of whom were female, and a further 29 per cent were children under-five.

The field reports also show how implementing partners have used CERF funding. We now know that 11 per cent of CERF funding was reported to have been forwarded to NGOs in 2010. The reports contain detailed information about funds provided to NGOs, including the names of the individual organizations and dates when exactly the funds were forwarded.

The main narrative section of the reports gives Humanitarian Country Teams the opportunity to describe the humanitarian context and coordination arrangements, as well as to analyse the CERF's added value. Four interesting trends emerge from the reports:

1. 92 per cent of countries described gender-specific interventions funded by the CERF, or took gender-specific needs into consideration when designing, implementing and monitoring CERF-funded projects. When inter-ethnic violence displaced hundreds of thousands of people in Kyrgyzstan for example, CERF funding enabled agencies to respond rapidly to sexual violence cases.
2. 75 per cent of countries noted that the CERF had contributed to improved partnerships with governments. During our last Advisory Group meeting we learned how in Kenya, CERF funding allowed the Humanitarian Country Team to support the Kenyan Ministries of Health to combat acute malnutrition.
3. 61 per cent of countries reported that CERF funds improved coordination among UN agencies, as well as with NGOs and Governments. The Resident Coordinator in the Central African Republic reported that CERF funding enabled UN agencies to focus on "a cross sectoral approach and integrated programmes to maximise the impact of funding".
4. 56 per cent of countries described how CERF funds expanded the number of beneficiaries reached. In Somalia, the Humanitarian Coordinator noted that without the CERF some 800,000 children under-five would not have been immunised against measles, DPT or polio, or provided with vitamin A supplements.

The field reports also provide Humanitarian Country Teams with the opportunity to reflect on the difficulties they experienced with Fund, and importantly to suggest follow-up actions and improvements. As well as encouraging Country Teams to improve the way they use the CERF, this feedback loop allows the Fund to evaluate its own performance and make its own improvements.

Many Humanitarian Country Teams reflected in the 2010 reports on the importance of coordination when using the CERF, not only between UN agencies, but also with NGOs and Government partners. A greater commitment to humanitarian coordination was reflected in the follow-up actions they set for themselves.

While the CERF is not able to fund preparedness activities directly, the field reports do suggest that the Fund has had a lasting positive impact on resilience in-country. Many reports noted that preparedness was important to their use of the CERF, through initiatives such as contingency planning, pre-existing relationships with implementing partners, and pre-positioning of emergency supplies.

D. Planned improvements to CERF reporting during 2011 and 2012:

The Five-year Evaluation of the CERF and management response plan provide new momentum for improvements to be made to the CERF's reporting.

Recommendation 8 from the Five-year Evaluation recommends “strengthened CERF monitoring and learning systems at the country level to improve CERF impact”. The CERF Secretariat will be focusing even greater efforts on supporting Humanitarian Country Teams fulfil their reporting obligations during the 2011 reports process. Additional support and guidance will be given to countries that have provided weaker inputs in preceding years.

The Secretariat is also committed to making further improvements to the guidance and template for CERF reports, with the aim of encouraging even more interactive and inclusive processes. Humanitarian Country Teams will be supported with conducting lessons learned workshops to review their use of the CERF in a participatory way, outcomes from which will feed into the reports. In cases where after-action reviews of emergencies are already taking place, Humanitarian Country Teams will be encouraged to incorporate a CERF component.

In accordance with *recommendation 15* from the evaluation, which recommends the “integration of UN-managed pooled funds into cluster performance systems”, the CERF Secretariat is planning to work with cluster lead agencies to explore options for closer integration of monitoring frameworks at the country level. Broader engagement of humanitarian stakeholders in reporting on the CERF through the clusters would clearly benefit the reports and improve their usefulness.

Recommendation 16 from the evaluation recommends the “dissemination and promotion of good practice examples”. Here again, CERF reporting will benefit, as best practice examples of 2010 field reporting (from countries such as Mongolia and Nepal) are shared with other Humanitarian Country Teams and exchanges of good practices are encouraged.