



Evaluation of FAO Interventions Funded by the CERF

Final Report

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Abbreviations

CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
EMPRES	Emergency Prevention Systems (FAO)
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator (UN)
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAS	Field Office Accounting System
FFS	Farmer Field School
FPMIS	Field Programme Monitoring and Information System (FAO)
GOUM	Government of the Union of Myanmar
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Germany)
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standards
IRLCO-CSA	International Red Locust Control Organization for Central and Southern Africa
JFFLS	Junior Farmer Field and Life School
KFSM	Kenya Food Security Meeting
LoA	Letters of Agreement
LoU	Letters of Understanding
McRAM	Multi-Cluster Rapid Assessment Mechanism
MT	Metric Ton
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRS	Northern Rakhine State (Myanmar)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OED	Office of Evaluation (FAO)
PONJA	Post-Nargis Joint Assessment
PPR	Peste des Petits Ruminants
RC	Resident Coordinator
RR	Rapid Response
RVF	Rift Valley Fever
SAP	Système d'Alerte Précoce (Niger)
SFERA	Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (FAO)
SGB	Secretary General Bulletin
TCP	Technical Cooperation Programme
UFE	Underfunded Emergencies
UK	United Kingdom

UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
US	United States
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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<p>Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this document are solely those of the independent evaluation team and do not necessarily reflect the official views of FAO or of any other stakeholder.</p>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Evaluation

The evaluation of CERF-funded projects implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, or the Organization) was undertaken by its Office of Evaluation (OED) in 2009-2010 to provide feedback and guidance to FAO's management on operational processes, constraints and projects achievements so far, and to account for the use of CERF funds to the CERF Secretariat, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, donors, governments of countries affected by crises and other stakeholders. The evaluation was meant to be forward looking and to contribute to improved relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of emergency activities carried out by FAO with CERF funding in the future. It was timed to serve as an input in the food security sector for the five-year global evaluation of the CERF, foreseen in 2010-2011.

The evaluation used a range of methods, including initial briefings in Rome and New York, visits to OCHA regional offices in Dakar, Bangkok and Johannesburg, a portfolio review of all FAO CERF-funded projects, an analysis of key corporate databases, and eight case studies in a purposeful sample of countries (Cuba, Kenya, Lesotho, Myanmar, Niger, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and a regional project on red locust control in Southern Africa). In each sampled country, OED selected, hired and trained two or three independent consultants to conduct the case study. The case study consultants met with the broadest possible array of partners and beneficiaries in country and produced country reports which served as a basis for the present synthesis report. Two previous evaluation processes in Syria and Tajikistan that had covered CERF projects in 2009 also informed the present evaluation.

The CERF

Created in December 2005 and launched in March 2006, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF, or the Fund) was established to support more timely and reliable assistance to those affected by armed conflicts and natural disasters, through a grant facility of up to US\$450 million per year and a loan facility of US\$50 million. Since FAO has had limited use of the loan facility, the evaluation focused on the grant component, which is further divided in two "windows": one for rapid response (RR), receiving two thirds of the grants, and another one for underfunded emergencies (UFE), receiving the remaining third. The objectives of these grants are to:

- a) Promote early action and response to reduce loss of life;
- b) Enhance response to time-critical requirements; and
- c) Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises.

Specific activities eligible in the agricultural sector include the provision of farming inputs, emergency livestock vaccinations, control of major transboundary pests such as locusts and spot repairs of agricultural infrastructure.

The CERF is managed by the UN's Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), who consults with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HC) in country to determine priorities for the use of funds. In this function, the ERC is supported by a CERF Secretariat

hosted by OCHA, and counselled by an Advisory Group of 16 experts representing donors, recipient governments and NGOs.

CERF funding to FAO

Since its inception, the CERF has provided more than \$1.5 billion to address humanitarian needs around the globe. The share of these CERF allocations entrusted to FAO remains modest, at 11 percent. Within FAO emergency and rehabilitation programmes, the share funded by the CERF has raised over the years from 7 percent in 2006 to 12 percent in 2009. The CERF represents a key financial instrument for FAO because it provides early funding, allowing to respond to the most pressing needs shortly after a sudden-onset disaster or early enough during a slow-onset disaster to be effective (e.g. for locust control).

FAO proposals are quickly reviewed, approved and funded but not as quickly as was intended. Over the evaluated period (2006-2009), the time from the first proposal submission to receiving the funds took on average 35 days for the RR window, and 51 days for the UFE window. The large number of UFE projects to be processed twice a year tends to delay approval, including for RR projects at these times of year. From data recently communicated by the CERF Secretariat, it would appear that the speed of project document processing has improved in 2010, following the hiring of additional staff towards the end of 2009.

Relevance and needs assessments

All country case studies reports concluded that the needs were correctly assessed and that CERF projects responded to these needs in a relevant manner. However, one could debate the relevance of the 2008 CERF projects addressing the global increase in food prices.

The CERF places significant emphasis on multi-stakeholder need assessments. Guidelines and policy documents describe a transparent, inclusive and multi-sectoral process conducted by UN teams and governments and with the participation of NGOs. In the sample, true multi-sectoral and inter-agency need assessments only took place in Sri Lanka and Pakistan. In other countries, need assessments tended to remain sector-specific even though they were typically conducted by several agencies (e.g. FAO, WFP and the respective governments). Only in Myanmar and Cuba were the needs assessments providing the basis for CERF projects conducted by one single organization (FAO and the Government's civil defence unit, respectively).

The evidence from this evaluation is that multi-stakeholder need assessments, by offsetting possible biases within each stakeholder, can promote a form of peer review and therefore buttress objectivity, accuracy and transparency in identifying needs and setting priorities. This does not mean that each and every needs assessment must involve a completely holistic and ultimately unwieldy approach. Convening multi-agency needs assessments can take time. The frame of analysis and the partners best placed to conducting it must be based on the apparent nature of the problem, sometimes circumscribed to a single sector.

Well-functioning UN Country Teams and clusters can help reach consensus on priorities. A critical factor here is the personalities involved. The UN RC/HC represents the most important actor. The CERF "programme theory" postulates that the UN country team should arrive at clear priorities under the chairmanship of the RC/HC. However, some RC/HC tend to "divide the cake" of the CERF allocation among UN agencies to avoid conflicts, thus diluting its

potential effectiveness. There is a fine line between strong leadership and authoritarianism, and between clear priorities and a narrow-minded approach. HCs and cluster chairs have to negotiate tradeoffs between the need for clear priorities and the necessity to reach a consensus on those priorities through an inclusive process, all this under severe time pressure.

Effectiveness

Based on the evidence from the eight country case studies, the evaluation concludes that FAO used its CERF funding to provide an important humanitarian contribution to communities affected by crises through time-critical interventions geared to protect self-reliant livelihoods. Its contribution to saving lives was often indirect – the exception being zoonoses which impact directly on human health – but squarely within the CERF guidelines on how to interpret the life saving criteria. Interventions can be classified in two broad *modus operandi*:

- Pre-crisis: interventions that attempt to control the escalation of a “biological threat” to productive assets and human health, such as livestock vaccinations or locust control operations; and
- Post-crisis: distributions of farming inputs such as seed, fertilizer, tools, livestock and livestock feed to mitigate the effects of a crisis on livelihoods after it has run its course.

The pre-crisis *modus operandi* seems to work better for locust control than for livestock disease control, mainly on account of pesticides being storable goods with a long shelf life, and hence available faster than some vaccines. The locust control project in Southern Africa could rapidly mobilise pesticides from aging stocks in Mali using the FAO “pesticide triangulation” programme. In contrast, the vaccines for Rift Valley Fever, Peste des Petits Ruminants or Anthrax in Kenya and Lesotho had to be tendered and in some case produced by the supplier on demand from FAO. As a result, these vaccinations tended to come fairly late in the development of the outbreak, sometimes too late to be effective.

The assistance provided under the post-crisis *modus operandi* was generally of good quality. Some problems occurred in the rare cases when the varieties, breeds or types of items distributed were not the same as those currently used in target areas. Quantitatively speaking, what FAO gives is often quite small as compared to the losses incurred by beneficiaries, e.g. when small CERF allocations are supposed to meet large needs caused by sudden onset disasters. This being said, farmers can often complement the assistance with inputs procured by themselves. There is also a risk that too large an assistance, usually provided free of charge, may create dependency and undermine more sustainable input supply mechanisms.

Timeliness

In spite of recent improvements in procurement procedures, timeliness remains the main constraint to the effectiveness of FAO emergency programmes. Farming inputs are often distributed *during* and sometimes *at the tail end* of the planting season, although the best practice would be to distribute them *before* the season to allow farmers to properly plan their use.

The short timeframes imposed by the CERF have forced FAO to shorten its delivery periods but there is room for further progress. The Organization must show no complacency with the timeliness of its delivery, as this would undermine its impact, its credibility and then in turn its access to the Fund, predicated on the time-critical criteria. Unfortunately, the impressive

financial and geographic expansion of the FAO emergency and rehabilitation programmes over the past decade has not been supported by a systematic institutional effort to raise operational capacity across the board at country level. In addition, the current information management systems of FAO do not permit a rapid and seamless flow of budgetary and implementation information from the field to headquarters. This hampers the capacity of headquarters to track project performance against benchmarks in real time.

Partnerships

Partnerships were generally an area of strength, making use of the comparative advantages of NGOs, CBOs, governments and UN organizations. FAO tended to work with well-established partners in the implementation of its CERF-funded projects, appropriately so since efficient execution was strongly correlated with the capacity of Implementing Partners (IPs). Some NGO partners complained about administrative deficiencies. Many sought to place the relationship on a more equal footing and stressed the importance of getting good technical support and capacity building from FAO rather than just funding. The instrument used by FAO to document and administer partnerships (Letters of Agreement) is unfit for purpose and is currently being revised.

Long-term partnerships forged by FAO's development work over the past decades often proved very helpful when implementing short-term emergency interventions. The most effective CERF-funded projects in the sample were those which provided surge capacity to actors with pre-existing field presence and emergency or development programmes, helping them address a particularly acute crisis or threat at a particular time.

Equity and targeting

In most of the reviewed projects, clear beneficiary selection criteria were stated in programme documentation and contracts with IPs. However, these criteria were often adapted at field level to take into account the perspectives and recommendations of communities. Generally these local modifications tended to weaken targeting criteria and broaden the set of eligible beneficiaries.

Given the short timeframe of CERF rapid response projects and the risk of bias in establishing distribution lists, the evaluation concludes on the need for more general targeting guidelines focussed on process, especially for easily sharable items such as seed or fertiliser, leaving it up to capable NGOs and communities to transparently select broad groups of deserving households at the field level. This would minimize tensions, be perceived as more equitable at the community level, save time in terms of planning, coordination and packaging (bulk packaging is cheaper and faster than packaging individual kits), and the result would not be significantly different.

Reporting

Substantive reports on the use of CERF funds are prepared annually at the country level by recipient agencies, consolidated by the RC/HC, forwarded to the CERF Secretariat and the ERC for quality control, and ultimately published on the CERF website. Timeliness in reporting has been improving according to the CERF Secretariat but remains an issue for all agencies. The Secretariat is not in a position to verify the veracity of those reports independently. Consolidated CERF UNCT annual reports would benefit from more ground-

truthing and peer review by the UN Country Teams and implementing partners. More attention to timelines (i.e. date of procurement and delivery to recipients) also appears in order, especially when reporting on rapid response projects.

Recommendations

1. Building upon its development programme and long term presence in most countries, FAO should continue to mobilise knowledgeable specialists from the government, pre-existing development projects and NGOs to participate in needs assessments.
2. Time permitting, FAO should strive to participate in multi-stakeholder needs assessments to buttress objectivity, accuracy and transparency in identifying needs and priorities after disasters that are likely to have affected many sectors. However, a holistic approach to needs assessments takes time and may become unwieldy and unnecessary in well-defined crises, e.g. locust outbreaks.
3. In the most disaster-prone countries, the Organization should continue to support early warning systems and/or the collection of simple livelihoods profiles and agricultural calendars developed on the basis of farmers' own knowledge initially captured at needs assessment time and further refined throughout the response under the aegis of the agriculture or food security cluster (or a similar coordination mechanism).
4. A standardisation of CERF projects technical approaches is desirable from a quality control view point, following the approach developed by the Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service. By virtue of their short duration, CERF projects must use simple and standard approaches and concentrate on replacing the most urgently needed production assets to ensure some level of food production and incomes, rather than aim at increasing food production levels as compared to pre-crisis times (see also recommendation 20).
5. If confirmed by the 5-year evaluation of the CERF, seasonal delays in the approval of CERF projects, due to a large number of UFE projects to be processed at specific times in the year, deserve consideration by the CERF Secretariat with a view to "insulate" rapid response projects from this effect, i.e. ensure that the approval process for RR projects remains unaffected by delays in the UFE window.
6. Programme staff need to be better aware of the typical delivery durations to expect from various procurement approaches and should start procurement and contracting as early as possible; "pre-procurement" (starting procurement before the official project start date) should become the rule for CERF Rapid Response projects; repeat orders are a very powerful tool for rapid delivery, when based on previous tenders that were well conducted and answered to by a sufficient number of suppliers.
7. Taking greater account, and in some countries developing a more precise knowledge of how cropping calendars change from one locality, elevation or agro-ecological zone to the next would allow field teams to better schedule delivery and provide farming inputs *before* rather than *during* the sowing season, it as is often the case currently. It may also help judge when catching the next season is doable and when it is more realistic to aim at subsequent seasons (see recommendation 8).

8. Based on the selected procurement approach and possibilities of a repeat order or not, programme staff should make an educated guess about whether or not asking for CERF funds to “catch the next crop”. As a rule of thumb, if one can do a repeat order or sole source contract with a supplier that has the goods in stock, one should expect a lead time of one to two months from procurement start to delivery of the inputs to farmers. This lead time jumps to a bare minimum of 3 months, and more likely a period from 4 to 6 months if the procurement needs to be tendered nationally or internationally.
9. To support and manage the early response to emergency situations, the FAO development-oriented staff at country level need to acquire “emergency expertise” through the provision of an ongoing and specific awareness raising and implementation training programme. This may require to integrate emergencies in corporate training programmes, and to devote resources either from the FAO regular programme budget or from donors to training staff and consultants at the country level on the management of emergency programmes.
10. The FAO corporate information management systems need to catch up with increasingly decentralized operations. Personnel managing emergency programmes need documented standardised processes, proforma and accounting and procurement management software that allow for a seamless flow of information from the field to headquarters and vice versa. Ultimately, the Oracle systems used by FAO for accounting, managing human resources and processing procurement orders should be expanded to support field operations, including accounting, LoAs tracking and the monitoring of procurement. As developing and rolling out these applications at the country level may take some time, an emergency operations management tool kit is required in the interim, including ready to use spreadsheet formats for field budget monitoring, procurement planning and tracking, monitoring of implementing partner progress against the LoAs, tracking of beneficiary numbers (planned vs. actual), plus associated operations manuals and guidelines.¹
11. FAO, while upholding the humanitarian principle of neutrality, should continue to develop and maintain working relationships with governmental and non-governmental actors, with a preference for actors with a long-term commitment and good community links in the targeted areas, to allow faster and more effective emergency programmes and to facilitate sustainability and the transition into subsequent recovery and development programmes.
12. FAO should treat its implementing partners as real, substantive partners and attempt to include core implementing partners in the scoping, design and specification of proposed interventions more than is currently the case; FAO should also support valuable projects designed directly by partners themselves, when appropriate.
13. To equalize the relationship with implementing partners, the new FAO Manual Section 507 and new partnership instrument should be completed as soon as possible and made available to operational teams.
14. Just as donors and FAO sometimes insist that local partners give some visibility to their assistance by putting their logos on boards or publications (“downward visibility”),

¹ This recommendation is in line with recommendations 5.2 and 5.3 from the Evaluation of FAO’s Operational Capacity in Emergencies.

FAO should systematically include the logos of its implementing partners in project completion reports and brochures to recognise the importance of their contribution (“upward visibility”).

15. Good technical leadership is an integral contribution of FAO to a disaster response and deserves to be further strengthened. FAO should continue the excellent work undertaken in most sample countries by its technical teams to support implementing partners with relevant technical assistance and training during emergency responses, ideally conveyed by national experts with strong field experience.
16. In the immediate response to a disaster, and hence in most CERF rapid response projects, targeting for assets replacement projects should primarily focus at the *village* level (selection of most affected villages). For *household* targeting, FAO should provide IPs with general guidelines focussed on process rather than precise criteria, especially for easily sharable items such as seed or fertiliser. In the interest of saving time and protecting cohesion / social capital at the community level at a time when they need it most, the targeted communities should be provided with the opportunity to decide how they want the proposed inputs distributed in a transparent way within their community.
17. More focused targeting (taking account of factors such as food insecurity or productive capacity) can be developed later after disasters, as communities have recovered sufficiently to have the time and motivation to participate in community based needs assessment and wealth ranking exercises, but also in protracted crises and slow-onset emergencies; hence precise targeting is more relevant for UFE projects than for RR ones.
18. Just as FAO headquarters have delegated implementation for some of larger procurement activities to field offices, there may be opportunities to improve the effectiveness of procurement by delegating procurement of some items to the implementing partners² or directly to the beneficiaries through a voucher and fair system, especially when the type of inputs to supply varies significantly from one locality to the next. Experience from the pilot voucher-based distributions in Africa should be incorporated into FAO procedures and emergency operations management tool kits. However, input fairs take some time to set up and require local availability of inputs; therefore they are probably not relevant immediately after a sudden disaster but better suited to slow-onset disasters and protracted crises, or to the later recovery period after a rapid onset natural disaster. When used in the context of a CERF project, they should be kept as simple as possible, avoiding complex work-for-vouchers schemes.
19. In the emergency and early rehabilitation phases, FAO should continue to give preference to varieties / breeds / types that are the same as those currently used in the target areas and are familiar to beneficiaries. The only reason for using a new type of inputs not known to the target groups during a rapid response project would be when the local, customary inputs are not available (see also recommendation 4).
20. The life-saving criterion of the CERF should continue to be interpreted flexibly as a bulwark to focus the funds on humanitarian needs, including the protection of self-

² This is currently not allowed by FAO procurement rules and needs to be discussed as part of the ongoing review of the LoA tool.

reliant livelihoods and food availability through time-critical agricultural interventions in accordance with CERF sectoral guidelines.

21. FAO and other organisations involved in livelihoods should continue to advocate, on behalf of the very communities they are trying to help, for livelihood protection as a legitimate humanitarian issue, recognising however that this line of work differs from palliative relief operations in that it aims to support the resilience of experienced economic actors whose technical know-how deserves respect and attention during needs assessment, selection of deliverables and timing of their delivery (see recommendations 3, 20 and 7, respectively).
22. The CERF Secretariat should amend the narrative report format so that each and every CERF annual country report contains, per sector and for each agency, a timeline of interventions, including the dates for procurement and delivery of assistance to beneficiaries.
23. Clusters and the UNCT should be required to systematically review CERF country narrative reports and the performance of each project annually, with a view to providing some degree of peer review and improving report quality. Along the same lines and similarly to what is often the case during needs assessments, the clusters and UNCT could usefully evaluate responses and learn from the experience as a group.

PART 1 - BACKGROUND

1. The evaluation

Background

During a visit of the FAO/TCE Director to OCHA in December 2008, it was proposed that FAO undertake its own evaluation of the CERF-funded projects it implements so as to contribute to the global 5-year CERF evaluation. The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) was approached in January 2009 and agreed to accommodate this evaluation in its programme for 2009. This report presents the methodology, finding, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

Objectives and scope

The evaluation was intended to provide feedback and guidance to FAO's management on operational processes, constraints and projects achievements in order to i) improve the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of emergency activities carried out by FAO under the CERF; ii) serve as an input in the food security sector to the five-year evaluation of the CERF foreseen for 2010-2011; and iii) account for the use of CERF funds to the CERF Secretariat, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, donors, governments of countries affected by crises and other stakeholders.

The evaluation analyzed a variety of CERF-funded and FAO-implemented projects, reviewing the use by FAO of both the underfunded and rapid-response grants³. However, and since FAO has had only limited use of the loan window, this instrument was not covered by the evaluation⁴.

Methodology

CERF-funded activities were assessed against the OECD-DAC and UNEG criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, supplemented with additional criteria more specific to emergency assistance, namely coordination, partnerships, equity (including gender and social inclusion) and connectedness with longer-term activities. The evaluation used a range of methods going from initial briefings in Rome and New York, a desk review of all FAO CERF-funded projects to identify the main types of interventions and arrive at a purposeful sampling of countries to be covered by the evaluation field work, and eight country case studies: Cuba, Kenya, Lesotho, Myanmar, Niger, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and a regional project on red locust control in Southern Africa⁵.

³ See next section for a description of the CERF windows.

⁴ FAO's reliance on the CERF lending window was significant prior to the creation of FAO's own programme lending tool (Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities - SFERA) in 2004, but is now confined to Sudan where it is used to cover the lag between donor pledges and fund transfer from the Common Humanitarian Fund.

⁵ Red locust control operations were implemented in Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique. Of these, the evaluation mission visited only Tanzania where the operations were completed at the time (September 2009). It also travelled to Zambia to visit the headquarters of IRLCO-CSA, the regional red locust control organisation which implemented the project with FAO.

Table 1: Evaluation Country Case Studies

Country / crisis	Total CERF financial size (US\$, as of September 2009)	Number of CERF projects evaluated		Crises addressed by CERF projects	Type of intervention supported	Reasons for selection as case study
		Rapid response	Under-funded crises			
Cuba	897,729	2		Climatic (hurricanes like & Gustav)	Seeds, tools and irrigation equipment for peri-urban agriculture	Latin America; projects managed by Government
Kenya ^	7,121,557	4	2	Climatic (drought and floods) Biological (RVF, PPR) Economic (soaring food prices) Conflict (post-election crisis)	Animal health (RFV); rehab. of animal dips; training; seeds & fertilizer	Large and diverse CERF portfolio
Lesotho	3,321,585	3		Biological (anthrax) Economic (soaring food prices)	Seeds, tools & fertilizer; animal vaccination	Large CERF portfolio, including on soaring food prices
Niger	2,769,282	2	1	Climatic (drought and floods) Economic (soaring food prices)	Seeds & tools	Situation representative of other West African crises, presence of early warning system
Myanmar	2,400,000	1	1	Climatic (Nargis hurricane) Protracted (North Rakhine State)	Seeds & tools; restocking of livestock	Major natural disaster, large FAO response, significant engagement with the Government
Pakistan *	1,701,836	3		Climatic (floods) Economic (soaring food prices)	Seeds & fertilizer; animal feed	Conflict-affected country °
Sri Lanka	2,102,793	4	1	Conflict (Tamil Tigers in North and East of the country)	Seeds, tools & fertilizer	Conflict-affected country with projects specifically addressing conflict
Red locusts control in Southern Africa	1,873,825	1		Biological (red locust)	Preventive control through surveys + chemical and biological pesticide treatments	Locusts control - disaster prevention; ongoing operation and hence real time evaluation potential
Total	22,188,607	20	5			

^ Kenya: including US\$1,565,420 from two regional projects (RAF/604 & RAF/608)

* Pakistan: 5 projects worth US\$3,619,136 had been implemented at evaluation time but two projects could not be covered by the evaluation for security reasons.

° Although the CERF projects in Pakistan do not address the conflict, their implementation is affected by poor security.

The country case studies were selected in order to achieve the best possible level of representativeness, using the following variables:

- use of various CERF instruments (underfunded and rapid response grants);
- types of emergency (natural disasters, conflicts, soaring food prices, pest outbreak or animal disease);
- types of emergency intervention (input distribution, small-scale irrigation, locust control, animal health, etc.);
- current security and emergency situation allowing or hampering field work; and
- geographic coverage.

In addition to the country case studies listed above, information was also made available by other evaluation processes on one CERF-funded project implemented by FAO in Syria and two projects in Tajikistan. The total number of projects covered in the present evaluation is therefore of 28, i.e. slightly below one fifth of the 160 CERF-funded projects implemented by FAO from 2006 to 2009.

The analysis of efficiency placed particular emphasis on timeliness, since the primary objective of the rapid response window is to speed up delivery of urgent assistance to disaster-affected communities. Timelines were drawn in all country case studies, recording the time taken from the initial crisis to needs assessment, proposals development, funding, procurement and contracting of implementation partners, and final delivery of assistance to beneficiaries. Project approval dates were compiled based on data provided by FAO and the CERF Secretariat about 142 projects approved from March 2006 to May 2009. The evaluation also analyzed FAO financial and procurement databases covering the entire CERF portfolio over the period 2006-2009 in order to determine how fast the Organization was in using CERF funds.

In each country, the FAO Office of Evaluation selected, hired and trained two or three independent consultants to conduct the case study. Consultants were usually nationals, with the exception of Cuba, Myanmar and Tanzania, where it was deemed important to pair one national and one international so as to make sure the team enjoyed the right level of technical expertise and independence. Each case study lasted two to three months and reviewed the relevance, performance, timeliness, effectiveness and connectedness of CERF-supported activities, following a common methodological framework and using a variety of methods:

- a review of project documents and implementation reports;
- semi-structured individual interviews and group meetings with FAO and Implementing Partners (IP) staff at national and provincial levels;
- focus group sessions at community level with beneficiaries and non beneficiaries;
- direct field observation;
- meetings at national level with Government and donors representatives; and
- collection of secondary data (policies, strategies, guidelines, kit content lists, training materials, monitoring reports, etc.).

Case study consultants (Annex 2) met with the broadest possible array of partners in country, including beneficiaries of the concerned projects and produced country reports which served as the main basis for the present synthesis report.

The preliminary results from each case study were presented to FAO and its partners in country for discussion, validation and/or fine-tuning in a series of meeting and/or shared via email. All country reports will ultimately be made public, together with the synthesis report.

Field work stretched from June 2009 to April 2010. It was slowed down by insecurity and conflicts in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. These delays were anticipated, but had to be accepted inasmuch as CERF projects are often implemented in areas rife with conflict. Excluding such countries would have affected the representativeness of the sample.

FAO evaluation officers also paid a visit to the CERF secretariat in New York to validate the evaluation framework and methodology, collect information on the project approval process and inquire about their perception of FAO as a partner. Similar visits were made to OCHA regional offices in Dakar, Bangkok and Johannesburg.

Such an evaluation specific to a particular source of funds constitutes an exception to the normal approach to emergency programme evaluations in FAO, which is to evaluate operations and responses to specific crises, irrespective of which donors funded them. This exception appeared justified given the specific purposes of the fund (to support early response and underfunded responses) and its operational idiosyncrasies (rapid disbursements to agencies; short periods to commit funds; importance of the life-saving criteria; allocations to “forgotten emergencies”; etc.). However, it was not without methodological consequences. Given the programmatic nature of most FAO emergency operations, CERF-funded projects did in many cases form part of a larger livelihoods support programme. In each sampled country, the evaluators had to analyze CERF projects within the broader context of the FAO response to a particular issue or disaster. In many cases, it was impossible to single out precisely the impact of a particular CERF project, because funds had been pooled with those of other projects to pay for agricultural inputs distributed to beneficiaries.

2. Overview of the CERF

Objectives

The CERF is a \$500 million fund established to support more timely and reliable assistance to those affected by armed conflict and natural disasters. It was created in December 2005 through resolution 60/124 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which added a grant facility of up to US\$450 million to the US\$50 million loan facility of what had been known until then as the Central Emergency Revolving Fund.

The new Fund was launched on 9 March 2006. It is managed by the UN’s Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). The ERC regularly consults with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HC) to determine priorities for the use of funds. An Advisory Group of 16 experts representing donors, recipient governments and NGOs provides the ERC with broad policy advice on the implementation of the Fund to ensure accountability and transparency. The Fund is supported by a secretariat hosted by OCHA in New York, governed by UN Financial Regulations and Rules, and financially administered by the Office of the Controller. As phrased in the Secretary General Bulletin 2006/10, its objectives are to:

Ensure a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies, based on demonstrable needs and on priorities identified in consultation with the affected states, as appropriate. Specifically, the objectives of the grant element shall be:

- a) Promoting early action and response to reduce loss of life;*
- b) Enhancing response to time-critical requirements; and*
- c) Strengthening core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises.*

Beyond those specific objectives, the Fund was also intended as one element of the humanitarian reform agenda and is expected to contribute to other elements, such as the development of effective partnerships between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors.

Funding

The CERF is funded by voluntary contributions from Member States of the UN, private businesses, foundations and individuals. Since March 2006, CERF has provided more than \$1.5 billion to address humanitarian needs around the globe. CERF was conceived as providing additional funding to regular humanitarian funding by bilateral donors. Annual outflows of US\$ 500 million from the CERF represent only 3% of global humanitarian funding, estimated at US\$ 15.1 billion in 2009 by the research group Development Initiatives⁶.

The loan facility is a revolving fund allowing access to funds ahead of the transfer of donor pledges. The grant component is comprised of two windows: one for rapid response and one for underfunded crises. Two thirds of the grant facility's provisions are for rapid-response and one-third for under-funded crises, as stated in the Secretary-General's Bulletin of 10 October 2006. The suggested minimum CERF allocation per project is US \$ 100,000, although larger allocations are recommended to ensure maximum impact.

Eligibility criteria

UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are eligible to apply for funding under the grant facility. Governmental entities and NGOs may receive CERF funds indirectly, as partners of UN agencies. A number of NGOs and NGO consortiums have advocated for more direct access.

In order to guide project preparation and screening, the CERF Secretariat further refined the three basic criteria (life-saving, time-critical and underfunded) in consultation with the IASC and UN agencies. The refined criteria specified more clearly which activities are eligible and which are not. The most detailed expression of this effort is found in a document entitled "CERF Life-Saving Criteria and Sectoral Activities"⁷ that defines life-saving humanitarian programmes as: "those actions that within a short time span remedy, mitigate or avert direct loss of life, physical harm or threats to a population or major portion thereof". It further defines "time-critical" as referring to "necessary, rapid and time-limited actions required to immediately avert or minimize additional loss of lives and damage to social and economic

⁶ Global Humanitarian Assistance Report for 2010. The report relies mainly on data provided by the OECD-DAC and OCHA's Financial Tracking System (FTS), and warns that "domestic response, the response that has its origins in the affected country, and ranges from individuals and families through to national administrations and militaries, is [...] largely uncounted."

⁷ CERF Secretariat, 7 August 2007.

assets”. The latter clause relative to social and economic assets makes room for the type of livelihoods protection work that FAO is carrying out.

The document includes a table summarizing the criteria for interventions in IASC recognized sectors. The criterion for agriculture is: *Agricultural activities that have a direct and immediate impact on protecting and restoring food availability and the livelihoods of families affected by an emergency*. Six specific agriculture-related activities are eligible for CERF funding, as long as they are “time-critical”:

- Provision of seeds, fertilizers and tools to restore food security and production capacity;
- Emergency livestock vaccination campaigns to ensure survival of productive animals;
- Livestock de-stocking and restocking;
- Provision of water and supplementary feeding for livestock to ensure their survival;
- Control of transboundary pest (i.e. locust⁸);
- Spot repairs of agricultural infrastructure and flood-control embankments.

In addition to the above, projects funded from the underfunded window must abide to two additional criteria:

- they should strengthen core, essential elements of humanitarian response;
- they should be demonstrably under-funded at time of request.

Activities and types of expenses that are explicitly excluded from CERF funding are:

- OCHA’s own programmes and activities;
- recurrent costs (government staff salaries, maintenance costs, etc.);
- generic early warning and prevention activities;
- regular agency stockpiling;
- sector-specific needs assessments (only *inter-agency* needs assessment can be funded, and only for new emergencies); and
- capacity building and training (funded only if related to direct implementation of emergency response).

The reason OCHA is not eligible for CERF is in part to avoid a conflict of interest, since OCHA administers the fund. Other excluded items illustrate a will to concentrate funding on activities with an immediate impact on the lives of affected populations.

Project cycle

The way proposals are prepared and approved illustrates the connection with other pillars of the humanitarian reform. Agencies cannot submit proposals directly to the ERC. Rather, the UN Country Team (UNCT) must jointly establish priorities under the leadership of the RC/HC, who then formally submits the proposals to the ERC and is accountable for the subsequent grants. This is intended to provide the RC/HC with some leverage and strengthens his coordinating function. For the rapid response window, the process is often part of the preparation of a humanitarian appeal, a part of which the CERF is expected to fund. In some countries, CERF proposals are discussed and elaborated upon in cluster meetings.

⁸ FAO has argued that this should include control of epizootic diseases that seriously endanger human health and lives, e.g. for animal diseases that are transmittable to humans.

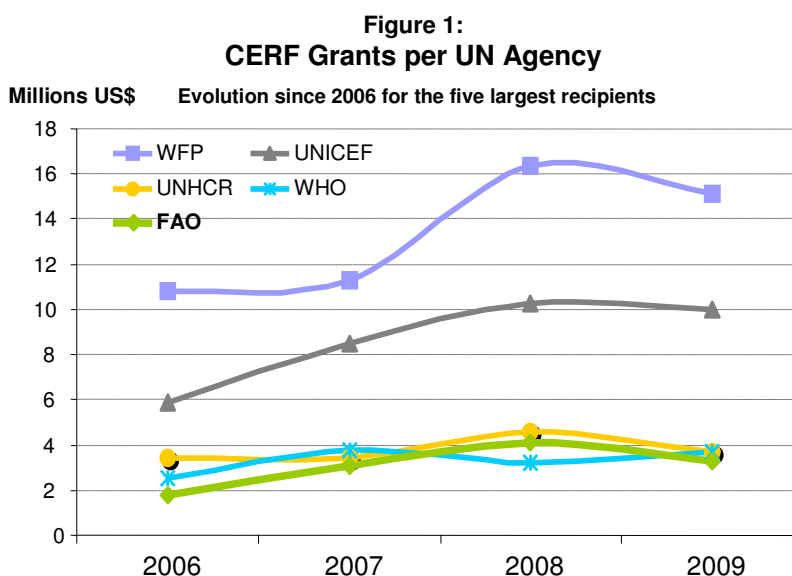
Allocations for the underfunded crises window are made twice a year in February/March and July/August based on a review of funding levels for current crises. For countries with a CAP, the CERF Secretariat and the ERC review CAP funding levels as recorded in OCHA's Financial Tracking Service and select the most underfunded CAPs. For countries without a CAP, the selection is based on a series of teleconferences between UN agencies, each agency proposing countries for which they see a need. This list of countries is shortened, harmonized and prioritized before being presented to the ERC, who makes the final selection and allocates target budgets to each country. Once country budgets are allocated, each RC/HC convenes a meeting of the Country Team to determine gaps in the response and prioritize needs. RC/HCs may allocate CERF funds by cluster and may ask cluster leads to prioritize CERF-funded projects within their clusters. NGOs should theoretically be included in the prioritization and selection process. Based on priorities agreed by the UNCT, the RC/HC reviews the proposals from agencies and/or clusters, endorses those that he/she feels are appropriate for the CERF, apportions the country budget to those and forwards the complete proposal to the ERC⁹.

Once approved and funded, CERF projects must be implemented quickly. The Secretary General Bulletin 2006/10 stipulates that all rapid response project activities should be completed within three months of their funding. This very short deadline quickly arose as a problem for many UN agencies including FAO, and since 2007 has been interpreted as: all project funds should be *committed* within three months, and all project activities should be completed during the following three months¹⁰. This is sometimes referred to as the "3+3 months rule". For the underfunded window, agencies must commit funds by the end of the allocation year for grants from the first tranche allocated in March-April each year, and by 30 June of the following year for grants from the second tranche allocated in August-September; i.e. funds for a project approved in the first tranche of 2009 must be fully committed by 31 December 2009. Therefore agencies have slightly more time (9 to 10 months) to commit funds obtained from the underfunded window than is the case for the rapid response window.

3. CERF funding to FAO

Size of CERF funding to FAO

Since its inception in March 2006 until 10 April 2010, the Fund has granted FAO US\$144,735,814, i.e. 9 percent of all CERF allocations and 10 percent of all contributions to FAO's emergency programmes over that period. The rapid response window accounts for 60 percent of this funding, while the underfunded crises



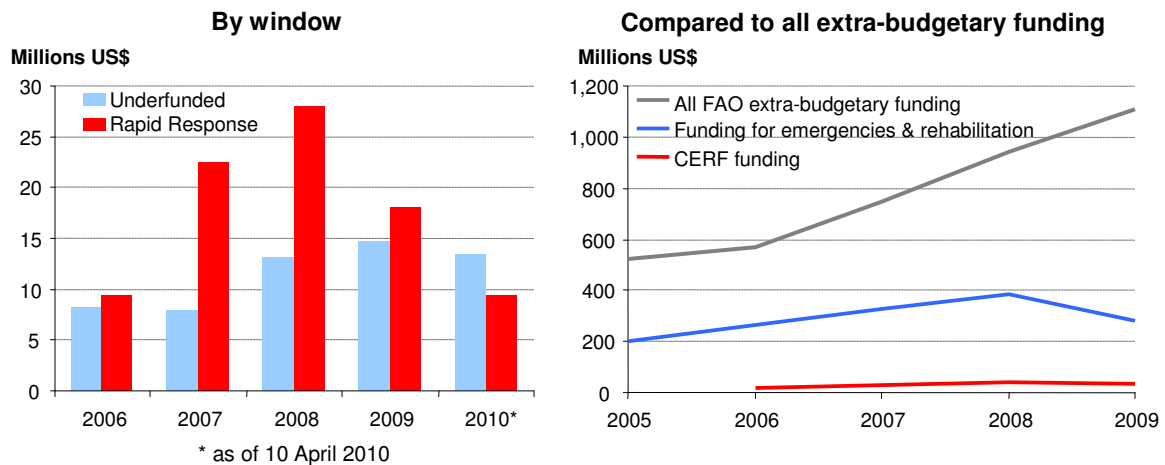
⁹ Occasionally a RC/HC has sent a proposal that exceeded the country allocation, in which case the ERC typically asks the RC/HC to re-prioritize the proposal so that it fits in the allocated envelope.

¹⁰ The SGB is being reviewed and it is likely that the 3 month rule will be changed to 6 month.

window accounts for the remaining 40 percent. FAO has been the 5th largest CERF recipient since the Fund's inception. These contributions have grown steadily from US\$17 million in 2006 to a peak of US\$41 million in 2008 because of allocations related to the soaring food prices crisis, and then went slightly down to US\$33 million in 2009 (see figure 1).

The share of CERF funding within FAO emergency programmes has raised slowly over the years: 7% in 2006, 9% in 2007, 11% in 2008, 12% in 2009. During the initial 3 months of 2010, CERF contributions to FAO have reached US\$21,346,190, almost twice the average amount FAO raised from the CERF during that quarter over the period 2007-2009. Figure 2 displays the annual contributions from the two CERF grant windows and presents the overall CERF funding to FAO within the context of the organisation's overall extra-budgetary funding¹¹.

**Figure 2:
CERF Grants to FAO**



Over and beyond the CERF, pooled funding has become a major trend: over the period 2006-2010, pooled funds¹² provided US\$420,806,051, i.e. one third (32 percent) of all FAO emergency programme funding.

Programmatic areas

Not surprisingly, the countries that have benefited the most from CERF grants have been emergency-prone countries such as DR Congo (\$17ml), Somalia (\$11ml), Kenya (\$8ml), Afghanistan (\$7ml) and Haiti (almost \$7ml). In terms of programme content, seed aid and the distribution of other farming inputs represent the majority of CERF-funded FAO interventions. Other types of projects are developing, such as support to animal health (e.g. in Kenya), provision of supplementary feed for livestock (e.g. in Mongolia after the very harsh winter or “Dzud” of 2009-2010), or locust control campaigns (Yemen, Timor-Leste, Tajikistan). These areas of focus are congruent with the CERF sectoral eligibility criteria described above.

¹¹ The FAO regular programme of work is funded out of assessed contributions from its member states and budgeted accordingly. The term “extra-budgetary resources” refers to additional funds and personnel mobilised from member states and private donors to support specific emergency, rehabilitation and development projects and programmes.

¹² CERF, various multilateral trust funds, joint funds for “Delivering as One”, Common Humanitarian Funds in Sudan and DRC, and UN Iraq Trust Fund.

A special allocation (US\$100 million overall, of which US\$20 million for FAO) was approved in 2008 under the Rapid Response window to address the soaring food prices crisis in 18 countries. This allocation, unusual in that it addressed a political and economic crisis rather than a military conflict or a natural disaster, explains the peak of CERF funding for FAO in 2008. Most such food prices projects were designed to distribute seed and fertiliser to farmers living in areas hardly hit by the crisis.

Strategic importance

In spite of its limited size, CERF funding has been critically important to FAO for the following reasons:

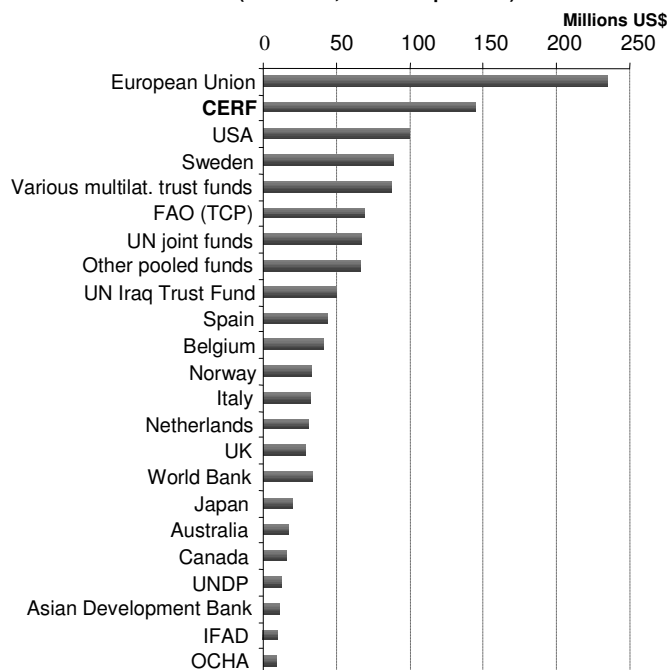
- The CERF provides early funding; together with the TCP¹³ and a few rapid donors (e.g. DfID, Italy, Belgium), the Fund is thus a strategic funding tool allowing FAO to quickly respond to the most pressing needs shortly after a sudden-onset disaster or early enough during a slow-onset disaster to be effective (e.g. for locust control);
- Even if its share in overall funding remains small, CERF has been the 2nd largest source of funds for FAO emergency programmes, behind the European Union (see figure 3);
- CERF funding to FAO has increased over time and could rise again in 2010;
- The share of CERF funding varies greatly per country and exceeds 30% in 19 countries (Table 2), including countries such as DPR Korea, Syria or Cuba from which most western donors tend to be absent.

Table 2: Countries where the share of CERF funding exceeds or equals 30 percent of total emergency funding

Recipient Countries	CERF Funding (2006-2010)*	
	US\$	% of total emergency funding
Chile	998,418	100%
Djibouti	1,704,984	87%
PR China	1,256,967	87%
Yemen	2,932,109	78%
El Salvador	291,860	62%
Cuba	897,729	54%
Kenya	8,026,068	50%
Honduras	494,597	50%
Guinea	1,882,875	47%
Syria	2,150,070	46%
Lesotho	3,321,585	44%
DPR Korea	6,189,871	44%
Mali	649,701	40%
Guatemala	1,092,052	40%
Mauritania	1,741,109	35%
Swaziland	1,542,362	31%
Liberia	5,094,565	31%
Colombia	1,528,100	30%
Mongolia	600,000	30%

*: as of 10 April 2010

Figure 3: Main Donors of FAO Emergency Programmes (2006-2010, as of 10 April 2010)



¹³ Technical Cooperation Programme, i.e. FAO field projects funded out of the organisation's regular budget.

PART 2 – FINDINGS

4. Needs assessments and priority setting

A fundamental CERF requirement

One of the specificities of the CERF lays in its requirement that all proposals be submitted by the RC/HC, based on the best possible need and damage assessments. The importance of accurate need assessments is highlighted in SGB 2006/10 which set up the CERF and which describes the objective of the Fund as “to ensure a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies, based on demonstrable needs and priorities”.

The CERF Secretariat places significant emphasis on multi-stakeholder needs assessments. Various guidelines and policy documents describe the hoped-for process: by necessity often rough and rapid, but transparent, inclusive and multi-sectoral, conducted by UN teams and governments and with the participation of NGOs. Financially speaking, the Fund can only support inter-agency needs assessment.

Scope and partners in needs assessments

In the sample, true multi-sectoral and inter-agency need assessments only took place in Sri Lanka and Pakistan. In Sri Lanka, the joint assessment conducted in November 2006 confirmed that the livelihood on Jaffna farmers have been seriously affected by the renewed conflict and formed the basis for the formulation of project OSRO/SRL/604/CHA. Other CERF projects in Sri Lanka were based on data from a variety of sources, including an FAO/WFP food security assessment (July 2007), a joint data collection on livelihoods by OCHA and FAO, Rapid Context Assessments by OCHA and social research by Save the Children. FAO also conducted agency-specific assessments to supplement this information.

In Pakistan, an early adopter of the cluster approach, there were several inter-agency assessments. In the case of the food price crisis, the needs assessment was prepared by FAO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, an initiative that led to a joint FAO-WFP intervention in the remote Shangla and Buner districts. In the case of the Balochistan earthquake, damages to agriculture were first assessed by FAO and then reviewed by a multi-agency process (McRAM) which concluded that the FAO assessment had overstated damages to the agricultural sector. Perhaps as a result of this, FAO only got \$100,000 from the CERF (i.e. the smallest possible grant) to respond to the Balochistan earthquake.

Needs assessments in other countries were conducted by various partners including UN agencies, the Government and NGOs but tended to remain sector-specific i.e. focussed on food security and agriculture. For instance, the project responding to soaring food prices in Lesotho was designed based on food security assessments conducted and/or supported jointly by WFP, FAO and the Government. Similarly in Niger, FAO supports the national early warning system on food security (*Système d’alerte précoce* or SAP) and its experts participated in the SAP surveys; SAP data were used to help target CERF-funded interventions on the most food insecure districts and social groups. In Kenya, needs assessments for CERF proposals were

undertaken under the aegis of the Kenya Food Security Meeting (KFSM¹⁴) or one of its subsidiaries, such as the Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG) and its Agriculture and Livestock Working Group. The latter in particular was directly involved in coordinating rapid assessments preceding the projects, in finalizing the CERF project proposals and in the selection of implementing partners.

In a few countries, the needs assessments were conducted by one single organisation:

- In Myanmar, the FAO-led needs assessment¹⁵ conducted immediately after the Nargis cyclone had hit the nation was multi-sectoral in that it included specialists of various disciplines such as forestry, fisheries, agriculture and livestock, but it was nevertheless conducted by FAO without the participation of other UN agencies (although government staff did participate). FAO did not participate directly in the ensuing multi-sectoral “Post-Nargis Joint Assessment”¹⁶ (PONJA) conducted from 10 to 19 June 2008 under the aegis of the Tripartite Core Group¹⁷ because the needs of the sectors within FAO’s mandate were already well assessed. The PONJA quotes the FAO need assessment report multiple times. In any case, the aim of the PONJA was not to support CERF projects formulation (the CERF allocations following Nargis were approved before the PONJA was even launched) but to help frame the broader, medium-term response to the hurricane.
- In Cuba, damages and needs following hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008 were assessed by the National Civil Defense Organization (*Estado Mayor Nacional de la Defensa Civil*) without the participation of UN agencies. The Government did not see a need for UN agencies’ involvement.
- In the case of the Red Locust crisis in Southern Africa, the build-up of the insect population in breeding areas was regularly monitored by the mandated regional organisation IRLCO-CSA. However, the appropriate technical services in the respective countries sometimes participated in monitoring missions or conducted their own surveys.

The evidence from this and prior evaluations¹⁸ is that multi-agency needs assessments help offset possible biases within each stakeholder. The McRAM assessment in Pakistan is a case in point. Another example is the collaboration between WFP and FAO in joint crop and food security assessments: this collaboration is often seen as a good way to strengthen impartiality in estimating food aid needs.

Along the same line, many governments in case study countries expressed the concern that UN agencies and NGOs have an interest in overestimating relief needs. The Government of Pakistan was for instance eager to verify the number of refugees following the Swat IDP crisis,

¹⁴ The KFSM collects, collates and synthesizes early warning information and promotes inter-agency collaboration, coordination, and cooperation for effective emergency responses. It is currently co-chaired by the Department of Drought & Disaster Emergency Response Coordination of the Government of Kenya and WFP. FAO lends technical support to the national early warning system operated by the KFSM.

¹⁵ Myanmar: Emergency & Rehabilitation Program Needs Assessment for Cyclone Nargis Affected Areas; FAO - 13 June 2008. http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/tc/tce/pdf/Myanmar-NA-Main-Report- plus-Annex1_2 - Lieberg .pdf

¹⁶ Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA); Tripartite Core Group - July 2008.

¹⁷ The TCG brought together the Government of the Union of Myanmar, the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in their efforts to coordinate the post-Nargis response.

¹⁸ See for instance the Evaluation of the FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Assistance in the Greater Horn of Africa (2004-2007) <http://www.fao.org/pbe/pbee/common/ecg/363/en/HoAEvaluationReport.pdf>.

under the (apparently correct) assumption that the data used by relief agencies were initially overstated. Sometimes, UN agencies may also be perceived by governments as displaying the opposite bias: in the Southern Africa red locust project, the Tanzanian Ministry of Agriculture considered at some point that FAO and IRLCO-CSA were *understating* the risk of locust escapes from breeding areas into agriculture lands, and insisted on additional spot treatments to mitigate those risks. Some governments in sampled countries may also have had a tendency to downplay the gravity of certain crises, e.g. when they were party to a conflict giving rise to the crisis.

In short, there is ample evidence that multi-stakeholder needs assessment processes can promote a form of peer review and therefore buttress objectivity, accuracy and transparency in identifying needs and setting priorities.

This does not mean that each and every needs assessment must involve all UN agencies, NGOs and ministries in a completely holistic and ultimately unwieldy approach. The frame of analysis and the partners best placed to conduct it must be defined based on the apparent nature of the problem. A cholera epidemic calls for a team of health and WASH specialists, a locust outbreak calls for locust specialists, etc. One must also keep in mind that convening multi-agency needs assessments can take time, as evidenced in the case of post-Nargis Myanmar where FAO managed to complete its own needs assessment at a time when the multi-sectoral PONJA was only getting started. It does mean, however, that qualified needs assessment teams are best drawn from several agencies and organisations.

Negotiation and decision making process

Well-functioning clusters (or any equivalent coordination mechanism as in Kenya) and UN Country Teams (UNCT) can help agencies involved to collaborate and reach consensus on priorities. A critical factor here is the personalities involved. The leadership skills, visibility and congeniality of the FAO leadership in country is key: the FAO Representative participates in UNCT meetings and can ensure the agriculture sector is not forgotten or given too low a priority; the emergency coordinator often chairs or co-chair the food security or agriculture cluster, she/he sets up FAO's participation in needs assessments and liaises with UN, NGOs, governmental partners and donors for its implementation. However, the UN RC/HC represents the most important actor. While the CERF "programme theory" postulates that the UN country team should arrive at clear priorities under the chairmanship of the RC/HC, it was mentioned several times to the evaluators that some RC/HC tend to "divide the cake" of the CERF allocation among UN agencies to avoid conflicts, thus diluting its potential effectiveness for meeting the most pressing needs. There is admittedly a fine line between strong leadership and authoritarianism, and between clear priorities and a narrow-minded approach. HCs and cluster chairs have to negotiate tradeoffs between the need for clear priorities and the necessity to reach a consensus on those priorities through an inclusive process, all this under severe time pressure.

Importance of prior information and early warning systems

Another factor in the quality of needs assessments and priority setting is whether or not the country operates an efficient early warning system. In Niger, Kenya and Lesotho, FAO could rely on much richer information than in other countries of the sample because of the presence of such systems, particularly when early warning systems were grounded analytically on livelihood profiles (Kenya) or complemented by detailed knowledge of rural livelihood systems

in the country (Niger). CERF projects in these countries could be better targeted to the most vulnerable geographic areas and to more precise elements of the livelihood strategies of beneficiaries than tended to be the case in other countries.

It must be realized that livelihoods support is a domain that requires much more contextual knowledge about production techniques, cropping calendars and the local economy than relief aid does. For instance, by and large any suitable tent can be used as a temporary shelter anywhere in the world. However, not all species or varieties may produce a crop in a given agro-ecological setting. As the example of the Ayeyarwady delta in Myanmar has shown (see Box), land races and varieties can form an extremely complex picture, varying significantly from one village to the next on account of subtle variations in the environment.

Needs can be broadly defined through a rapid multi-agency needs assessment, but organisations dealing with livelihood support will in most cases require additional contextual data to be able to provide well tailored and effective assistance. As a result, FAO probably needs more contextual and technical information than other UN agencies receiving CERF grants and cannot rely on “quick and dirty” needs assessments alone. In Myanmar, FAO mobilized needs assessment experts with a long-standing knowledge of the local environment (e.g. ex-staff from the Bay of Bengal Programme for artisanal and small-scale fishermen). This is considered good practice not only because such experts know the physical and agronomic environment much better than newcomers, but also because they know key informants and actors well (local experts, government technical staff).

The need for diverse rice varieties in the post-Nargis response

In the Ayeyarwady delta of Myanmar, upward percolation of salted water happens naturally during the dry season. Proximity to sources of salt water (sea, brackish water channels) and elevation determine the extent of the salinity problem. To plant their monsoon rice, farmers must wait for the heavy monsoon rains to drain salinity out of the root zone. The speed of this process depends on the extent of the salinity problem. Therefore, farmers owning land in low lying areas tend to plant monsoon rice later and use earlier-maturing and more salt-tolerant varieties than those located further inland.

Relevance of CERF projects

All country case studies reports concluded that the needs were correctly assessed and that CERF projects responded to these needs in a relevant way. However, one could debate the relevance of the CERF projects addressing the 2007-2008 global increase in food prices and implemented in 18 countries¹⁹. It is unclear how these small injections of cash and the technical approach chosen (distribution of farming inputs in fairly circumscribed rural areas) could have made a significant difference on a problem resulting from multiple, long-term and complex economic factors such as a lack of investment in agriculture in many developing nations over the past decades, population growth, diversifying diet patterns in emerging market countries, high energy prices, speculation and the development of derivatives based on agricultural produces, or export bans to try and protect the domestic markets of food exporting countries from rising food prices²⁰.

The delivery of free or subsidised farming inputs over the short-term and in limited areas provided at best temporary relief to a small number of benefiting farmers (typically a few

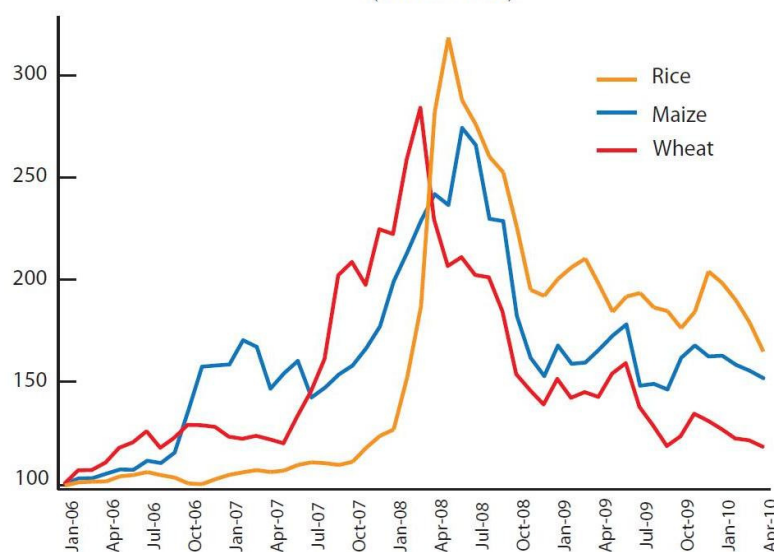
¹⁹ Burundi, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Eritrea, Haiti, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Somalia, Togo, Tanzania and Yemen.

²⁰ See for instance: Soaring Food Prices: Facts, Perspectives, Impacts And Actions Required – FAO June 2008.

thousands per country) but is unlikely to have a significant impact on food prices because the incremental production induced by these small CERF projects represents a minute fraction of national food consumption needs. It could also undermine the provision of farming inputs by the private sector in those areas, as evidenced in Niger where FAO has for the past decade helped set up a dense network of input shops operated by farmer organisations. The delivery of free farming inputs by emergency projects (not only CERF-funded ones) was seen as undermining this effort.²¹

To be fair, the CERF food prices projects did not aim to solve or even abate the problem at the national or global levels, but to provide temporary relief to a few vulnerable households. In some countries these interventions have provided useful, if palliative, assistance. Many such CERF projects were followed by much larger interventions funded by the EU and other donors that may still make a significant difference on food prices at the national level. Nevertheless, global food prices have subsided (Figure 4) largely as a result of market forces, high food prices stimulating a supply side response by food producers.

Figure 4:
World Price Indices of Selected Cereals
(Jan-06=100)



Source: FAO 2010

Recommendations:

1. Building upon its development programme and long term presence in most countries, FAO should continue to mobilise knowledgeable specialists from the government, pre-existing development projects and NGOs to participate in needs assessments.
2. Time permitting, FAO should strive to participate in multi-stakeholder needs assessments to buttress objectivity, accuracy and transparency in identifying needs and priorities after disasters that are likely to have affected many sectors. However, a

²¹ For one CERF project in Niger, FAO decided to sell the deliverable (animal feed) at a subsidised price in these input shops. The evaluation supported this approach.

holistic approach to needs assessments takes time and may become unwieldy and unnecessary in well-defined crises, e.g. locust outbreaks.

3. In the most disaster-prone countries, the Organization should continue to support early warning systems and/or the collection of simple livelihoods profiles and agricultural calendars developed on the basis of farmers' own knowledge initially captured at needs assessment time and further refined throughout the response under the aegis of the agriculture or food security cluster (or a similar coordination mechanism).

5. Project design and quality assurance

A decentralized process

CERF applications for grant funding follow a specific template²² in which each project proposal is no more than 2-page long. The template includes a succinct description of the project objectives, activities, expected outcomes, implementation plan and budget. Proposals must include information on how CERF funding will be used to support life-saving or core humanitarian activities. The total amount requested from the CERF cannot be 100% of the total budget for the project, as CERF funding is expected to complement other funding sources. The budget uses CERF-specific headings which are different from FAO standard chart of accounts. This means that financial reporting from FAO to CERF cannot be entirely automated and involves some manual steps.

As explained above, CERF proposals are prepared by agencies country offices and then collated, negotiated, endorsed and submitted as a package by the RC/HC to the ERC. FAO Headquarters has therefore little role in their preparation and sometimes learn about an application only after it has been submitted to the ERC. For a relatively centralised agency such as FAO, this in itself comes as a little revolution.

The following reasons have been pointed out in support of a systematic review of CERF proposals by FAO headquarters prior to their approval:

1. the need to ensure that budgets include standard, Governing Bodies sanctioned costs;
2. in the case of a field office with little experience in emergency operations and the management of CERF projects, FAO headquarters could help improve those applications that are too complex, unrealistic and/or impossible to implement within the mandated period; and
3. FAO projects cannot be approved without receiving technical clearance from the concerned technical units.

Point 1 above requires a simple, rapid budget review prior to project finalisation and is supported by the present evaluation (which could not have been funded if not for the inclusion of standard evaluation costs in CERF projects). Point 2 could at time be of significance but the evaluation sample includes quite a few cases of overly complex project deliverables, indicating that FAO headquarters do not always fulfil this role. The risk that field offices with little experienced in CERF applications would design over-ambitious, complex projects may be better addressed with a short training programme and/or an online tutorial than by

²² CAP project sheets can also be used in countries with a CAP.

strengthening the review process at headquarters, although both approaches could be combined as long as the support from headquarters is extended in a timely fashion.

Point 3 (project technical clearance) remains fairly theoretical in the case of CERF proposals, which do not provide enough technical information upon which to base a technical clearance. Little technical quality assurance of CERF project documents is actually performed at FAO headquarters prior to their approval, even when headquarters receive a copy of the application in advance of its submission. The Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service (AGPS) has adopted what seems to be the best approach under the circumstances: insist that each and every proposal for seed distribution includes specific language to the effect that the crops and varieties will be based on the preference of beneficiaries, adaptation to local agro-ecological conditions and recommendations by the concerned agricultural governmental authorities, and that the seed will be up to FAO quality standards²³. This provides useful and rapid input to the formulation process, promotes corporate standards and places clear targets against which implementation teams can later be held accountable.

Such standardisation of CERF project documents is unavoidable, as technical units in headquarters are not in a position to second-guess the field office about the relevance of a particular activity but they can insist that the activity follows best practice and technically sound processes. Projects that are rapidly designed and implemented cannot be innovative and complex; they must follow standard processes to deliver fairly basic assistance, or risk becoming unwieldy and/or technically unsound.

Time-tested deliverables

A similar point is that, in an emergency context, tried and tested inputs such as land races for seed and livestock or traditional designs for boats or fishing gear tend to work much better than new technology. A particular genotype or technology is never good or “improved” *per se*; rather, it can be well adapted to a local context or not. Introducing any new, untested feature into a particular context involves taking a risk. Development projects can afford the time to try and test new features before introducing and disseminating the most successful ones, but not short-term emergency projects of the type funded by the CERF. Most of the evaluated projects rightly aimed to replace lost assets rather than to improve them. Counter-examples include the distribution of Rhode Island Red chicks – a popular chicken breed in the US and Europe – to poor households in the North Rakhine State in Myanmar. The distributed birds were much larger in size than traditional village chickens and did not perform well in beneficiaries backyards, probably due to a combination of poor feed and lack of veterinary health care.

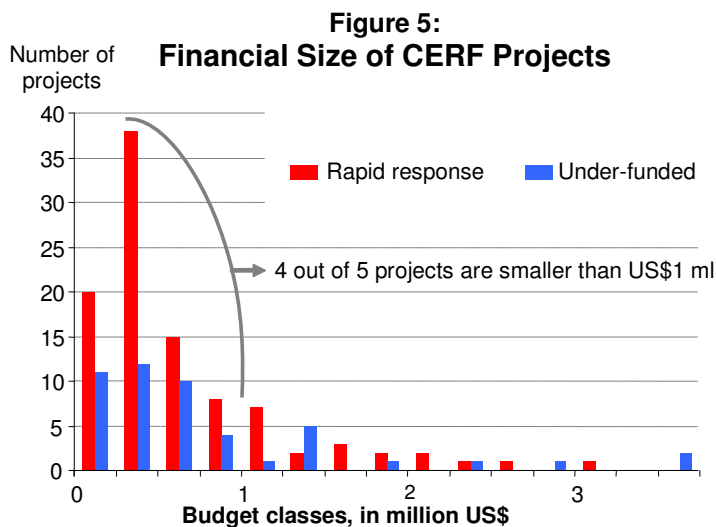
Small financial size

Most FAO CERF-funded projects are of very small size. The largest project amounts to US\$3.7 ml. Underfunded emergency projects tend to be larger, with an average financial size of US\$799,836 vs. US\$656,231 for rapid response projects. 81% of rapid response projects and 77% of underfunded projects are smaller than 1 million US\$ (Figure 5). In most country case studies, CERF projects formed part of a larger response, typically providing the earliest contribution (see the programme charts in Annex 4).

²³ FAO seed quality standards for emergency projects are available in: [Guiding Principles for Seed Provision in Response to High Food Prices](#), FAO 2008.

The reasons for the small size of CERF-funded projects are not entirely clear but may include a lack of trust in FAO’s operational capacity, at least among some RC/HCs. The type of relief work undertaken by the larger CERF recipients may also be perceived as simpler, easier to scale up and more directly and immediately life-saving than the livelihoods work undertaken by FAO.

In summary, CERF projects tend to be small, rapidly designed and follow fairly standard, simple and technologically unambitious approaches. This trend toward simplicity of design is commendable and deserves to be re-enforced.



Recommendation:

4. A standardisation of CERF projects technical approaches is desirable from a quality control view point, following the approach developed by the Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service. By virtue of their short duration, CERF projects must use simple and standard approaches and concentrate on replacing the most urgently needed production assets to ensure some level of food production and incomes, rather than aim at increasing food production levels as compared to pre-crisis times (see also recommendation 20).

6. Efficiency and timeliness

Since the primary objective of the rapid response window is to speed up delivery of urgent assistance to disaster-affected communities, the analysis of efficiency placed particular emphasis on the timeliness of CERF-funded interventions. Timelines were drawn in all country case studies, recording the time taken from the initial crisis to needs assessment, proposals development, funding, procurement and contracting of implementation partners, and final delivery of assistance to beneficiaries.

Timeliness in project approval and funding

Both FAO and the CERF Secretariat collect data on the approval and funding process. The Secretariat does so in order to monitor their response time (the objective being 3 days to respond to a proposal submission) and FAO does so to monitor compliance with the CERF time limits for project implementation. For rapid response projects, all project funds should be committed within three months and all project activities completed during the following three months, *starting from the date FAO receives the project funds in its bank account* (“disbursement value date”), which is by convention taken to be the project start date. For underfunded emergency projects, the rule is that all project funds must be committed by the end of the approval year or June of the following year for the second tranche (see p.26).

Based on a review of 142 projects approved from March 2006 to May 2009 for which the FAO and CERF Secretariat data could be combined, it appears that project review, approval and funding is indeed quite rapid but not as rapid as it was intended to be. The Fund's goal was to provide aid workers with sufficient funding to jump-start lifesaving relief operations within 72 hours of a disaster²⁴. In practice, funds were made available on average 35 days after the first submission of a UNCT proposal to the ERC for the rapid response window, and 51 days after first submission for the underfunded window. These periods include the following stages:

- *“Fine-tuning” of the formulation:* after review of the first submission sent by the UN RC/HC, the CERF Secretariat issues comments to the country team, that, when integrated by FAO country office, result in the final submission by the RC/HC of a document which is deemed approvable by the Secretariat;
- *ERC approval:* once the proposal submitted by the RC/HC is deemed acceptable by the CERF secretariat, it is forwarded for approval to the ERC who communicates his agreement to the HC/RC and the FAO Director General through a scanned, emailed letter;
- *Disbursement:* based on the proposal, a more detailed Letter of Understanding (LoU) is then prepared, signed by FAO and counter-signed by the ERC in New York to allow OCHA to disburse the funds;
- *Bank transfer:* the time it takes for the funds to reach the FAO bank account.

Table 4 displays the average durations of these steps for the two CERF windows and, within the rapid response window, for those projects addressing the soaring food prices crisis of 2008 and for others. On average, “fine-tuning” a project takes two weeks, ERC approval takes another two weeks, and disbursement and bank transfer yet another two weeks. However, these periods do *not* include project formulation and negotiations with the RC/HC at the country level, a step which can easily take another two weeks and is not yet recorded in a systematic fashion at headquarters or by country offices.

It appears that some of the soaring food prices projects were slow to approve, probably because of the large number of such projects received by the CERF from FAO and WFP. The volume of submissions in response to the food crisis far exceeded the resources made available by the ERC (US\$100 million overall, US\$20 million for FAO). An inter-agency meeting discussed the issue on 26 June 2008 and it was agreed that a process similar to the one used in deciding on allocations for the underfunded emergencies window would be followed to select priority countries, prior to reviewing the submissions. This delayed approval for *some* soaring food prices project by approximately one month. This delay was not perceived as a problem since the crisis was a slow-onset crisis that had been building up since 2007. However, in a few country case studies (Pakistan, Lesotho), this delayed approval led to projects starting just weeks away from the next sowing season. In Pakistan, farmers indicated that in order to reach a better impact the inputs should have been distributed 10 to 15 days earlier, in spite of a very rapid procurement process by FAO. In Lesotho FAO and its partners raced to organise the input fairs, with success at lower elevations but apparently too late in more mountainous areas.

²⁴ Jan Egeland OpEd in the Wall Street Journal, Oct 25, 2005.

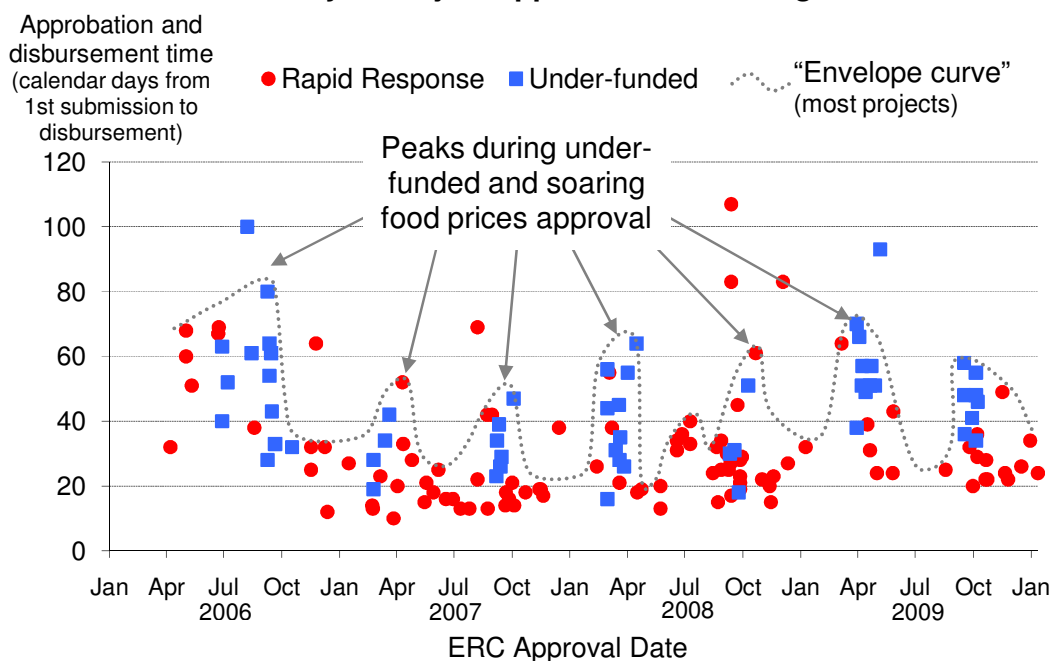
Table 4: Average durations for formulation, approval and disbursement of CERF projects to FAO (in calendar days)

Milestones	Rapid response window			Underfunded emergencies window	Overall average
	Soaring food prices projects	Other projects	Average RR window		
Project fine-tuning (from first to final submission)	26	9	12	19	15
ERC approval (from final submission to ERC approval)	9	12	12	18	14
Disbursement (from ERC approval to disbursement)	5	7	6	7	6
Bank transfer	5	6	6	7	6
Total (from first submission to receipt of \$)	45	33	35	51	41

Notes:

- Not inclusive of preparation and negotiations at the country level.
- Based on 142 projects approved from 2006 to 2009: 48 underfunded and 94 rapid response, 18 of which for soaring food prices.

**Figure 6:
Seasonality in Project Approval and Funding Times**



Projects from the underfunded window take on average more time to be approved and funded than rapid response projects, for reasons similar to the soaring food prices projects: large number of applications to be reviewed in a short period of time (allocations for the UFE window are made twice a year in March-April and July-August) and the protracted nature of the crises to be addressed which means that there is a lesser sense of urgency in the process. As a result, the approval and funding times are quite seasonal. Approval delays during UFE allocation periods spill over the rapid response window: the processing of some RR projects gets delayed as well during those times (Figure 6).

The CERF Secretariat was unable to confirm these seasonal delays. The Secretariat monitors approval time but does so in ways that differ from the approach used in producing Table 4 and Figure 6: the variable measured and reported is the length of the period from final submission to ERC approval, i.e. the period referred to as “ERC approval” in Table 4. This leaves out of the equation what Table 4 calls “project fine-tuning” – the longest step in the process, during which the CERF Secretariat comments on the draft proposal and the concerned agency revises it accordingly. This and the fact the Secretariat expresses this variable in *working days* rather than *calendar days* accounts for most of the discrepancy between their data and ours.

From data recently communicated by the CERF Secretariat, it would appear that the speed of project document processing has improved in 2010, following the hiring of additional staff towards the end of 2009.

Experience in sample countries show that slight approval delays can also happen when negotiations at the field level are protracted or difficult, or when the preparation of a Flash Appeal and negotiations about what to include in the Flash Appeal delay the review of CERF proposals.

In sample countries, the only case where FAO was excluded from an initial CERF submission, thus leading with funding delays as compared with other CERF recipients, was in Myanmar after Nargis. FAO was not invited to participate in the initial discussions and in the first round of CERF funding announced on 11 May 2008. An important reason for this exclusion was the lack of strong leadership in FAO Myanmar at the time (absence of an FAO Representative for a few months). The UN community also perceived agriculture as an early recovery rather than an emergency need. Only after much lobbying at both local and headquarters levels did it alarm the UNCT that agriculture should be considered with the same urgency as other sectors in order not to jeopardize the food security of survivors. A second phase application was accepted on 23 May 2008 and released by early June. It included funding for the agricultural sector, allowing FAO to distribute rice seed, fertiliser, draft animals and ploughing equipment in time for the 2008 monsoon planting season in the Irrawaddy Delta. In spite of this initial delay, the CERF still constituted the first financial contribution to FAO’s programme in response to Nargis. The country case study report concluded that earlier CERF funding may not necessarily have expedited procurements, because during the month of May, FAO found it difficult to mobilize staff and consultants to manage the response. Some measure of surge capacity was set up in Yangon only by early June, coinciding with the CERF funding.

To sum up, most projects get approved and funded one to two months after the initial submission of a proposal. This places the CERF on a par with the most rapid bilateral donors, such as DfID. FAO and other recipient agencies can of course undertake initial implementation steps before they receive the funds. As soon as FAO is notified that the project has been approved, field staff are allowed to draw from the FAO Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) to pay for initial expenses²⁵. For rapid response projects implemented by FAO, this means that implementation can usually start a month or a month and a half after the disaster or crisis escalation that triggered the CERF proposal.

²⁵ SFERA acts as a revolving fund, advancing money to country teams and being reimbursed as soon as the donor contribution is received.

Recommendation:

5. If confirmed by the 5-year evaluation of the CERF, seasonal delays in the approval of CERF projects, due to a large number of UFE projects to be processed at specific times in the year, deserve consideration by the CERF Secretariat with a view to “insulate” rapid response projects from this effect, i.e. ensure that the approval process for RR projects remains unaffected by delays in the UFE window.

Timeliness in project implementation: the issue

Once a project is approved, does timely CERF disbursement to FAO translate into more timely interventions in the field? This question is central to the evaluation of CERF’s contribution to livelihoods protection. It is also a question that resonates with the NGO community (see Box). When the Fund was set up and launched, a number of international NGOs deplored that NGOs were not included as eligible CERF recipients and argued that rapid funding for UN agencies was unlikely to result in timely and effective project implementation, because the UN often work through NGOs and can be late and bureaucratic in making such arrangements.

“The overall success of the CERF depends on the quick and efficient disbursement to the UN’s own implementing partners: mainly NGOs.”

In: Exclusion of NGOs: The fundamental flaw of the CERF - Save The Children Position Paper - January 2007.

To shed light onto this issue, the evaluation analyzed corporate financial and procurement databases covering the entire CERF portfolio over the period 2006-2009, and collected information from programme partners and beneficiaries in the 8 sample countries.

Administrative and operational issues have been often evaluated in FAO, in an effort to align the Organization’s somewhat dated administrative procedures and operational processes to the requirements of emergency operations.²⁶ A number of initiatives were recently undertaken to streamline FAO administrative procedures and operational processes and have in some areas resulted in positive changes in the Organization’s business practices. A revision of Manual Section 502 - Procurement came into force on 1 January 2010 and reflects significant improvements and increased delegation of authority to field offices. For Letters of Agreement (LoAs) which are used to contract non-commercial entities as implementing partners, such as government departments and NGOs, a revision of Manual Section 507 is currently being completed.

The purpose of the present evaluation is not to duplicate past evaluations but simply to document as precisely as possible the time it takes to undertake procurements, to contract NGOs and other implementing partners, to disburse funds and ultimately to deliver assistance to affected communities in a representative sample of CERF projects. Another purpose is to identify factors slowing down or speeding up delivery, as a way to identify bottlenecks and good practices.

Procurement and contracting timelines

One of the improvements brought to the area of procurement over the past few years was the creation of a computerized database recording each and every procurement and commercial

²⁶ This effort climaxed with the Evaluation of FAO’s Operational Capacity in Emergencies, completed in 2010 (<http://www.fao.org/pbe/pbee/common/ecg/386/en/OED.pdf>).

contract processed at FAO headquarters.²⁷ This database is the source for the data presented in Tables 5 and 6 below.

Table 5 indicates that about a third of the total value of all CERF procurements and contracts is recorded in the procurement database at FAO headquarters, an indication that the Procurement Service at headquarters had some role in approving or processing these procurements or contracts. FAO country offices are entitled to procure up to the level of their “delegated authority” (recently set at US\$100,000 per purchase but it used to be US\$50,000 during most of the evaluation period). For purchases beyond their delegated authority, country offices must request the Procurement Service at headquarters to undertake or at least validate the procurement process.

Two-thirds of all CERF-funded procurements and contracts are processed at the field level and are hence not recorded in the procurement database maintained at FAO headquarters. The percentage is fairly stable over the recent years. Similarly, the Evaluation of FAO’s Operational Capacity in Emergencies found that approximately 60% of all procurements for emergency projects were processed in the field from 2005 to 2007. The share was only 25% in 2004, which indicates that the predominance of field procurements is a relatively new phenomenon, dating from 2005.

This predominance may be slightly more pronounced for CERF projects than it is for other emergency projects, and is particularly important for items such as animal feed, tools, livestock and seeds which display a high degree of local variability. Appropriately, headquarters procurements predominates for of-the-shelf, “non-local” items available in large quantities on international markets such as veterinary supplies, fertilizers and pesticides.

Table 5: Share of procurements involving the procurement Service at FAO headquarters and recorded in their database

Projects' year of Approval	All procurements and contracts recorded in accounts (US\$)			Procurements in headquarters procurement database (US\$)			% purchased at HQ		
	RR	UFE	Total	RR	UFE	Total	RR	UFE	Total
2006	6,594,307	5,014,413	11,608,719	1,337,820	683,124	2,020,944	20%	14%	17%
2007	16,343,301	5,530,982	21,874,283	5,801,814	1,494,668	7,296,482	35%	27%	33%
2008	20,554,019	8,806,665	29,360,685	7,836,509	1,850,672	9,687,181	38%	21%	33%
2009	3,810,666	5,838,517	9,649,183	1,827,794	1,216,105	3,043,899	48%	21%	32%
Total	47,302,293	25,190,577	72,492,870	16,803,937	5,244,569	22,048,506	36%	21%	30%

Based on 173 discreet procurements for CERF projects recorded in the procurement database, Table 6 calculates the average period of time separating the start of a project (i.e. the “project value date”) and the issuance of a purchase order by FAO headquarters, for varied types of procurement processes. The average duration between project start and issuance of purchase orders by FAO headquarters is 78 days i.e. slightly over two-and-a-half month.

²⁷ Unfortunately for the evaluation and for programme managers, a similar corporate database does not exist yet for LoAs, which means that the evaluators had to assemble LoA timelines manually.

It must be stressed that this analysis pertains only to procurements and contracts in which the Procurement Service at headquarters played a role (sometimes driving the whole process, sometimes just issuing a purchase order based on a tender managed by the country office). In general it takes more time to procure through headquarters than through country offices.

In fact, the analysis shows that the time it takes to issue a purchase order depends heavily on where and how the procurement is handled, the main factors being:

- whether the procurement was based on an international tender, a national tender, a prior tender (repeat orders) or no tender at all (direct procurements); and
- whether the procurement has been requested after the project start date or before it (called “pre-procurement” in this report).

Table 6: Average time between project start and issuance of purchase order from FAO headquarters

Type of process	Number of purchase orders in database		Average time between project start and purchase order (days)
<i>Purchase requested after start of project</i>	113	65%	111
International tendered	45	26%	168
Purchase order issued at HQ but tendering in country	34	20%	95
Repeat order based on earlier tender	15	9%	36
Direct procurements without tender (e.g. sole source)	13	8%	38
Contract amendments	4	2%	62
Exceptional awards *	2	1%	245
<i>Purchase requested before start of project</i>	60	35%	15
Tendered	31	18%	28
Repeat order based on earlier tender	15	9%	-7
Direct procurement without tender	14	8%	9
Grand Total	173	100%	78

* “Exceptional” in that the awards were based on less than the 3 valid bids requested by the procedure. In both cases (one-day-old chicks for project OSRO/ERI/801/CHA and bean seeds for OSRO/BDI/903/CHA) the purchase was requested very late.

Pre-procurements, made possible by an advance of funds from the FAO Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) immediately after project signature by the ERC, represent 35% of all database records. The difference with “post-procurement” seems to be simply due to the fact that in one case the process starts sooner: for procurement processed at headquarters, pre-procurements are requested (through a purchase request) on average 18 days before the project start, while post-procurements are on average requested 76 days after the project start. Not all of this time is wasted. Before one can register a purchase request, one needs to identify the goods to be procured, describe them precisely enough for the tendering process if any, and get such technical specifications cleared by the relevant FAO technical unit.²⁸ The important point is that the average duration of procurement processes, once

²⁸ There might also be cases where initiating the procurement process sooner would not be beneficial or doable because of seasonality issues.

requested, is the same in both cases (33 days to issue a purchase order once the request has been filled in the case of pre-procurements, 35 in the case of post-procurements). In other words, what makes the difference is how soon the procurement is requested by project managers, rather than how it is handled by the Procurement Service at headquarters. This suggests that a very simple way to improve on delivery times would be to always initiate the contracting or procurement process as soon as it becomes clear that the project is likely to be approved, before the project official start.

This being said, among those procurements recorded in the headquarters database, those that were based on national tenders managed in the field delivered sooner than those based on an international tender managed at headquarters, probably because those tendered at headquarters tend to be larger and more complex and involve more back-and-forth communications.

In the fastest scenario, i.e. a repeat order requested prior to project start date, the purchase order is on average issued one week before the project official start, i.e. almost immediately after the project is approved by the ERC. On the other end of the spectrum, a purchase or contract requested after the start of the project and involving an international tender takes on average 168 days from project start date to procurement order, i.e. 5.5 months.

Given that the typical delay for delivery by suppliers to implementing partners is about one month, this means that IPs will receive the procured goods more than 6 months after project start in the case of a classic procurement initiated after the start of the project and tendered at headquarters. This delay can be brought down to as little as one or two months if the procurement is initiated before project start, tendered in the field and/or not tendered (direct procurement or repeat order).

The answer to the question “How fast is FAO passing on the goods to NGOs?” is therefore: about 108 days (3 months and a half) on average, and anywhere between three weeks to six months depending on what process is chosen and, critically, when the procurement or contracting process is initiated and whether it implies an international tender or not. Repeat orders and sole source procurements are not surprisingly much faster than international or even national tenders.

Recommendation:

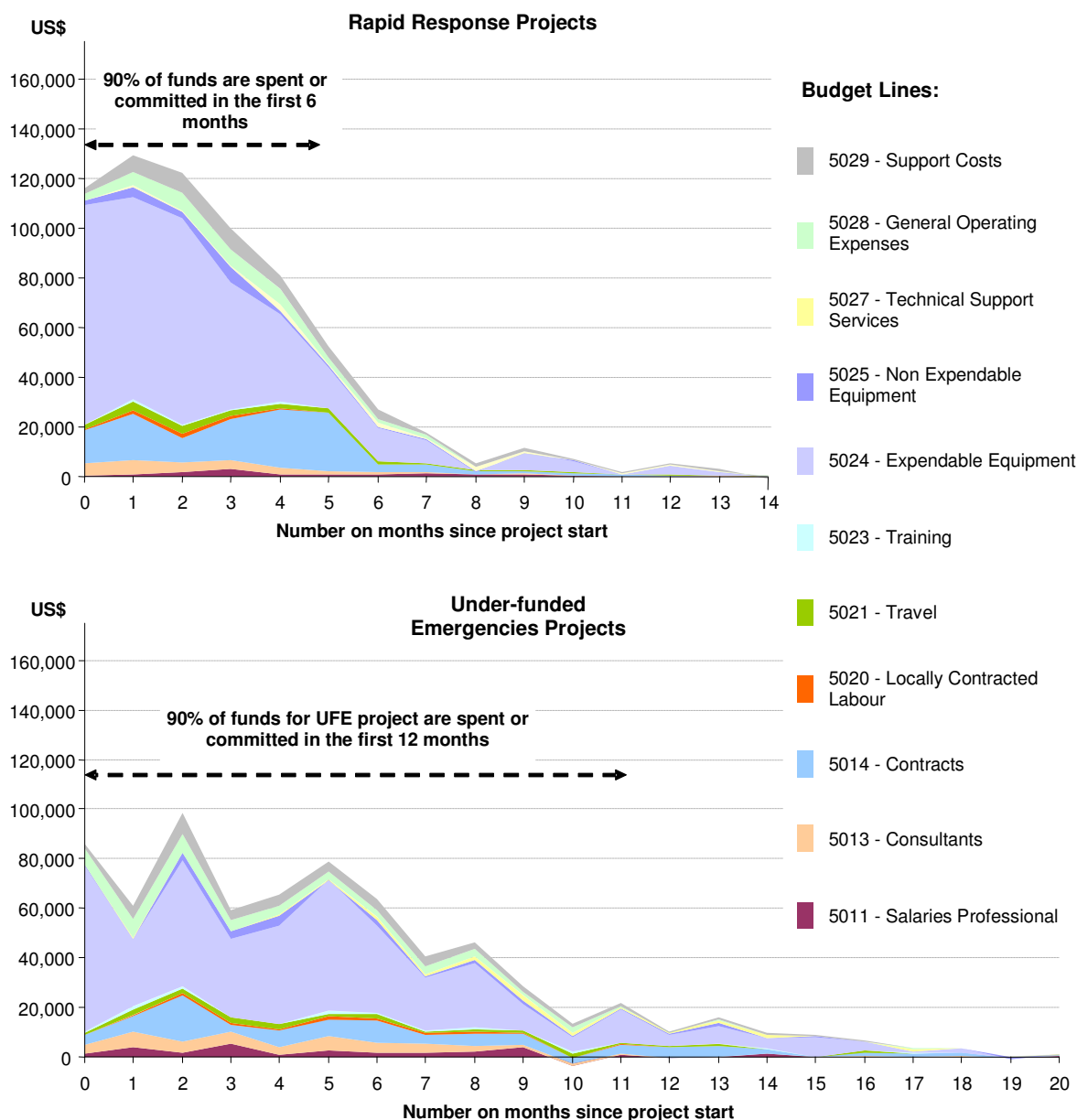
6. Programme staff need to be better aware of the typical delivery durations to expect from various procurement approaches and should start procurement and contracting as early as possible; “pre-procurement” (starting procurement before the official project start date) should become the rule for CERF Rapid Response projects; repeat orders are a very powerful tool for rapid delivery, when based on previous tenders that were well conducted and answered to by a sufficient number of suppliers.

Disbursement Timelines

Another database exploited in this evaluation was the FAO’s accounting system at headquarters, from which one can derive timelines of expenditures. Figure 7 displays the disbursement timelines for RR and UFE projects. It appears that an average RR project spends and/or commits 90% of its funds during the first 6 months, while this period is twice as long (12 months) for an average UFE project. This indicates that the speed in implementation and disbursement is significantly slower than it should be as per CERF rules, which stipulate that an

RR project should spend and/or commit all of its funds during the first 3 months and be operationally completed in 6 months, while an UFE project should be completed by the end of its allocation year, i.e. either 8 months or 4 months after its approval (allocations are in April and August).

**Figure 7:
Disbursement Timelines**
(average actual expenditures + hard commitments for RR and UFE projects)



In actual fact, the discrepancy is not as large as it appears because the FAO Field Office Accounting System (FAS) can only record actual expenditures incurred in country, not *commitments*. If anyone at headquarters signs a contract with an NGO or passes a procurement order with a supplier, these are immediately entered in the corporate financial accounting system as commitments against which future payments will be recorded. If processed at field

level, the same contract or procurement order will only be recorded once the expenditures are recorded, i.e. typically after delivery of the procured goods or services. In short, the accounting system is blind to field-level commitments, and yet FAO procurements and contract handling are increasingly decentralised – two-thirds of procurements and contracts are processed at the field level. As a result, FAO headquarters are unable to monitor and report in an automated, real time fashion against most of its financial commitments. Of course, such commitments are monitored in country offices and FAO headquarters, informed via email, also keep track of them but this is done on ad hoc basis through varied spreadsheets, and thus the information cannot be aggregated easily. The project to replace the FAS with a tool that would allow for commitments tracking (IPSAS) is expected to deliver a workable system in 2012 at the soonest.

Even with this artefact taken into consideration, FAO remains slower than it should be in implementing CERF projects. Where it should spend 100% of an RR project funds in 6 months, it manages to spend (through actual payments) only 80% of an average RR project budget over this period. Similarly, UFE projects should be completed during a period of 9 to 10 months, but the average UFE project spends only 80% of its budget over 9 months and 85% over 10 months.

An 80% delivery rate represents acceptable performance. However, these averages hide significant variability from one project to the next. FAO leads the list of agencies requesting project extensions from the CERF Secretariat. About 20% of all its projects were granted a no-cost extension in 2007, and as many as 31% of all FAO projects funded by the CERF had to be extended to accommodate longer-than-expected implementation in 2008. The CERF Secretariat has expressed strong concerns about this seemingly aggravating trend. There is also a disconnect between official project dates and real ones. An FAO CERF project often incurs expenses over a period longer than its official duration, and may rightly involve follow up activities (e.g. monitoring) over an even longer period.

Timeliness at delivery

The evaluation reveals a rather mixed picture of timeliness at delivery: some interventions were on time and some were not. In most cases, farming inputs were distributed *during* – and sometimes at the end of – the planting season. The best practice is to distribute farming inputs immediately *before* the planting season.

In many farming systems around the globe, planting and harvesting seasons form the busiest periods in the cropping calendar. Sometime they coincide, in that the harvesting period for one crop immediately precedes, or is concomitant with, the planting season for the next crop (e.g. in the Irrawaddy Delta of Myanmar). Farmers need to allocate their time and resources in the most effective manner in a “just-in-time” decision making process. If additional farming resources are provided in the middle or at the end of that complex process, the additional resources will typically be utilised in a less-than-optimal way. For instance, the beneficiaries will sow the newly distribute seed – often a high yielding variety – on marginal or low-productivity land that they did not intend to plant this year, or will sow it very late in the cropping calendar. Late planting generally translates into low yields. They might also decide to consume or sell the planting material and fertiliser if they cannot use it well. Consequently, for farmers to make the best possible use of seed, they need to receive it *before* the sowing period rather than *during* it. The same rule applies to those fertilisers that must be applied at land preparation time such as most phosphates or organic fertiliser, and evidently to ploughing equipment or drought animals.

In some of the evaluated projects, farming inputs distributed at the end of the planting season could not be used by farmers who postponed their application to the next season (e.g. in Kenya or Sri Lanka). Even if the resource is not lost but its use simply delayed, this is not considered a positive outcome because 1) the seed could lose some of its germination power in the meantime; and 2) in the case of the rapid response window, CERF funding is premised on the need to respond to time-critical needs and using the funds in an untimely manner breaks the promise made to beneficiaries, the ERC and donors.

In Niger, a combination of late delivery and of prevailing famine led some of the most vulnerable households to consume the millet seed they had received, another suboptimal use. Similarly, in a project dealing with soaring food prices in Kenya, seed and tools were delivered through a voucher-for-work system in which beneficiaries could redeem the vouchers against farming inputs from FAO or food from WFP; late delivery of the inputs led many of the benefiting farmers to choose food instead of seed.

Sometimes, the next cropping season or window of opportunity for a given deliverable is just too close to catch, i.e. the time between a CERF submission and the optimal time for delivery is less than the minimum time needed to procure the assistance and deliver it. In these cases it is best not to request CERF funds, or to plan their use in a different way, e.g. for the next agricultural season.

Beyond cropping inputs, all other projects in the sample also had seasonal and/or time-bound considerations, as follows:

- Following the earthquake that jolted Ziarat and Pishin districts of Balochistan province in Pakistan on 29 October 2008, FAO submitted a project and received modest funding from the CERF rapid response window on 1st December. Among the project deliverables were 100 earthquake-resistant animal sheds based on a design that had worked well in the response to the Kashmir earthquake. The shelters required a variety of construction material and skills and their mud walls cannot be constructed during periods of rain or snow. Their construction started in January 2009, too late to protect animals from the severe cold in early winter. The evaluation concluded that aiming to deliver such complex items in time to protect livestock during the 2008-2009 winter was simply unrealistic.
- Disease control operations, such as the Rift Valley Fever vaccination campaign in Kenya or the Anthrax vaccination campaign in Lesotho, present a particular challenge because unlike cropping seasons, epidemics are not entirely predictable. Rift Valley Fever tends to arise in the Horn of Africa after every extensive flooding event²⁹ but the gravity of the outbreak cannot be determined in advance. The Government of Kenya declared the outbreak late and some other affected nations never declared it for fear of negative economic consequences. FAO had very little time to procure the vaccine while the outbreak was running its course³⁰. In the case of Anthrax in Lesotho, the disease appears to be more predictable: Anthrax is an endemic disease in the area where the CERF project vaccinated (Maseru and Mafeteng districts in the West of the country) and therefore, an annual vaccination of young animals would seem to be called for rather than trying to contain epidemics after they arise.

²⁹ The 2006-07 outbreak was forecasted by the FAO EMPRES programme which issued a warning as early as October 2006 based on weather patterns.

³⁰ RVF vaccine has a short shelf-life, making it uneconomical to store large quantities in a strategic vaccine stock. Suppliers only produce the vaccine when they receive an order.

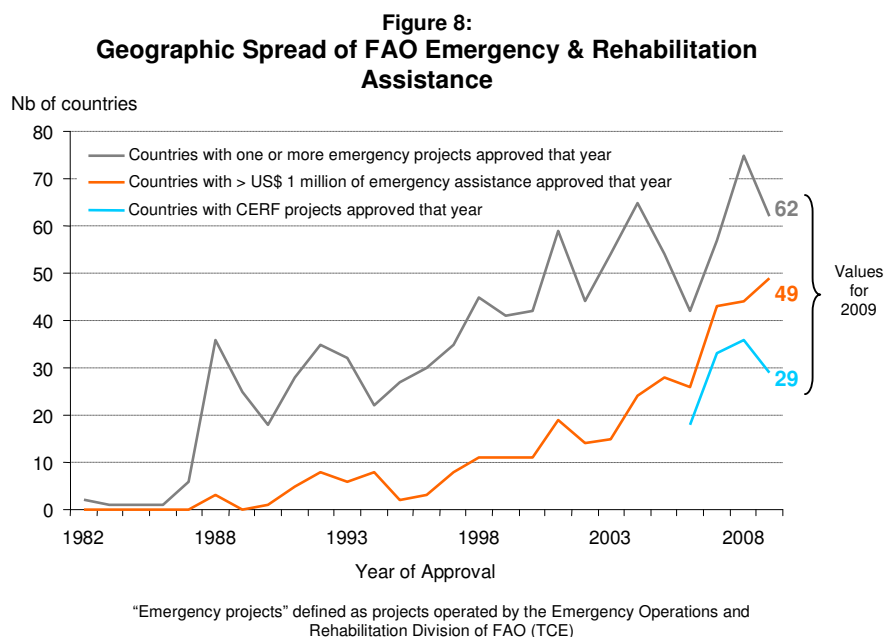
- The red locust control campaign in Southern Africa was able to spread its operations over a longer period of time than most input distribution campaign can, but it had to carefully balance the risks and advantages of several aerial treatment “windows” involving different stages of the insect development, grass growth and weather patterns.

Recommendations:

7. Taking greater account, and in some countries developing a more precise knowledge of how cropping calendars change from one locality, elevation or agro-ecological zone to the next would allow field teams to better schedule delivery and provide farming inputs *before* rather than *during* the sowing season, it as is often the case currently. It may also help judge when catching the next season is doable and when it is more realistic to aim at subsequent seasons (see recommendation 8).
8. Based on the selected procurement approach and possibilities of a repeat order or not, programme staff should make an educated guess about whether or not asking for CERF funds to “catch the next crop”. As a rule of thumb, if one can do a repeat order or sole source contract with a supplier that has the goods in stock, one should expect a lead time of one to two months from procurement start to delivery of the inputs to farmers. This lead time jumps to a bare minimum of 3 months, and more likely a period from 4 to 6 months if the procurement needs to be tendered nationally or internationally.

An uneven field capacity

From the country case studies, it appears that the degree to which FAO was able to “catch the next crop”, or more generally deliver its CERF-funded assistance at the most opportune time, depends heavily on the available capacity to manage the projects in country³¹. This capacity varies greatly from one country to the next.



³¹ Already a finding of the CERF Two Year Evaluation: “the pre-existing capacity of agencies is critical for timely response”.

Historically, the number of countries in which the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division of FAO operates projects has grown steadily (Figure 8). Unfortunately, this impressive geographic expansion of the FAO emergency and rehabilitation programmes has not been supported by a systematic effort to raise operational capacity across the board. Countries with a large, well-established emergency portfolio (e.g. Pakistan, Sri Lanka in the sample, see Annex 4) tend to host experimented emergency teams, but countries with a small emergency portfolio are staffed with regular, development-oriented staff who are ill-equipped to design and implement rapid emergency projects.

When a large sudden-onset disaster strikes a country with hitherto no or limited FAO emergency programmes, FAO must quickly set up a capacity to respond. The Myanmar case study indicated that little progress had been made on this issue, three years after the Tsunami Real Time Evaluation³² had identified surge capacity as an area for improvement. The Organization struggled to establish sufficient capacity in Yangon in the initial few months after the Nargis cyclone (3 May 2008) but nevertheless managed to deliver well-suited, good quality inputs in time for the monsoon rice planting season in June-July 2008.

One central issue in terms of rapidly raising field capacity is that, while FAO has increasingly and rightly decentralised its emergency procurement and contracting to the field, it still lacks standard tools, systems, document proformas (e.g. standard tables to plan and track procurements and LoAs, report outlines for IP), processes and training material to support its field offices across the board, quickly raise capacity when and where required, and facilitate the transfer of managerial information from the field to headquarters or from a departing emergency coordinator to a newly arriving one. It also makes this information more difficult to compile and report to supervisors, donors and evaluators than would be the case with standard systems and tools.

The case of the Field Office Accounting System (FAS) that does not allow the recording of commitments (see p.44) is but an illustration of this broader problem: in essence, the FAO corporate accounting, budgeting and management systems failed to keep abreast of increasingly decentralised emergency operations. This situation is unfortunately expected to last for a few years, until new systems can be developed (e.g. IPSAS which is due to replace FAS in 2012) or improved connectivity allows for the roll-out of corporate systems to the field.

Similarly, the critical processes of seeking and obtaining technical clearance and of requesting, issuing and monitoring Field Budget Authorisations are entirely made via email, making them more time-consuming, more prone to human error and less well documented than would be the case if they were automated. Technical clearance on specifications and bids could be greatly facilitated and better documented by an automated workflow database similar to what has already been rolled out for personnel (HRMS) or document management (EIMS) at headquarters. This is not only a problem for FAO. The lack of simple, comprehensive automated tool to support field procurements makes transparent reporting on procurement progress to all stakeholders next to impossible. As a result, implementing partners often receive project deliverable on very short notice.

While there are regular training opportunities offered to country office staff in the development sector, there have been few systematic attempts by FAO at raising the operational capacity of

³² Real Time Evaluation of the FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Operations in Response to the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami – FAO April 2007. <http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/227090/RTEFinalReport.doc>

its country offices to implement emergency and rehabilitation programmes³³. In fact emergency programmes are still considered “special” or outside the mainstay of the Organization’s work by some country office staff.

Recommendations:

9. To support and manage the early response to emergency situations, the FAO development-oriented staff at country level need to acquire “emergency expertise” through the provision of an ongoing and specific awareness raising and implementation training programme. This may require to integrate emergencies in corporate training programmes, and to devote resources either from the FAO regular programme budget or from donors to training staff and consultants at the country level on the management of emergency programmes.
10. The FAO corporate information management systems need to catch up with increasingly decentralized operations. Personnel managing emergency programmes need documented standardised processes, proforma and accounting and procurement management software that allow for a seamless flow of information from the field to headquarters and vice versa. Ultimately, the Oracle systems used by FAO for accounting, managing human resources and processing procurement orders should be expanded to support field operations, including accounting, LoAs tracking and the monitoring of procurement. As developing and rolling out these applications at the country level may take some time, an emergency operations management tool kit is required in the interim, including ready to use spreadsheet formats for field budget monitoring, procurement planning and tracking, monitoring of implementing partner progress against the LoAs, tracking of beneficiary numbers (planned vs. actual), plus associated operations manuals and guidelines.³⁴

7. Partnerships and coordination

The proven capacity of FAO to relate and work with a wide range of state and non-state actors remains an important strength. FAO is often considered more approachable than many other UN agencies. In the implementation of CERF-funded projects, it worked with national and international NGOs, CBOs, farmers organisations, but also research centres, various levels of government and other UN agencies.

Partners in sample countries could broadly be categorized as governmental and non-governmental. NGOs are typically contracted to deliver material assistance to affected communities, while government personnel perform a variety of technical roles: participation in needs assessments, programme planning and coordination, training delivery, technical supervision (e.g. of vaccination campaigns), monitoring and stakeholder coordination at the local level.

³³ Procurement presents a welcome exception to this finding: the new FAO procurement procedures (manual section 502) have been the subject of much training in headquarters (237 staff) and in field offices (445 staff including FAORs and their assistants, project managers, procurement officers, emergency coordinators, etc) over the past few months.

³⁴ This recommendation is in line with recommendations 5.2 and 5.3 from the Evaluation of FAO’s Operational Capacity in Emergencies.

This approach is appropriate as it makes use of the comparative advantages of NGOs, governments and UN organisations.

The roles of FAO

FAO's roles are in resource mobilization, procurement, technical support and coordination. In short, NGOs and governments deliver the goods that FAO procures with donors' funds. The rationale is that, as compared with NGOs and governmental actors, UN organisations enjoy better access to donors, can ensure better quality and prices due to grouped purchase and technical expertise, and are perceived as more neutral and/or less opinionated and hence offering a more neutral "ground" to coordination.

For instance, the procurement of pesticides or vaccines is probably best handled by FAO than by NGOs. Governments often procure such items, but the Cuba case study showed that FAO procurement services are competitive compared to governmental ones: FAO was able to procure seeds at significantly better prices than what the Government of Cuba had been able to get in previous years.

However, there are exceptions to this rule. As evidenced in Myanmar, when the specifications of the assets that are required by communities affected by a disaster are widely variable locally, from one group of village to the next, a central procurement is almost impossible and will likely not generate economies of scales. If the goods to be procured are not too technical (e.g. seed or tools) and available locally, it would make practical and financial sense to allow NGOs to procure them within the communities in which they work either through a seed fair or through more classic procurement and distribution methods. In the sample for this evaluation, the input fair approach was used in Lesotho and in Kenya, successfully in the former case but less so in the latter because of an exceedingly complex voucher-for-work scheme.

FAO also provided technical assistance, e.g. in Myanmar, Niger, Kenya and most prominently in the Southern Africa red locust control project. The importance of technical leadership and support is worth stressing, as it was expressed by many partners. It is also one of the comparative advantages of FAO as a specialised technical agency. This type of assistance was seen as key to "respectful partnerships" by interviewed NGOs in that it signals the interest of FAO to invest in partners' capacities rather than treating them as disposable service deliverers. However, there are clear limits to how much the CERF can support this function: it can only fund capacity building costs directly supporting the delivery of physical assistance. In the countries listed above, FAO was fortunate enough to access additional resources from bilateral donors or from its own Technical Cooperation Programme to support technical assistance.

Finally, FAO, its donors and partners rightly invest significant resources and time to establish fora – clusters or other coordination groups centred on food security or agriculture and frequently facilitated, chaired or co-chaired by FAO – for governmental and non-governmental actors to build consensus on needs and priorities, avoid duplications and fill gaps. Some food security or agriculture coordination mechanisms (not necessarily formal clusters) in country case studies worked as strong teams in assessing needs and planning and implementing programmes. For instance, in Kenya a strong coordination mechanism in the animal health sub-sector contributed much to the quality and effectiveness of the related CERF-funded projects.

The leadership role of FAO in these fora is generally well perceived and welcome, but it has clear limits. International NGOs and ICRC do not always come to clusters meetings – especially when those devolve a lot of attention to FAO-funded interventions – as they sometime consider that their own contributions, programmes and priorities are not given sufficient attention in these meetings. There is also a perceived conflict of interest between the cluster lead and the fund raising roles: being a cluster lead can give an edge in resource mobilisation efforts, and vice-versa. In the case of the CERF, the link is indirect but discernible: while CERF funds cannot be used to directly support coordination costs, the fact that only UN agencies and IOM can access the CERF resources directly strengthens their hand in their efforts to coordinate humanitarian assistance. It gives them some additional financial leverage in their dealings with NGOs and a head start in establishing field presence after a sudden-onset disaster. Hence the CERF indirectly supports the cluster approach.

Some international NGOs have expressed misgivings about this state of affairs. The criticism centres around the UN organisations becoming rent-seeking middlemen between the CERF and the NGOs ultimately contracted by UN agencies for project implementation. This feeling is strong when the NGOs consider that they are used as mere service providers rather than full substantive partners, when they are not allowed to charge sufficient overheads, and/or when the concerned UN agencies are perceived as playing a weak technical, substantive or coordination role.

Another limit or challenge to this coordination role was evidenced in Niger where INGOs members of the cluster explained that food insecurity had become a taboo in meetings attended by the Government. Even in an area like food security which is its specialty, FAO seems unwilling to contradict the official policy of the recipient state and that may weaken the transparency, credibility and effectiveness of the coordination mechanisms it facilitates. Fortunately, the new Niger government has identified food security as one of its highest priorities, so the issue is now given all the attention it deserves.

The roles of NGOs

NGOs offer more agile logistics than the UN and, as compared with most governments, better grassroots community interaction infused with humanitarian values such as neutrality, equity and accountability to, and advocacy on behalf of, communities. In conflict-affected or low-security countries (Pakistan, Sri Lanka in the sample), UN staff operating under stringent security rules find themselves at a strong disadvantage compared with NGO staff when it comes to field movement, thus re-enforcing UN dependence on non-governmental actors for interactions with local stakeholders. However, NGOs (particularly national ones) are often weaker financially and technically than UN organisations and they too are affected by poor security (see Box).

Selecting beneficiaries under curfew in Peshawar

In Pakistan, military operations against militants started around Peshawar at the time when the beneficiary selection for a CERF project (OSRO/PAK/803/CHA) was just beginning. A curfew was declared and the operation had to be temporarily suspended. In face of the imminent sowing season, it was decided to entrust beneficiaries identification and inputs distribution to local elders and officials. Staff from the IP (BEST, a local NGO) visited the area at night time, taking significant risk to verify beneficiary lists. However, strict monitoring was impossible. The evaluation found that local politicians sometime enlisted some of their relatives and supporters as beneficiaries at the expense of more deserving households. Given the circumstances, it is hard to see how this could have been avoided.

In the implementation of CERF projects, FAO has been fortunate to find a large number of NGOs, CBOs and farmer organisations willing and able to fulfil this delivery role to beneficiaries. Whenever possible, a conscious choice was made to select NGOs with pre-existing programmes in the area of intervention, be they international or national. As explained below, the premium put on well-established NGOs is particularly appropriate for fast-paced CERF projects, even if at times it can constrain geographic coverage.

However, the Organization's contractual arrangements need substantial adjustments. Interviewed NGOs tended to be critical of the administrative procedures followed in contracting and complained about high transaction costs, small overheads and late payments. Another issue is that several IPs felt they were treated more as service providers rather than full partners and for some, FAO was viewed as a less preferred source of project resources unless it offered inputs aligned closely with the IP's own field program. FAO usually contracts its NGO partners through "Letters of Agreement"(LoAs). By nature of the instrument, this implies that the NGO performs its duties as a service provider even if it would wish to assume a more substantive role. As stated earlier, the LoA tool is being revised by FAO. In an effort to answer the call for, and FAO commitments³⁵ towards more equal partnerships, a draft of Manual Section 507 has been in the works, with a view to developing a separate instrument allowing FAO to fund projects developed and/or implemented by others, rather than services which is what LoAs are meant for.

The roles of governments

Although the role of governments in disaster response has been stressed many times and at the highest levels (see Box), the humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence are often taken by relief agencies as shorthand for disengagement from state structures, rather than as necessitating principled engagement with them to encourage and support them to fulfil their responsibilities to protect and assist their citizens³⁶.

"The central role played by governments and local authorities in [addressing] natural disasters should be recognized throughout the cycle of providing life-saving relief."

Minutes from the CERF Advisory Group meeting – 23-24 May 2007

Governments offer generally good contextual knowledge, technical capacity and a stable cadre of personnel at the district/provincial level which can be invaluable in the implementation of labour-intensive, technically demanding operations such as vaccinations or locust control campaigns. They control access to crisis-affected areas. They can provide some degree of continuity and sustainability (at least in theory) and are keen to remind other actors of the long-term dimensions of food insecurity and of the need to switch rapidly to long-term rehabilitation rather than become trapped in a permanent emergency mindset. On the weak side, governments of affected countries can be part of the very problem the assistance is supposed to address (especially but not only in conflict-affected countries).

In this context, the significant role played by governmental institutions in FAO disaster responses and coordination sets the organisation apart from more "classic" humanitarian actors. In Myanmar, the close links forged between FAO and the Government of the Union of Myanmar (GOUM) technical ministries allowed the fielding of a joint FAO/Government assessment team in the delta almost immediately after Nargis. Senior technical managers from

³⁵ FAO supports the Global Humanitarian Platform and endorsed its Principles of Partnership adopted in July 2007.

³⁶ Paul Harvey - Towards good humanitarian government - The role of the affected state in disaster response, in HPG Policy Brief 37 - September 2009.

the Ministry of Agriculture were later contracted by FAO as national consultants to work alongside international technical consultants and provide well-received technical assistance to IPs. However, UN relief agencies in Myanmar initially held some misgivings about the links between FAO and the GOUM. To be fair, the Nargis response did not involve much political issues, certainly less than the long-standing IDP crisis in North Rakhine State of Myanmar.

Moreover, in conflict-affected states (Pakistan, Sri Lanka) and in Niger where the issue of food security was perceived as politically charged, the FAO emergency personnel's relationship with central political levels of the respective governments were found much weaker than those with provincial bodies and technical staff within the Ministry of Agriculture, perceived as more neutral.

The prevailing view among governments of disaster-affected countries is one of scepticism towards the effectiveness and sometimes the intentions of relief agencies. In the sample, Niger and Cuba lie at the extreme of a range of relief-sceptic views³⁷. Even if such views are not always without hidden agendas, it is true that relief can be turned into a self-perpetuating business. Governments of countries affected by disasters have a legitimate role in insuring that this is not the case, that relief needs are not overstated and that resources are spent primarily to help the populations in need.

The governmental discourse in support of longer term investment in solving the root causes of destitution and food insecurity rather than offering mere palliative treatment when a crisis strikes also deserves serious attention, especially by an agency like FAO. However, the CERF is clearly not the best tool to do this. Some Governments in case study countries tried to use a small portion of CERF resources to pay for investments that they always wanted to make, irrespective of any disaster or crisis: Kenya channelled some of the farming inputs to the rehabilitation or initiation of irrigation schemes; Cuba assisted some farmers operating semi-privately under the agriculture decentralization programme, not all of whom had been apparently affected by the hurricanes; Tajikistan argued to buy broad-spectrum pesticides instead of the locust-specific ones proposed by FAO, probably to use such broad-spectrum pesticides in support of cotton production. The articulation of short-term goals with long-term interventions is desirable in principle but can also lead to such debatable use of relief assistance and CERF funds to support long-term government goals. The goals are not necessarily bad in themselves but they are not what the Fund was meant to pay for.

Recommendation:

11. FAO, while upholding the humanitarian principle of neutrality, should continue to develop and maintain working relationships with governmental and non-governmental actors, with a preference for actors with a long-term commitment and good community links in the targeted areas, to allow faster and more effective emergency programmes and to facilitate sustainability and the transition into subsequent recovery and development programmes.

³⁷ In Cuba, the Government formulated and implemented all the CERF projects approved in response to hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008, including the two projects administered by FAO.

Partners' field presence

As seen above, limited capacity of some FAO field teams can form a bottleneck during implementation. The same problem can happen at the partners' level. As the example of Kenya illustrates, their capacity is not infinite either and sometimes an intervention is slowed down by insufficient IP capacity. The same applies to government partners (e.g. in Kenya, Cuba or Lesotho) and to suppliers, who on a number of occasions became bottlenecks, i.e. limited the size or speed of a response (Niger, Myanmar).

More generally, the capacity, experience and long-term presence of programme partners determine the quality of their service. A comparison between the locust control projects implemented in Southern Africa and in Tajikistan is telling in this regard:

- In Southern Africa, the 2008 surveys of red locust populations in Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique revealed a pre-occupying situation. The capable but cash-strapped regional red locust control organisation IRLCO-CSA approached FAO with a request for assistance. After resources approved from FAO's regular programme proved insufficient to contain the evolving threat, FAO submitted a CERF project which was approved in 2009 and successfully implemented by IRLCO-CSA, FAO and the concerned governments. The regional scope of the project and the generally good teamwork between these institutions – stemming from decades of collaboration – were critical factors for the success of the operation.
- In Tajikistan, a country programme evaluation conducted in 2009 found that the institution receiving the locust control assistance was too weak to make good use of it, as it relied on outdated techniques and lacked autonomous logistics and a surveying and mapping capacity. The FAO CERF-funded locust control interventions were relevant in that they meant to help Tajikistan respond to real and immediate crises, but sporadic projects based on emergency requests fell short of what was required, i.e. a comprehensive and systematic approach to locust surveillance and control in the country and even in the region³⁸.

In the first case above, CERF resources came in support to an existing surveillance and control capacity, while in the second case they were injected in a system lacking a regional dimension and operational and technical strength. The cases of Niger, Pakistan, Kenya and Cuba are other (positive) examples of the same correlation between good resource utilisation and a capable, experienced set of field partners with long-standing presence in project implementation areas.

This finding is similar to the previous one that FAO emergency capacity in country is an important factor in the timeliness of CERF projects implementation. Only it applies one link further in the delivery chain, at a point where the main issues are not about administrative efficiency or timeliness anymore, but centred around quality of the field presence, familiarity with the context and technical expertise. Admittedly, the need for partners with a strong field presence and technical capability is more important when the response and/or the context are complex, and hence the point is truer for locust control operations than for relatively simple farm input distributions. Similarly, contextual knowledge may also be more important in the sectors where FAO intervenes than it is in food aid, health or shelter because rural livelihoods are complex and location-specific socio-economic systems.

³⁸ The collapse of the USSR has translated in a lack of collaboration and a fragmentation of efforts between the newly created Central-Asian states to tackle what became a transboundary pest. FAO has been advocating for the creation of a regional locust control organisation in Central Asia.

In any case, experienced organisations with a well established field presence tend to make better use of CERF funds than more inexperienced ones. Their long-term presence and autonomous financial strength also enable them to continue to serve the beneficiaries after the CERF support is over. This is a fairly evident point which FAO field offices are already factoring in their choice of partners. It is of course not always possible to find such partners, in particular in countries struck by a sudden disaster like Myanmar after Nargis, but in most countries in the sample, FAO could rely on a useful combination of long-standing NGOs/CBOs, surveillance systems and governmental institutions to help scope, plan and deliver CERF-funded assistance.

Recommendations:

12. FAO should treat its implementing partners as real, substantive partners and attempt to include core implementing partners in the scoping, design and specification of proposed interventions more than is currently the case; FAO should also support valuable projects designed directly by partners themselves, when appropriate.
13. To equalize the relationship with implementing partners, the new FAO Manual Section 507 and new partnership instrument should be completed as soon as possible and made available to operational teams.
14. Just as donors and FAO sometimes insist that local partners give some visibility to their assistance by putting their logos on boards or publications (“downward visibility”), FAO should systematically include the logos of its implementing partners in project completion reports and brochures to recognise the importance of their contribution (“upward visibility”).
15. Good technical leadership is an integral contribution of FAO to a disaster response and deserves to be further strengthened. FAO should continue the excellent work undertaken in most sample countries by its technical teams to support IPs with relevant technical assistance and training during emergency responses, ideally conveyed by national experts with strong field experience.

8. Equity and targeting

The issue of how well CERF assistance was targeted to the neediest beneficiaries is an important one, but it does not apply equally to all types of activities. It goes without saying that locust control and mass livestock vaccinations are not targeted based on household food insecurity but based on technical criteria such as age cohorts or the geographic distribution of the insect or zoonosis. The issue is relevant only for asset replacement programmes.

Asset replacement projects typically pursue two distinct and at times conflicting objectives: rebuild the economy rapidly and efficiently, which calls for helping good, established asset managers, and help the most vulnerable segments of society overcome the disaster, under the assumption that the better-off can take care of themselves. The tension between these two

objectives has long been recognised³⁹ and in practice, FAO generally supports both small and large farmers affected by a crisis. In most of the reviewed projects, clear beneficiary selection criteria were stated in LoAs with partners and other programme documentation. However, these criteria were often adapted at field level, during discussions with local officials and communities, to take into account their perspectives and recommendations. Generally these local modifications tended to weaken targeting criteria and broaden the set of eligible beneficiaries.

In Myanmar, the evaluation found that the IPs had targeted communities most affected by Nargis, but that within each community, most affected households had benefited. An initial FAO proposal to focus seed and fertiliser on households with <2 acres of paddy was modified to take into account the large land holdings of many farmers and the criteria increased to < 10 acres. Following formal and informal⁴⁰ community consultation, the IPs distributed the inputs with processes agreed with the communities to minimise possible community tensions by aligning with local social norms. The inputs were sometimes distributed equally amongst the agreed group of poorer households, rather than attempting to wealth rank or prioritise the whole group and only support part of the group. Where only large items (buffaloes, piglets, power tillers) were provided, groups or livestock banks were set up to take responsibility for the items so the benefits would be more widely distributed.

This example is echoed in many of the country case studies: communities resist targeting and prefer blanket distributions whenever possible⁴¹. In Sri Lanka, the projects supported both IDPs and host communities under the explicit justification of avoiding conflicts at distribution time or later on. Niger provides a more contrasted picture. A number of the implementing partners for the first FAO CERF-funded project in 2007 took targeting very seriously, but it backfired when some of the poorest households ate the cereal seed. A lack of food aid and late arrival of the FAO seed may have contributed to this phenomenon. The subsequent distribution of vegetable seed targeted capable female producers organised in a producer group. 84% of the recipients were women organized in such groups. As for the animal feed sold at a subsidised price in input shops, it was intended only for small livestock owners but the size of flocks was found impossible to verify. It was decided that a maximum of 2 to 5 bags, depending on the locality, would be sold to each livestock owner. In practice, the large owners circumvented the criterion by asking family members to buy on their behalf. Nevertheless, the operation succeeded in causing a drop in feed prices in the market, and therefore the impact was positive for all livestock owners.

In Pakistan, while the IPs managed to reach the most deserving households, the evaluation team noticed some malpractices in beneficiary selection in all districts, usually as a result of local political pressure.

The cases of Cuba and Syria are unique in that the respective governments were in charge of targeting. Both governments opted to distribute the farming inputs to capable producers rather than to the most vulnerable. In Syria, the beneficiary selection was done in collaboration by the

³⁹ See: Real Time Evaluation of the FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Operations in Response to the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami, Final Report, FAO April 2007.

⁴⁰ At this stage, immediately after the disaster, extensive community consultations as undertaken in a normal rural development activity would have been an unjustifiable imposition on the time and priorities of the target groups.

⁴¹ In this respect, the behaviour of most community leaders and village chiefs is not unlike that of a HC who wants to keep the peace among UN agencies and hence apportion a bit of CERF funding to each and everyone of them – see section 4.

Ministry of Agriculture (MAAR) extension agents, the Party's local and governorate branches, the General Union of Peasants local representatives and Peasants Union and local community leaders. In Cuba the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG) targeted the most productive cooperatives and farmers having received idle land under the decentralization programme. For them, the CERF represented an important and a sometimes unique source of inputs.

Given the timeframe of CERF rapid response projects and the risk of bias in establishing distribution lists, the evaluation concludes that the best approach is to issue only general targeting guidelines focussed on process, especially for easily sharable items such as seed or fertiliser, and leave it up to capable NGOs and communities to select transparently broad groups of deserving households at the field level. This would minimize tensions and be perceived as equitable at the community level. It would also save time in many ways, not least in terms of planning, coordination and packaging (some projects devolve time and resource to package individual kits, while bulk packaging is cheaper and faster), and the result would not be significantly different.

Precise targeting using fixed criteria (food insecurity and/or productive capability) could be easier to adhere to during 1) a slow-onset emergency such as soaring food prices; 2) a protracted crisis; and 3) during the rehabilitation period a few months after a disaster when communities have recovered sufficiently to have time and be motivated to participate in community based needs assessment and wealth ranking exercises.

Recommendations:

16. In the immediate response to a disaster, and hence in most CERF rapid response projects, targeting for assets replacement projects should primarily focus at the *village* level (selection of most affected villages). For *household* targeting, FAO should provide IPs with general guidelines focussed on process rather than precise criteria, especially for easily sharable items such as seed or fertiliser. In the interest of saving time and protecting cohesion / social capital at the community level at a time when they need it most, the targeted communities should be provided with the opportunity to decide how they want the proposed inputs distributed in a transparent way within their community.
17. More focused targeting (taking account of factors such as food insecurity or productive capacity) can be developed later after disasters, as communities have recovered sufficiently to have the time and motivation to participate in community based needs assessment and wealth ranking exercises, but also in protracted crises and slow-onset emergencies; hence precise targeting is more relevant for UFE projects than for RR ones.
18. Just as FAO headquarters have delegated implementation for some of larger procurement activities to field offices, there may be opportunities to improve the effectiveness of procurement by delegating procurement of some items to the implementing partners⁴² or directly to the beneficiaries through a voucher and fair system, especially when the type of inputs to supply varies significantly from one locality to the next. Experience from the pilot voucher-based distributions in Africa should be incorporated into FAO procedures and emergency operations management tool kits. However, input fairs take some time to set up and require local availability of

⁴² This is currently not allowed by FAO procurement rules and needs to be discussed as part of the ongoing review of the LoA tool.

inputs; therefore they are probably not relevant immediately after a sudden disaster but better suited to slow-onset disasters and protracted crises, or to the later recovery period after a rapid onset natural disaster. When used in the context of a CERF project, they should be kept as simple as possible, avoiding complex work-for-vouchers schemes.

9. Results

This section provides a rapid overview of results (outcomes, impacts) achieved by the evaluated project based on country case study reports, and analyses these results in the light of CERF allocation criteria. A more extensive description of the case studies is presented in Annex 3. The reader will refer to individual case study reports for additional detail.

Results per country case study

In Cuba, 84% of the projects budget was used for deliverables. The seed procured at high price from Italy was well adapted to the country's urban and peri-urban agriculture and produced very high yield, estimated at 370,000 MT. The induced production was directed to hospitals, schools and cities, thus providing food, vitamins and a degree of diet diversity to the most vulnerable. However, some of the inputs were assigned to other priorities than replacing assets lost during the hurricanes, such as supporting the agriculture decentralisation programme or replacing old drip irrigation systems. The procurement of irrigation equipment ran into significant delays. Some of the items could not be procured in time and the corresponding funds (approximately \$175,000) will be returned to the CERF as a result.

The four CERF projects implemented in Kenya in 2007 and 2008 and focussing on animal health were found well timed, flexibly implemented and making a significant contribution to the protection of pastoralists' livelihoods in the country's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) by helping absorb severe climatic shocks. The training vaccination against Rift Valley Fever in March-April 2007 were credited with helping to control the outbreak of this deadly hemorrhagic fever transmittable to humans and hence saved people lives. Unfortunately, the economic damage to the livestock industry in Kenya had already been done: scared national consumers opted for other types of meat such as chicken, leading to a temporary collapse of the livestock and red meat market in the country. The two later projects implemented in 2008-2009 were much too complex for CERF funding and for this reason could not be completed on time. A vaccination campaign came after the disease it was supposed to control had run its course. Farming inputs were delivered late and often planted by farmers in the following season. The Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools⁴³ set up under the UFE window in refugee camps and within the host community in Kakuma and Dadaab by FAO and GTZ seemed to have imparted the targeted youths with some good knowledge on agriculture and life skills, but it can be argued that the project was too short to make a significant difference. FFS and JFFLS need longer-term funding than what the CERF can offer.

⁴³ Farmer Field Schools (FFS) are a agriculture extension methodology based on farmers' own observations and experimentations during the cropping cycle; Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) are FFS adapted to the needs of teenagers, often based on school gardens and including lessons about HIV/AIDS, gender roles, social issues such as violence or drug addiction, etc.

The anthrax vaccination in Western Lesotho came in at the right time and seemed to have contained the outbreak, although delays in delivery of the vaccines from the Government of Lesotho's own resources resulted in partial coverage as some of the pastoralists moved their animals to the mountains before they could be vaccinated. The disease – transmittable to humans – is endemic in the project area and regularly vaccinated against, which may raise a question about the use of CERF funds for a recurring activity. The other two projects managed to provide farming inputs on time for the plains, reaching good impact, but was delayed vis-à-vis the cropping calendar in mountainous areas.

In Myanmar, the CERF project approved in response to Nargis provided the first resources made available to the response and paid for two-thirds of the items distributed for the 2008 monsoon rice crop, with other donors contributed to subsequent activities. The paddy seed, fertiliser and buffaloes (used as drought power) were well-suited and delivered on time for the monsoon rice planting season of June-July 2008. However, and due to its small financial size, the FAO post-Nargis response could not cover all the needs. The cluster allowed for an orderly repartition of “village tracks” amongst organisations providing agricultural assistance. FAO CERF-funded assistance protected the livelihoods of approximately 4,000 households, but did not provide all the inputs required by these households. In most cases, beneficiary households received enough seed for about 2 acres of monsoon paddy. Most households had from 5 to 10 acres so still had to get additional seed from other sources, including borrowing money to buy seed. Based on the information provided in surveys in 2008, households procured on average 2 or 3 times more seed from their own savings or borrowing than was supplied through FAO. Interest rates in the Delta area were reported to be 8% to 10 % per month at the time, which made borrowing extremely expensive. Each basket of seed and associated inputs distributed reduced the amounts that households had to borrow.

The project in Northern Rakhine State (NRS) approved under the UFE window delivered vegetable seed and fertilizers to 3,000 displaced families as well as young chickens with initial feed packs to 1,600 households. The families targeted by the vegetable seed activity had planted their seed and were about to start harvesting their crops in early March when the evaluation took place. Anecdotal information from IPs indicated that most of the households who planted vegetables would harvest more than enough vegetables for their own use and would have small surpluses for sale. The poultry package had more fundamental weaknesses in terms of breed: the Rhode Island Red chicks distributed are of much larger size than traditional NRS village chicken and may not survive and multiply in the subsistence environment of poor families' backyards. More fundamentally, the issues faced by displaced households in NRS are more political than technical in nature, having to do with minority rights and land tenure. It is unclear how a purely technical support such as the one extended by FAO there could make a significant difference.

The 3 CERF projects evaluated in Niger can be described as partly successful. The inputs were generally appreciated in terms of quality but not always delivered on time. Some late delivery of farming inputs may have contributed to millet seed being eaten by some of the most vulnerable farmers. However, the rains arrived late in 2008 in many locations, which was a saving grace of sorts. The project delivered short-cycle millet varieties which could produce a crop in spite of the late arrival of rains and subsequent short duration of the rainy season. The distributed varieties of millet, sorghum and niébé (black eye peas) reached higher yields than local ones, with a production from the distributed seed averaging 4.3 months of household consumption. Seeds were being kept and shared by farmers so incremental impacts are likely to accrue in the following years. According to the FAO completion report, the subsequent project

delivering vegetable seeds to mainly women groups induced a production estimated at 30,000 MT of fresh vegetables and worth more than US\$ 6 million (US\$257 per household). These are fairly theoretical figures based on expected yields. 80% of the focus groups met with the evaluation team rated the yield not very good because of late seed distribution compared to the cropping calendar and a lack of water towards the end of the season. The evaluation estimated that the generated crop and income allowed beneficiating households to feed themselves during two months, i.e. a fraction of what FAO had estimated. Another CERF project provided subsidized animal feed which helped control rocketing feed prices and thus had an indirect impact on non-beneficiaries as well as beneficiaries.

In Pakistan, the small project responding to the Balochistan earthquake delivered a hundred earthquake-resistant animal sheds in January 2009, probably too late to make a significant difference on livestock survival during the 2008-2009 winter. However, the animal feed distributed did help prevent distress sales of livestock. The other two projects were successful examples of time critical assistance. In Peshawar, entire communities were using whatever resources they had left to rebuild their houses and would not have been able to restart agricultural production without FAO and CERF assistance. However, some of the goods delivered by FAO in Peshawar were found of low quality and the beneficiary selection process was disrupted by military operations, resulting in local politicians sometime enlisting relatives and supporters as beneficiaries at the expense of more deserving households. As for the CERF-funded project dealing with food prices, it focused on the Buner and Shangla districts of Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa⁴⁴ severely affected by soaring food prices due to their physical remoteness from markets, an isolation aggravated by the Taliban insurrection. The farming inputs distributed by FAO motivated farmers to revive agriculture production and generated an estimated additional production of 4,752 MT of wheat, which would cost approximately US\$3 million if it had to be delivered as food aid (against an FAO project budget of 1.2 million). Part of the grain produced was being kept by farmers as seed for subsequent years. This pilot project has since been followed by a massive EU-funded project covering many more districts.

In Sri Lanka, the projects provided for seeds, fertilizer, hand tools, poultry and livestock vaccination for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities in the North and East of the country affected by the conflict between government forces and Tamil separatists. While the projects were found very relevant against a backdrop of deteriorating food production and food security, the farming inputs were not always handed out on time and some beneficiaries used them during the next season. The paddy seed was well received and helped produce surplus for sale and barter; there were some local initiatives for sharing surplus seed after harvest by way of seed banks. Problems were reported with some of the vegetable varieties as well as quality issues with poultry and farm machinery provided to farmer organisations. The farmer training sessions were particularly appreciated, apparently also for symbolic or psychological reasons as they provided a sense of return to normality and hope.

The project in support of red locust control in Southern Africa was one of the most successful in the sample. It managed to control an alarming build up in red locust populations in breeding areas of Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi that posed a regional threat to crop production at a time when the region was already facing a severe food shortage. The operation, including surveying, aerial spraying with chemical and biopesticides, and monitoring of locust populations, were highly technical. The project managed to effectively control red locust populations in all breeding areas. The operational capacity of IRLCO-CSA was re-enforced,

⁴⁴ Formally known as the North-West Frontier Province or NWFP.

although the case study also highlighted sustainability concerns in terms of arrear payments from some IRLCO-CSA member countries. The project pioneered the large-scale use of biopesticides in the Ikuu-Katavi natural park in Tanzania. Over and beyond this park, all red locust breeding areas are wetlands and produce much fish. Chemical pesticides likely get into the food chain this way, and thus wider use of biopesticides is not only important for the environment but to protect human lives as well.

Results per type of assistance

The interventions reviewed in detail above may be classified in two broad groups depending on whether the intervention comes during a slow-onset crisis or after a sudden crisis:

1. Some interventions attempt to control the escalation of a “biological threat” to productive assets and human health, such as livestock vaccinations intended to contain zoonoses, or pest (e.g. locust) control operations designed to prevent massive outbreaks; and
2. Asset replacement interventions, i.e. distribution (or subsidized sale) of seed, fertilizer, tools, livestock and livestock feed, attempt to mitigate the effects of a crisis on livelihoods after it has run its course.

In both cases the main objective is to protect the productive capacities of the affected households and/or countries so as to avoid or shorten the period during which households need food aid and other relief assistance. Both the pre-crisis and post-crisis types are time-critical and squarely fit the CERF sectoral eligibility criteria intended to translate the life-saving criteria into sector-specific guidance (see p.25).

In the country cases studies for this evaluation, the first *modus operandi* above seemed to work better for locust control than for livestock disease control, mainly because pesticides are easier to store than vaccines. The locust control project in Southern Africa could for instance mobilise pesticides from aging stocks in West Africa. In contrast, the procurements of vaccines for Rift Valley Fever, Peste des Petits Ruminants or Anthrax went through a tendering process. The vaccine for Rift Valley Fever has also a short shelf life and needs to be produced after each outbreak. These factors contributed to vaccinations of limited effectiveness because they came late in the development of the outbreak or, in the case of PPR in Kenya, after it had run its course. FAO may need to improve its readiness to address livestock epidemics by identifying reliable vaccine suppliers and be ready to procure vaccines from them through rapid sole source contracts, as routinely done for locust control.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Preventive control (i.e. regular vaccinations in the case of diseases, systematic surveys and control of hopper bands in the case of locusts) is generally considered more cost-effective than fighting declared outbreaks. In some of the sampled countries (e.g. red locust in Tanzania), a preventive control operation had failed to control the threat early enough and the CERF was called upon to face an escalation of the risk. As evidenced in this particular project, there is a risk that the availability of emergency assistance to control declared outbreaks may reduce developing countries’ concerns about outbreaks, and hence mollify their commitments to supporting strong, permanent surveillance and preventive control systems. However, these two approaches cannot be seen as mutually exclusive. There are synergies between strong preventive capacity and efficient emergency response. As explained above, partners with long-standing field presence and technical expertise – such as national veterinary services or regional locust control organisations – are

best placed to make good use of emergency funding when a particular situation gets temporarily out of control. It is therefore crucial for FAO and its national and regional partners to maintain a robust preventive veterinary and locusts control capacity, in order to prevent crises but also to mitigate them effectively when they occur. Emergency funding from donors can never replace strong, durable preventive control systems; in fact the latter are best placed to make good use of the former.

The second modus operandi above – the replacement of productive asset lost in a disaster in an attempt to protect and/or rebuild productive, self-reliant livelihoods – functions a little bit like an insurance policy in that it protects livelihoods against risks. The evidence from the case studies is that this sort of livelihoods protection projects provides valuable assistance to populations in need. This is why many UN agencies (FAO of course but also WFP, ILO and others), hundreds of NGOs and most prominently the Red Cross movement are increasingly investing in emergency livelihoods projects.

Not surprisingly, the approach works best when relevant, good quality aid is delivered in sufficient quantity, to the right people, and on time for its optimal utilisation. From the evidence at hand, the performance of CERF-funded FAO projects against these criteria was as follows:

- Quality: the assistance provided by FAO and its partners has generally been of good quality and well known to the farmers, a point on which FAO technical services rightly insist. Some problems occurred when the varieties / breeds / types of items distributed were not the same as those currently used in the target areas, as already mentioned in section 5 on project design. With seed and livestock, the only reason for using new varieties not known to the target groups during a rapid response project should be that known local varieties are not available. Table 7 below outlines the differences in technology requirements at different stages of a disaster response.
- Quantity: what FAO gives is variable but often quite small as compared to the losses incurred by beneficiaries. This is typically the case when small CERF allocations meet with the large needs generated by sudden onset disasters. On the one hand, small kits tends to reduce the impact of CERF-funded, FAO-implemented projects. On the other hand, there is a risk that too large an assistance, usually provided free of charge, may create dependency and undermine more sustainable input supply mechanisms. Farmers can often complement the assistance with seed and other inputs procured by themselves. The case of Niger where FAO has invested significant efforts and resources over the past decade to develop sustainable input shops operated by farmers organisations is an apt example of this problem: the evaluation concluded that emergency assistance could undermine the input shops viability and recommended to use the shops to deliver assistance through a voucher system in times of crisis rather than develop parallel input distribution channels. Similarly, the free fertiliser distributions undertaken under soaring food prices projects certainly helped benefiting farmers on the short run but may contradict the long-standing position of FAO and IFIs against broad-based fertiliser subsidies and in support of more sustainable, market-based fertiliser supply systems.
- Targeting: the assistance was generally well distributed, the best performance being achieved when IPs and communities opted not to focus the assistance too narrowly on the most vulnerable households.

- Timeliness remains a problematic area, in spite of improvements brought to FAO’s procurement procedures in recent years such as increased decentralisation. FAO emergency teams tend to adopt optimistic views about the time it takes to identify, procure and distribute farming inputs and thus underestimate the time frame. The goal is generally set to distributing the assistance *at the beginning* the planting season. In practice, it is often distributed *during* and sometimes *at the tail end* of the planting season. As explained above (Timeliness at delivery, p.45), the best practice is to distribute *before* the season to allow farmers to properly plan their use of the inputs. Cropping calendars are highly variable even within a given target area and a finer awareness and respect of these local variations are in order.

Table 7: Technology requirements at different stages of a disaster response

In an emergency context, tried and tested inputs such as land races for seed and livestock or traditional designs for boats or fishing gear tend to work much better than new technology. “Building back better” is rarely as easy and straightforward as generally assumed.

Emergency Stage	Appropriate Technology	Identified by	Goal
Initial response	Immediately available. Locally proven and understood, requiring no or minimal technical advice.	Farmers, township level extension staff. Agency technical manuals	Replace the most urgently needed lost assets
Recovery / rehabilitation	Locally proven and understood, with a few innovations decided in consultation with users (based on experience of technical specialists, timeliness of supply and available technical support and inputs)	Line ministry technical specialists, farmers	Replace or rebuild - and at times improve upon - lost assets
Development	Innovative, identified through adaptive research and supported by structured extension and market chain support processes	Line ministry supported by FAO technical specialists	Improve upon <i>existing</i> assets and practices

Adapted from the Myanmar Case Study

Another important criterion determining impact in emergency responses is coverage. However, most of the evaluated CERF projects formed part of a broader response involving a number of projects from other donors, and the present evaluation was not geared to look at those entire responses. Hence it is not in a position to systematically assess in all country case studies the degree to which CERF funding, usually fairly small, helped FAO reach adequate coverage of livelihood needs beyond the few thousands beneficiaries targeted by each individual project.

Recommendation:

19. In the emergency and early rehabilitation phases, FAO should continue to give preference to varieties / breeds / types that are the same as those currently used in the target areas and are familiar to beneficiaries. The only reason for using a new type of inputs not known to the target groups during a rapid response project would be when the local, customary inputs are not available (see also recommendation 4).

Results vs. CERF criteria

The evaluation TORs included questions about how well FAO assistance fits the CERF funds allocation criteria, i.e. whether FAO programmes funded by the CERF delivered time-critical assistance, whether they satisfied the CERF life-saving criterion (e.g. by reducing life-threatening coping strategies), and whether the CERF funding available to FAO for “underfunded crises” contributed to more equitable responses to agricultural emergencies worldwide. Additionally, another relevant question here is whether the UFE window strengthened *core* elements of the humanitarian response in underfunded crises or whether it tended to support rather ancillary interventions.

On the latter issue, most projects approved from the underfunded emergencies window were designed to complement or upscale central, core activities of the response, as they should. Only very few of them displayed a tendency to use the UFE window to experiment with more complex approaches than RR projects (e.g. JFFLS in Kenya).

The answer is also clearly positive as far as the time-critical criterion is concerned. As described in details in section 6, seasonality sets FAO apart from other recipients of the CERF. It constitutes a fundamental constraint to agricultural interventions everywhere, including but not only emergency ones, be they intended to contain an emerging crisis or to mitigate its effects. All the evaluated projects tried to address time-critical needs relative to seasons or the cropping calendar, even though not all succeeded in doing so. For other agencies, a two weeks delay is a two weeks delay. For FAO, a two weeks delay can mean a 6 months or 1 year delay if it means missing a cropping season.

As far as the life-saving criterion is concerned, the evaluation concludes that protecting livelihoods does save lives, although this link is generally indirect. Crises can exacerbate resource-based conflicts (e.g. among pastoralists or between pastoralists and crop farmers). The loss of one’s means of livelihood can lead to destitution, famine and/or the adoption of risky or socially unacceptable coping strategies such as getting into unsustainable debt, selling assets, theft, cattle rustling or prostitution. However, most of the communities met during the evaluation had access to potentially less risky behaviours to earn a living, such as seasonal migration in search of jobs or, in some of the areas with a strong food deficit, access to food aid.

Moreover, when FAO projects did evidently and directly save lives, this was perceived by local stakeholders not as the central aim of the intervention but as a side effect: e.g. the vaccinations against zoonoses such as Rift Valley Fever or Anthrax were in the mind of local actors mainly aimed at protecting livelihoods and functioning markets, even though they also saved the lives of an undermined number of pastoralists, livestock traders, meat sellers and consumers⁴⁵. The central aim of livelihood protection interventions is to protect secure, self-reliant and dignified lives. Not lives in a refugee camp, passive and dependent on foreign generosity to survive, but active lives, as men and women able to provide for their family.

This difference with purely palliative relief operations has important practical consequences. Livelihoods protection work cannot rely on standard deliverables but must instead pay much attention to the specific needs, technical know-how and production processes of the people it tries to support. However, it doesn’t follow that livelihood protection programmes are not

⁴⁵ The Government of Kenya reported 148 human deaths as a result of the 2006-2007 RVF outbreak.

humanitarian. Dignity constitutes an important humanitarian value in its own right. However, it is not a value explicitly reflected in the CERF criteria. Hence the insistence of many FAO CERF project documents on linking livelihoods with saving lives, even in cases where the link is quite indirect.

This being said, the life-saving criterion cannot be interpreted in a strictly literal and direct manner or “only therapeutic feeding and war surgery will fit”, to quote a staff member of the CERF Secretariat itself. The IASC and the CERF Secretariat have, through a transparent and participatory process, managed to operationalise the life-saving criterion into precise sectoral guidance delimitating what types of interventions form legitimate use of CERF funds. The resulting guidelines, entitled “CERF Life-Saving Criteria and Sectoral Activities”⁴⁶, provide a list of supported agricultural interventions which the evaluation found adequate and well prepared⁴⁷. Almost all the reviewed projects fell squarely within these guidelines.

It is natural and appropriate that the work of FAO be considered of lesser priority immediately after a disaster than the directly life saving work of relief agencies. However, once the undernourished are being fed and major health threats are brought under control, safeguarding productive livelihoods and restoring a local food production capacity quickly become priorities for national governments and affected populations. This is reflected in a broad consensus among the humanitarian community that time-critical agricultural activities with a direct and immediate impact on food availability and the livelihoods of families affected by an emergency are legitimate recipients of the CERF. The CERF criteria were meant to prevent mission creep towards recovery and keep the funds focussed on the most pressing humanitarian needs. They were not meant to limit the CERF exclusively to palliative relief operations.

Recommendations:

20. The life-saving criterion of the CERF should continue to be interpreted flexibly as a bulwark to focus the funds on humanitarian needs, including the protection of self-reliant livelihoods and food availability through time-critical agricultural interventions in accordance with CERF sectoral guidelines.
21. FAO and other organisations involved in livelihoods should continue to advocate, on behalf of the very communities they are trying to help, for livelihood protection as a legitimate humanitarian issue, recognising however that this line of work differs from palliative relief operations in that it aims to support the resilience of experienced economic actors whose technical know-how deserves respect and attention during needs assessment, selection of deliverables and timing of their delivery (see recommendations 3, 20 and 7, respectively).

⁴⁶ CERF Secretariat, 7 August 2007.

⁴⁷ The control of livestock diseases contagious to humans (zoonoses) could arguably be given more visibility in the guidelines since it constitutes the most directly life-saving form of agricultural intervention, but it is already authorized as a sub-set of livestock vaccination campaigns.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Substantive reports for the use of CERF funds are prepared annually at the field level by recipient agencies towards the end of the year, consolidated by the RC/HC on a crisis by crisis basis, forwarded to the CERF Secretariat and the ERC for quality control and published on the CERF website generally around March. Timeliness in terms of reporting has been improving according to the CERF Secretariat but it remains an issue for all agencies.

The quality of these narrative UN-wide country reports also remains rather weak. They are very short and tend to focus on the positive aspects of project implementation and results. There is for instance a specific section on success stories (entitled “CERF in Action”) but no section on issues or difficulties encountered. The CERF Secretariat is not in a position to verify the veracity of those reports independently. It is keenly aware that reporting constitutes a weakness in the system and is exploring ways to improve accountability through a Performance and Accountability Framework.

As far as reporting from FAO is concerned, this has improved over the years. The importance of reporting to donors is well engrained in the Emergency and Rehabilitation Division of FAO. However, the CERF Secretariat considers that FAO should request sooner its project extensions and report sooner on implementation problems justifying extensions, something which is apparently often done at the “last minute”.

From the point of view of the evaluation team, the CERF UNCT annual reports would deserve additional attention to timelines, especially when reporting on rapid response projects. A mention of the dates of delivery of the procured deliverables per type of deliverable and geographic area (or implementing partner) appears desirable, at least for the type of work undertaken by FAO for reasons explained above when reviewing timeliness at delivery. These reports would also benefit from additional ground-truthing and peer review by the UN Country Team and by implementing partners.

These issues are of course not specific to FAO since it is only following the CERF template and its annual narrative reports are compiled with those of other Fund recipients on a country-by-country basis, as explained above.

Recommendations:

22. The CERF Secretariat should amend the narrative report format so that each and every CERF annual country report contains, per sector and for each agency, a timeline of interventions, including the dates for procurement and delivery of assistance to beneficiaries.
23. Clusters and the UNCT should be required to systematically review narrative reports and the performance of each project annually, with a view to providing some degree of peer review and improving report quality. Along the same lines and similarly to what is often the case during needs assessments, the clusters and UNCT could usefully evaluate responses and learn from the experience as a group.

PART 3 – CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Conclusion

FAO provides an important humanitarian contribution to communities affected by crises by supporting their self-reliance and local food availability through time-critical agricultural interventions. Its contribution to saving lives is often (although not always) indirect but squarely within the CERF guidelines on how to interpret the life saving criteria. FAO's share of total CERF allocations remains modest, at 11 percent. Within FAO emergency and rehabilitation programmes, the share funded by the CERF has raised over the years from 7 percent in 2006 to 12 percent in 2009. Nevertheless, FAO's reliance on CERF grants remains moderate so far and reflects a broader trend towards pool funding of humanitarian assistance. In most evaluated countries, FAO appropriately used CERF funding in synergy with other funding tools having longer time horizons.

This synergy is also operational. The work of FAO in support of both development and disaster risk management over many decades allowed the Organization to forge strong links with perennial institutions and actors. As explained in previous sections, such long-term investment and partnerships with stable organisations proved invaluablely helpful to implement short-term disaster prevention or response interventions, as and when need arose. The most effective CERF-funded projects in the sample were those which helped a group of actors with a pre-existing field presence and programmes to address a particularly acute crisis or threat requiring surge capacity for a limited period of time.

In spite of the limited size of its funding, the CERF represents a key financial instrument for FAO because it provides early funding, allowing to respond to the most pressing needs shortly after a sudden-onset disaster or early enough during a slow-onset disaster to be effective (e.g. for locust control).

FAO projects funded from the CERF tend to be small, rapidly designed and following fairly standard and simple approaches. This trend toward simplicity of design is appropriate for projects that must be implemented over 6 to 10 months. A few more complex projects in the sample performed rather poorly during implementation.

Most projects were found relevant. The only concern in terms of relevance pertains to the soaring food prices projects approved in 2008. The delivery of subsidised farming inputs for a few months will at best provide temporary relief to a small number of farmers and have a marginal impact on food prices.

The CERF was found very professionally managed, dependable, balancing flexibility with rigor and promoting a coherent and prioritized response to needs. It also appears to support the cluster approach indirectly, by giving UN agencies a small and temporary "head-start" as compared to NGOs immediately after a disaster. Proposals are quickly reviewed, approved and funded, but not as quickly as was intended. For FAO, the period from the first proposal submission to receiving the funds takes on average 35 days for the rapid response window, and 51 days for the underfunded window. UFE projects are processed twice a year. The large

number of projects to be processed at these times tends to delay approval, including for RR projects.

However, FAO does not need to wait for the bank transfer to start implementing a project: as soon the project has been approved, field staff are allowed to pay for initial expenses by drawing from the FAO SFERA advance mechanism. For rapid response projects, implementation can usually start a month or a month and a half after the disaster or crisis escalation they are supposed to address.

The main concern highlighted by the evaluation pertains to efficiency and timeliness. The short timeframes imposed by the CERF have forced FAO to shorten its delivery periods but there is room for progress. The organisation must show no complacency with the timeliness of its delivery, as this would undermine its impact, its credibility and then in turn its access to the Fund. Unfortunately, the current information management architecture does not permit a rapid and seamless flow of budgetary and implementation information from the field to headquarters. This hampers the capacity of headquarters to track project performance against benchmarks in real time.

Timeliness and seasonality are central to livelihoods projects and deserves greater attention from programme staff. They need to be better aware of the typical delivery durations to expect from various procurement approaches. They also need to take better account of local cropping calendars and how the sowing seasons may vary from one locality, elevation or agro-ecological zone to the next. Such enhanced knowledge of procurement and delivery timeframes and of local cropping calendars would allow them to deliver farming inputs *before* the sowing season in most locations, rather than *during* it as is often currently the case. It may also help then judge when catching the next cropping season is doable and when it is not.

Efficient and timely execution of projects was found correlated with FAO emergency capacity in country, which is very variable: as one would expect, countries with a large emergency portfolio tend to host large, experimented emergency teams while countries with no or a small emergency portfolio are staffed with regular, development-oriented staff who are ill-equipped to design and implement rapid emergency projects. An effort to raise the capacity of regular programme country offices to manage small emergency projects appears necessary. Besides, FAO field staff lacks standard processes, tools and information systems to facilitate and document financial management, procurement, contracting and monitoring at the country level. While emergency procurement and contracting have increasingly and rightly been decentralised to the field, the corporate accounting, budgeting and management systems have failed to catch up. Given the progress made in recent years in terms of connectivity worldwide and the current efforts of FAO to improve country office connectivity, it is high time to develop and roll out applications and tools that will work at the country level, where the action happens, and connect that level with headquarters in integrated information management systems.

Finally, one should stress the invaluable role that FAO's implementing partners have played in the success of the reviewed CERF-funded projects. Partnerships made use of the comparative advantages of NGOs, CBOs, governments and UN organisations. Some partners sought to place the relationship on a more equal footing, complained about administrative deficiencies and stressed the importance of getting good technical support and capacity building from FAO rather than just funding. Nonetheless, partnerships were generally an area of strength. Given that local capacities are key to providing timely and effective assistance to populations in need, there is some reason to hope that if FAO management and administrative capacity could be

raised in a methodical and systematic manner at the country level, the Organization and its partners can implement excellent emergency livelihoods protection programmes in the years to come.

12. Recommendations

Needs assessments and priority setting

1. Building upon its development programme and long term presence in most countries, FAO should continue to mobilise knowledgeable specialists from the government, pre-existing development projects and NGOs to participate in needs assessments.
2. Time permitting, FAO should strive to participate in multi-stakeholder needs assessments to buttress objectivity, accuracy and transparency in identifying needs and priorities after disasters that are likely to have affected many sectors. However, a holistic approach to needs assessments takes time and may become unwieldy and unnecessary in well-defined crises, e.g. locust outbreaks.
3. In the most disaster-prone countries, the Organization should continue to support early warning systems and/or the collection of simple livelihoods profiles and agricultural calendars developed on the basis of farmers' own knowledge initially captured at needs assessment time and further refined throughout the response under the aegis of the agriculture or food security cluster (or a similar coordination mechanism).

Project design and quality assurance

4. A standardisation of CERF projects technical approaches is desirable from a quality control view point, following the approach developed by the Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service. By virtue of their short duration, CERF projects must use simple and standard approaches and concentrate on replacing the most urgently needed production assets to ensure some level of food production and incomes, rather than aim at increasing food production levels as compared to pre-crisis times (see also recommendation 20).

Efficiency and timeliness

5. If confirmed by the 5-year evaluation of the CERF, seasonal delays in the approval of CERF projects, due to a large number of UFE projects to be processed at specific times in the year, deserve consideration by the CERF Secretariat with a view to "insulate" rapid response projects from this effect, i.e. ensure that the approval process for RR projects remains unaffected by delays in the UFE window.
6. Programme staff need to be better aware of the typical delivery durations to expect from various procurement approaches and should start procurement and contracting as early as possible; "pre-procurement" (starting procurement before the official project start date) should become the rule for CERF Rapid Response projects; repeat orders are a very powerful tool for rapid delivery, when based on previous tenders that were well conducted and answered to by a sufficient number of suppliers.

7. Taking greater account, and in some countries developing a more precise knowledge of how cropping calendars change from one locality, elevation or agro-ecological zone to the next would allow field teams to better schedule delivery and provide farming inputs *before* rather than *during* the sowing season, it as is often the case currently. It may also help judge when catching the next season is doable and when it is more realistic to aim at subsequent seasons (see recommendation 8).
8. Based on the selected procurement approach and possibilities of a repeat order or not, programme staff should make an educated guess about whether or not asking for CERF funds to “catch the next crop”. As a rule of thumb, if one can do a repeat order or sole source contract with a supplier that has the goods in stock, one should expect a lead time of one to two months from procurement start to delivery of the inputs to farmers. This lead time jumps to a bare minimum of 3 months, and more likely a period from 4 to 6 months if the procurement needs to be tendered nationally or internationally.
9. To support and manage the early response to emergency situations, the FAO development-oriented staff at country level need to acquire “emergency expertise” through the provision of an ongoing and specific awareness raising and implementation training programme. This may require to integrate emergencies in corporate training programmes, and to devote resources either from the FAO regular programme budget or from donors to training staff and consultants at the country level on the management of emergency programmes.
10. The FAO corporate information management systems need to catch up with increasingly decentralized operations. Personnel managing emergency programmes need documented standardised processes, proforma and accounting and procurement management software that allow for a seamless flow of information from the field to headquarters and vice versa. Ultimately, the Oracle systems used by FAO for accounting, managing human resources and processing procurement orders should be expanded to support field operations, including accounting, LoAs tracking and the monitoring of procurement. As developing and rolling out these applications at the country level may take some time, an emergency operations management tool kit is required in the interim, including ready to use spreadsheet formats for field budget monitoring, procurement planning and tracking, monitoring of implementing partner progress against the LoAs, tracking of beneficiary numbers (planned vs. actual), plus associated operations manuals and guidelines.⁴⁸

Partnerships and coordination

11. FAO, while upholding the humanitarian principle of neutrality, should continue to develop and maintain working relationships with governmental and non-governmental actors, with a preference for actors with a long-term commitment and good community links in the targeted areas, to allow faster and more effective emergency programmes and to facilitate sustainability and the transition into subsequent recovery and development programmes.
12. FAO should treat its implementing partners as real, substantive partners and attempt to include core implementing partners in the scoping, design and specification of proposed

⁴⁸ This recommendation is in line with recommendations 5.2 and 5.3 from the Evaluation of FAO’s Operational Capacity in Emergencies.

interventions more than is currently the case; FAO should also support valuable projects designed directly by partners themselves, when appropriate.

13. To equalize the relationship with implementing partners, the new FAO Manual Section 507 and new partnership instrument should be completed as soon as possible and made available to operational teams.
14. Just as donors and FAO sometimes insist that local partners give some visibility to their assistance by putting their logos on boards or publications (“downward visibility”), FAO should systematically include the logos of its implementing partners in project completion reports and brochures to recognise the importance of their contribution (“upward visibility”).
15. Good technical leadership is an integral contribution of FAO to a disaster response and deserves to be further strengthened. FAO should continue the excellent work undertaken in most sample countries by its technical teams to support IPs with relevant technical assistance and training during emergency responses, ideally conveyed by national experts with strong field experience.

Equity and targeting

16. In the immediate response to a disaster, and hence in most CERF rapid response projects, targeting for assets replacement projects should focus at the village level (selection of most affected villages). In the interest of saving time and protecting cohesion / social capital at the community level at a time when they need it most, the targeted communities should be provided with the opportunity to decide how they want the proposed inputs distributed in a transparent way within their community.
17. More focused targeting (taking account of factors such as food insecurity or productive capacity) can be developed later after disasters, as communities have recovered sufficiently to have the time and motivation to participate in community based needs assessment and wealth ranking exercises, but also in protracted crises and slow-onset emergencies; hence precise targeting is more relevant for UFE projects than for RR ones.
18. Just as FAO headquarters have delegated implementation for some of larger procurement activities to field offices, there may be opportunities to improve the effectiveness of procurement by delegating procurement of some items to the implementing partners⁴⁹ or directly to the beneficiaries through a voucher and fair system, especially when the type of inputs to supply varies significantly from one locality to the next. Experience from the pilot voucher-based distributions in Africa should be incorporated into FAO procedures and emergency operations management tool kits. However, input fairs take some time to set up and require local availability of inputs; therefore they are probably not relevant immediately after a sudden disaster but better suited to slow-onset disasters and protracted crises, or to the later recovery period after a rapid onset natural disaster. When used in the context of a CERF project, they should be kept as simple as possible, avoiding complex work-for-vouchers schemes.

⁴⁹ This is currently not allowed by FAO procurement rules and needs to be discussed as part of the ongoing review of the LoA tool.

Results

19. FAO should always procure varieties / breeds / types that are the same as those currently used in the target areas and are familiar to beneficiaries, particularly in the emergency and early rehabilitation phases.
20. The “life-saving” criterion of the CERF should continue to be interpreted flexibly as a bulwark to focus the funds on humanitarian needs, including the protection of self-reliant livelihoods and food availability through time-critical agricultural interventions in accordance with CERF sectoral guidelines.
21. FAO and other organisations involved in livelihoods should continue to advocate, on behalf of the very communities they are trying to help, for livelihood protection as a legitimate humanitarian issue, recognising however that this line of work differs from palliative relief operations in that it aims to support the resilience of experienced economic actors whose technical know-how deserves respect and attention during needs assessment, selection of deliverables and timing of their delivery (see recommendations 3, 20 and 7, respectively).

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

22. The CERF Secretariat should amend the narrative report format so that each and every CERF annual country report contains, per sector and for each agency, a timeline of interventions, including the dates for procurement and delivery of assistance to beneficiaries.
23. Clusters and the UNCT should be required to systematically review narrative reports and the performance of each project annually, with a view to providing some degree of peer review and improving report quality. Along the same lines and similarly to what is often the case during needs assessments, the clusters and UNCT could usefully evaluate responses and learn from the experience as a group.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

FAO/OED - May 2009

A. Background

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was created on December 2005 through the resolution 60/124 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, which added to the US\$50 million loan facility of the *Central Emergency Revolving Fund* a grant facility of up to US\$450 million. The new fund was launched on 9 March 2006. Two thirds of the grant facility's provisions are for rapid-response and one-third for underfunded crises, as stated in the Secretary-General's Bulletin of 10 October 2006.

FAO is the fourth largest recipient of the fund and CERF funds represent the third largest source of funding for FAO emergency projects. CERF contributions to FAO funding have considerably grown during the last years going from US\$17Million in 2006 to US\$41Million in 2008 (see figure 1). Seed aid and the distribution of other farming inputs represent the majority of CERF-funded FAO interventions but other types of projects are developing, such as support to animal health (e.g. in Kenya) or to locust control campaigns (Yemen, Timor-Leste, Tajikistan).

A two-year evaluation of the CERF was commissioned by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) in 2007-08, and focused primarily on strategic, administrative and operational aspects of the Fund. A five-year evaluation will be launched by OCHA in 2011 and is expected to focus on results achieved in the field by CERF-funded programmes. During a recent visit of the TCE Director to UN-OCHA, it was proposed that FAO undertake its own evaluation of the CERF-funded projects it implements so as to contribute to the global 5-year CERF evaluation. The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED, formally PBEE) was approached in January 2009 and agreed to accommodate this evaluation in its programme for 2009.

B. Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation is intended to provide an assessment of FAO interventions carried out with CERF funding, particularly focusing on results achieved at field level. It will be forward looking, by identifying areas for improvement of relevance and effectiveness of CERF-funded FAO projects in the future and by making suggestions for corrective measures, future programming and improved use of the Fund by FAO, especially the grant window.

In particular the evaluation will provide feedback and guidance to FAO Management on operational processes, constraints and programme achievements in order to i) improve the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of FAO's emergency activities carried out under the CERF; ii) provide findings and recommendations to the five-year evaluation of the CERF foreseen for 2011; and iii) account for the use of CERF funds to the CERF secretariat, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, donors, governments and other stakeholders.

C. Scope

The evaluation will analyze a variety of CERF-funded and FAO-implemented projects, reviewing the use by FAO of the underfunded and rapid-response grants. However, and since

FAO has had only limited use of the loan window, this instrument will not be covered by the evaluation.

CERF-funded activities will be assessed in terms of their relevance; efficiency (with special consideration to timeliness); coordination and partnerships; effectiveness, impact and sustainability; and connectedness with longer-term activities. Issues related to equity (including gender and social inclusion) and environmental sustainability will be given due consideration.

Key issues:

Relevance

1. Does FAO conceive its CERF-funded interventions based on reasonably accurate needs assessments looking at the needs of all people affected by a disaster or crisis? Do the CERF procedures or application processes encourage better needs assessment than other funding sources do?
2. Are interventions tailored to fit the assessed needs of the affected population? As a result, are FAO CERF-funded projects generally relevant to local needs and conditions, including needs of the people most affected by a given crisis, of women and female-headed households, and of the poorest segments of society?
3. How relevant are CERF-funded interventions vis-à-vis FAO's mandate and corporate strategy on emergency and rehabilitation?
4. Given the short time frame during which the project proposals are prepared, what are the steps for quality control of these proposals within FAO and do they add value to the documents? Similarly, does CERF Secretariat/OCHA CRD review of FAO projects add value to the proposals and the subsequent activities?
5. What are the respective roles of FAO headquarters and country offices in project design and management for the underfunded and early response windows, and are these roles effectively carried out with adequate coordination between the two levels?

Efficiency and Timeliness

6. How much has CERF funding increased the volume of FAO emergency response work in the last two years? What measures did FAO take to ensure it has the ability to implement these extra projects quickly and effectively?
7. How efficient and rapid is FAO in providing the CERF Secretariat with proposals and progress reports? Do these proposals contain realistic timelines and consideration of FAO and its partners' capacity to implement projects?
8. Are CERF proposals quickly reviewed and funding decisions made in a timely fashion? Once funding allocations are decided upon, are funds rapidly transferred to FAO? How does CERF compare with other donors in terms of timely decision-making and disbursement of funds?
9. Does timely CERF disbursement to FAO translate into more timely interventions by FAO as compared to other sources of funding?

10. Are FAO projects being implemented within the timeframes given by the CERF? Is the quality of FAO interventions and deliverables funded by the CERF constrained by the Fund regulations, e.g. limits on project duration? Do these regulations provide sufficient time for procurement, beneficiary selections, delivery and monitoring?
11. Are the costs of supporting, administering, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on CERF funds well covered by the Fund?
12. Are CERF funds allocated and used for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)? Is information resulting from M&E used for improving project performance and decision making? Are the results and lessons learned shared with the CERF Secretariat and/or partners?

Partnerships and Coordination

13. Are OCHA, ERC, UN Controller and RC in country generally satisfied with FAO's reports and responsiveness related to the implementation of CERF-funded activities?
14. In its CERF-funded activities, is FAO perceived by donors, the CERF Secretariat and the ERC, governments of countries affected by crises and other humanitarian actors as bringing a clear valued-added to humanitarian assistance?
15. To what extent are proposals to the CERF produced in a collaborative spirit among UN and NGO partners? If this is the case, does collaboration in needs assessments and proposal development contribute to good collaboration between agencies during implementation?
16. Has CERF funding helped FAO assume its sectoral coordination role and strengthen its participation in clusters? Conversely, does being a cluster chair or regular member help secure CERF funding?
17. What sorts of implementing/operational partners does FAO work with most frequently in the implementation of CERF-funded projects? What are the roles and performance expected of the different partners (including FAO) in those operational partnerships and do they tend to deliver the value expected of them?
18. How are the costs of implementing the projects allocated among partners? Are NGO stated concerns about access to pooled funds such as the CERF affecting their willingness to work with FAO?

Effectiveness, impact and sustainability

19. How equitable are the distributions of agricultural inputs and other project outputs or benefits? Who are the FAO CERF-funded interventions trying to reach and help? Are beneficiary selection criteria clearly defined in most project documents and practical / achievable? Do projects usually succeed in targeting the intended beneficiaries?
20. In effect, do FAO livelihood support programmes funded by the CERF deliver time-critical assistance (e.g. relative to cropping calendars) to restore or protect livelihoods and food availability or to avert disaster, thereby satisfying the CERF time-critical criteria?

21. Do these programmes result into saved and/or rebuilt livelihoods and reduced life-threatening coping strategies for targeted beneficiaries, thereby satisfying the CERF life-saving criteria?
22. Does the CERF funding available to FAO for “underfunded crises” contribute to more equitable responses to agricultural emergencies worldwide, or does it spread the resources too thin to make a difference?
23. How cost-effective is FAO in implementing CERF-funded projects? How could cost-effectiveness be improved, e.g. through potentially less costly operational alternatives to current approaches? How does seed aid compare to food aid in terms of cost per food delivered in a variety of settings?⁵⁰
24. Is environmental sustainability given sufficient consideration during project design, appraisal and implementation? Are there projects with significant environmental impacts (e.g. impacts of desert locust control operation) and what could be done to reduce possible harmful environmental impacts?

Connectedness and Programme Approach

25. Are CERF-funded projects generally well coordinated with and integrated in a larger FAO response to a given disaster or crisis? What role do they tend to play within the broader response?
26. To what extent are FAO CERF-funded emergency interventions connected to medium-term rehabilitation and long-term development programmes and priorities of the government and FAO in the agricultural sector (e.g. in terms of fostering a sustainable supply of agricultural inputs)? Do CERF projects contribute to helping a country’s preparedness, its capacity to react better the next time, and *should* CERF money be spent for such purposes?
27. Does initial funding from CERF have a catalytic effect on other funding sources? Can it be demonstrated that CERF funding – particularly from the underfunded window – attracts donor attention to a problem?
28. In the case of “biological emergencies” (locust outbreaks, animal diseases), can it be demonstrated that a small cash injection at the beginning of the emergency lessened the need for larger, more costly interventions later?

Aspects the evaluation will *not* cover:

1. The governance of the Fund at the global level, e.g. issues related to which organisations and programmes should be eligible for funding, is evidently beyond FAO’s control and hence will not be covered in this evaluation.
2. The *lending window* of CERF will not be reviewed as it was used by FAO only in Sudan and to complement FAO’s own programme lending tool (SFERA, *cf.* Figure 2).

⁵⁰ This comparison is intended to help benchmark cost-effectiveness across countries and projects, not to imply that seed aid could or should replace food aid in all or any circumstances.

3. The main focus of the evaluation will be on results achieved at the level of crisis-affected populations. Operational and coordination processes will be studied from the perspective of documenting significant constraints to the effectiveness of CERF-funded projects, but a thorough, documented analysis of these processes is beyond the scope of this evaluation.
4. While the evaluation will strive to document impact based on qualitative evidence, it will not include a precise and statistically representative *quantitative* assessment of economic and social impact, for lack of time and resources.
5. The evaluation will not be in a position to calculate precisely the numbers of beneficiaries based on its own primary evidence, although in some cases it may be in a position to provide an order of magnitude and hence corroborate or invalidate the numbers of beneficiaries cited in progress reports.

D. Methodology

The evaluation will use a range of methods going from initial briefings in Rome and New York, desk research and studies, and field work in selected countries using primarily qualitative investigation techniques such as focus group interviews and interviews with key informants.

Given the nature of CERF interventions (short projects with three months to one year duration), the evaluation will have to focus on recently completed projects clearly remembered by the beneficiaries. Out of the 48 projects, about 30% will be covered in the evaluation field work or will provide direct inputs to the evaluation.

In each sampled country, a few projects from other funding sources than CERF may have to be briefly reviewed so as to benchmark timeliness of funding and operation between CERF and other funding sources, and/or to document connectedness with longer-term FAO programmes.

The exercise will be subdivided in three main phases: i) a preparatory phase from February to May 2009; ii) the evaluation field work from June to December; and iii) analysis, debriefing and writing of the report, to be completed by March 2010.

1. The preparatory phase is articulated in various steps entailing:

- Definition of evaluation questions and of an analytical framework through the application of a theory of change model (Figure 3).
- A desk review for the description of main areas of activities per geographical location and to arrive at a purposeful sampling of projects and countries to be covered by the evaluation field work. The sample will be selected based on the following criteria:
 - size of the CERF portfolio;
 - use of various CERF instruments (loans, underfunded and rapid response grants);
 - types of emergency (natural disasters, conflicts, soaring food prices or conflict);
 - types of emergency intervention (input distribution, small-scale irrigation, locust control, animal health, etc.);
 - current security and emergency situation allowing or hampering field work; and
 - geographic coverage.

- Once a sample is established, the desk study will review the timelines of main procurement and contracting activities in the sampled projects (analysis of time taken from the initial crisis to needs assessment, proposals development, funding, procurement and contracting, delivery of assistance to beneficiaries, monitoring & evaluation, reporting).
- A teleconference or email exchange with the CERF secretariat in New York to validate the evaluation framework and methodology.

2. The evaluation field work will be conducted in the form of separate country case studies in eight countries selected according to the size of the CERF portfolio and the different typologies of emergency (natural disasters, compounding crises, soaring food prices, conflict). A tentative list of countries is provided in section F below. The FAO's Office of Evaluation (OED) will select, hire and train two national consultants per country, ideally a male and a female consultant. Each case study will last two to three months and will review the relevance, performance, timeliness, effectiveness and connectedness of CERF-supported activities, following a common methodological framework and using a variety of methods:

- a review of CERF project documents and implementation reports;
- semi-structured individual interviews and group meetings with FAO and IP staff at national and provincial levels;
- focus group sessions at community level with beneficiaries and non beneficiaries;
- direct field observation;
- meetings at national level with Government and donors representatives; and
- collection of secondary data (policies, strategies, guidelines, kit content lists, training materials, monitoring reports, etc.).

The country case studies will proceed according to the following sequence:

- Initially, field visits will be made by OED evaluation experts to all sampled countries to provide guidance and supervision.
- To ensure adequate sampling of project sites, a map of project locations and an analysis of the typologies of interventions in each sampled country will be undertaken by OED, either in headquarters or in country depending on data availability.
- The national consultants will review, complement and fine-tune the timelines drawn by the desk study, to document the main steps in the design and implementation of the response: needs assessments, preparation and submission of proposals to CERF, funding, procurement and contracting, delivery, and reporting.
- Impact will be assessed through before/after comparisons and comparison between the perceptions and experience of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Qualitative analysis relies on the consultants' professional judgment concerning the relevance and significance of collected data. The consultants must therefore be both knowledgeable concerning the study issues and attuned to potential biases. Analysis should be ongoing and daily reviews and summary of interviewing information should inform questions for subsequent interviews.

- Once the case studies are completed, their results will be presented (in preliminary form) for discussion, validation and/or fine-tuning in a national workshop or meeting involving all stakeholders, including beneficiary representatives.

A mission to New York by an FAO evaluation officer will also be organized during the field work to meet with the Secretariat and inquire about their perception of FAO as a partner.

3. The analysis and report writing phase will involve:

- Comparing and synthesizing the results of field work;
- A debriefing at FAO HQ with FAO officers (OED and TCE);
- A debriefing with the CERF secretariat in New York; and
- Report writing.

The report should focus on the strengths, weaknesses and results of the CERF-funded, FAO-implemented projects. It must build its findings and conclusions from a systematic assembly of the evidence collected and rigorously analyzed. Information should be cross-checked and triangulated from multiple sources wherever possible, in an attempt to document effects and impact to the extent possible, taking into account that the methodology followed is essentially qualitative. Inclusion in the report of text boxes with story telling and case studies would serve as supporting evidence for the general findings coming out from the analysis.

The methodology outlined above is not without weaknesses:

- The poor security situation in specific areas for a number of sampled countries (e.g. Yemen, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) which may limit field work inasmuch as the CERF projects are often implemented in areas rife with conflict.
- Such an evaluation specific to a particular source of funds constitutes an exception to the normal approach to emergency programme evaluations in FAO, which is to evaluate operations and responses to specific crises, irrespective of which donors funded them. This exception appears justified given the specific purpose of the fund (to support early response) and its operational idiosyncrasies (rapid disbursements to agencies; short time limit to commit Rapid Response funds; preeminence of the life-saving criteria; allocations to “forgotten emergencies”; etc.). However, it may have methodological consequences. Given the programmatic nature of most FAO emergency operations, it should be expected that CERF-funded projects could in many cases form part of a larger livelihoods support programme. Even if CERF resources may be expected to jump-start activities or cover critical gaps in an overall response, attributing success or failure to CERF funds alone may not always be possible.⁵¹

E. List of Countries for Field Work

The total CERF funding made available to FAO since the inception of the Fund in 2006 amounts to US\$89 million and was shared among 48 countries (average country portfolio of US\$1.9 million). The 15 largest country portfolios amount to US\$59 million, i.e. two-thirds of the total funding.

⁵¹ This would particularly be the case when CERF funds part of an “input kit” distributed to beneficiaries (e.g. the seed) while another donor funds the remaining part (e.g. the fertilizer).

Focusing the evaluation on large portfolios would help cover a significant share of the CERF funding. However, the evaluation must look at medium and small country portfolios as well in order to capture issues specific to countries where FAO has a small emergency operation. Besides, the largest CERF portfolios tend to be in Africa and the smallest ones in Latin America. As a consequence, the evaluation country sample must include a few countries with average or small CERF portfolios in order to maintain some degree of geographic (as well as sectoral) representativity.

An analysis of CERF funding for 27 countries with a promising CERF portfolio⁵² (Table 2) was performed based on a number of criteria such as the size of the portfolio, geographic location, the types of emergencies and responses, and the CERF instrument used (rapid response or underfunded emergencies), to arrive at a shortlist of 12 possible countries for field work: Burundi, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo⁵³, Haiti, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Niger, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Yemen.

The final selection will take into account additional desk study results, availability of strong national consultants and security considerations. It will include 8 countries, which should adequately cover the expected variability between countries.

Besides, FAO was recently granted CERF funding to control the red locust invasion in Southern Africa (Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia...), and there is a possibility that the evaluation could include a real-time element in this region.

The evaluation will also benefit from the findings and recommendations carried out by separate evaluation missions:

- a project evaluation in Syria will focus on a CERF project (July 2009);
- a country programme evaluation in Tajikistan will encompass two locust control projects funded by the CERF (June 09); and
- a country programme evaluation in Sudan (Fall 2009) will help review the role played by CERF lending, particularly preeminent in the FAO programme there.

F. Timeline

Country-specific thematic studies are planned to be implemented between June and December 2009. A first batch of two countries will be launched in June in countries where OED has already worked with capable consultants for similar surveys, thus short-cutting the need to collect and screen applications for these 1st batch countries. A second batch of six countries will be launched in September for countries where OED does not know of suitable consultants yet and therefore needs to advertise the studies and screen applications. This staged approach will accelerate field work and facilitate training and supervision by OED.

⁵² All countries with a CERF portfolio higher than US\$ 2 million; 50% of those countries with a CERF portfolio between US\$1 and 2 million; and 4 Latin American countries with a CERF portfolio smaller than US\$1 million.

⁵³ The current Study of Transaction Costs Associated with Humanitarian Pooled Funds fielded a mission to DRC in January 2009; an inter-agency RTE is also being considered by OCHA. These may plead against the inclusion of DRC in the sample for this evaluation.

In order to foster consistency in approach and learning throughout case studies, selected consultants involved during the first batch could be asked to travel to 2nd batch countries so as to brief national consultants there.

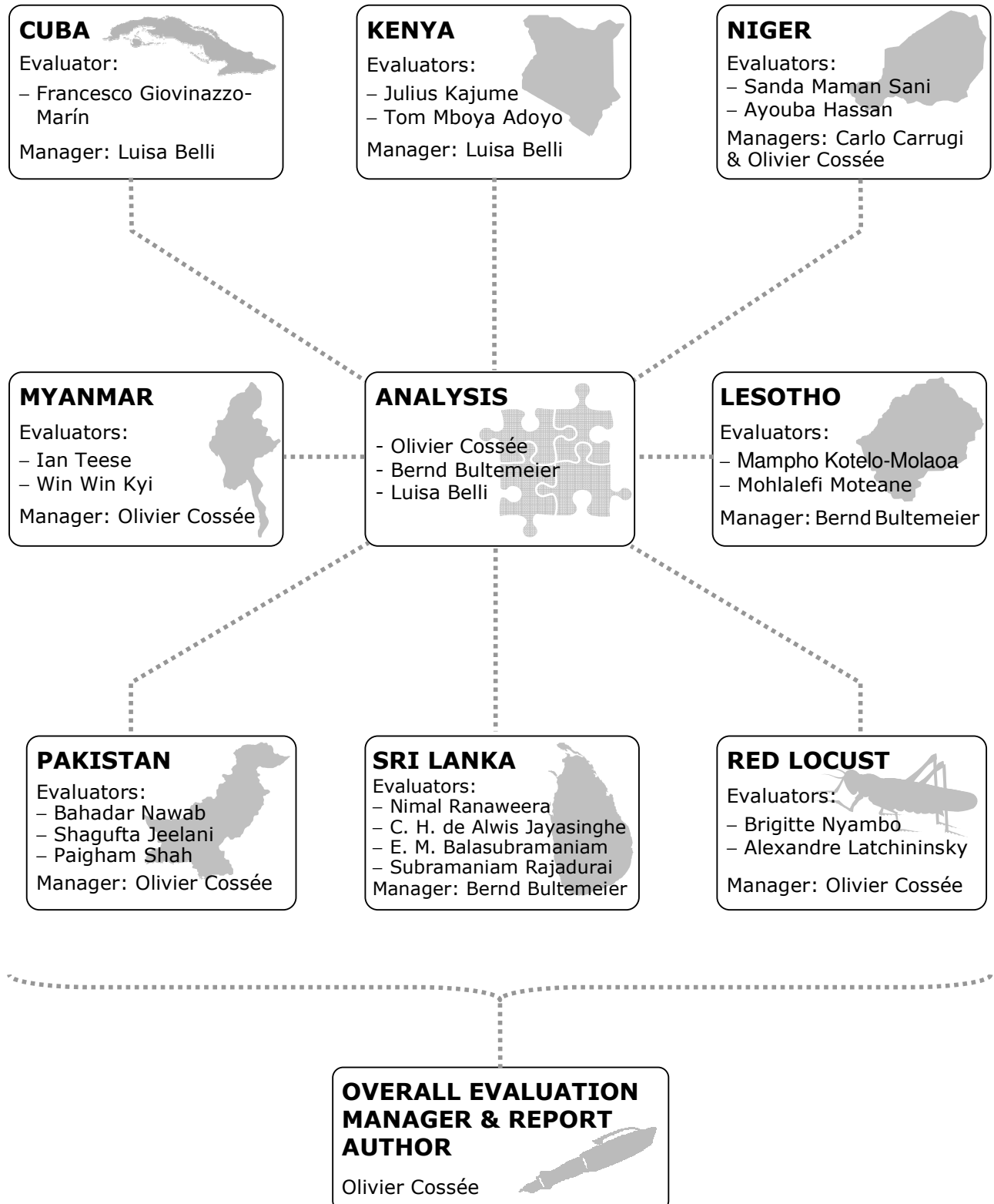
Table 1: Evaluation Schedule

Activity	Period/ Milestone
General call for expression of interest	by 31/03/09
Contacting consultants for a 1 st batch of 2 countries	April-May 09
Launching mission to 1 st batch countries by FAO Evaluation Officer	June 09
Field work and analysis for 1 st batch	June-August 09
Consolidation of findings, conclusions and report writing for 1 st batch	September 09
Telephone interviews of candidates for 2 nd batch countries	1-15 July 09
Selecting and contracting consultants for 2 nd batch countries	16 July-30 August 09
Launching mission to 2 nd batch countries by FAO Evaluation Officer	September-October 09
Field work and analysis for 2 nd batch countries	September-December 09
Consolidation of findings, conclusions and report writing	January-March 10

G. Budget

The evaluation will require a budget of approximately US\$400,000. This may seem expensive but it only amounts to 0.45% of the evaluated programme cost (US\$89 million). The budget is tentative and computed based on a hypothesis of eight countries. For a variety of reasons including deteriorating security conditions in some countries and the opportunity to review emerging projects in others, field work may involve more or less countries than eight, which may have budgetary implications.

Annex 2: Contributions to the Evaluation



Annex 3: Summary of Country Case Studies

Cuba

The case of Cuba is particular in that the two CERF projects, amounting to US\$900,000 and approved in response to hurricanes Gustav & Ike (August & September 2008), were entirely managed by the Government, which negotiated this as a condition for receiving the assistance. Only procurement remained under the responsibility of FAO, while all other activities were undertaken by the Government: needs assessment, beneficiary selection (most beneficiaries were cooperatives), choice of deliverables (vegetable seed, tools, irrigation equipment), distribution and monitoring. This approach had a number of positive effects such as 84% of projects budget being used for deliverables and the seed procured from abroad being well adapted to the country's urban and peri-urban agriculture and producing very high yield (estimated at 370,000 MT). Another advantage was that under the country's command economy, the induced production was directed to hospitals, schools and cities, thus providing food, vitamins and a degree of diet diversity to the most vulnerable. However, the inputs procured with CERF funds could not be used during the first planting season after the hurricanes, but were key in replenishing the national seed reserves totally depleted by the first emergency response provided by the Government, and were hence used during the subsequent season in 2009. The CERF intervention also contributed to jump-start the agriculture decentralisation programme that provides incentives to farmers operating on a private basis.

It was the first time that the Government of Cuba and the UN System build a joint response to an emergency through the CERF. The Government – apparently unaware of the stringent time limits placed on CERF projects – requested the replacement of fairly elaborate irrigation equipment which took many months to specify, order and receive. Some of the items could not be procured in time and the corresponding funds (approximately \$175,000) will be returned to the CERF as a result.

Kenya

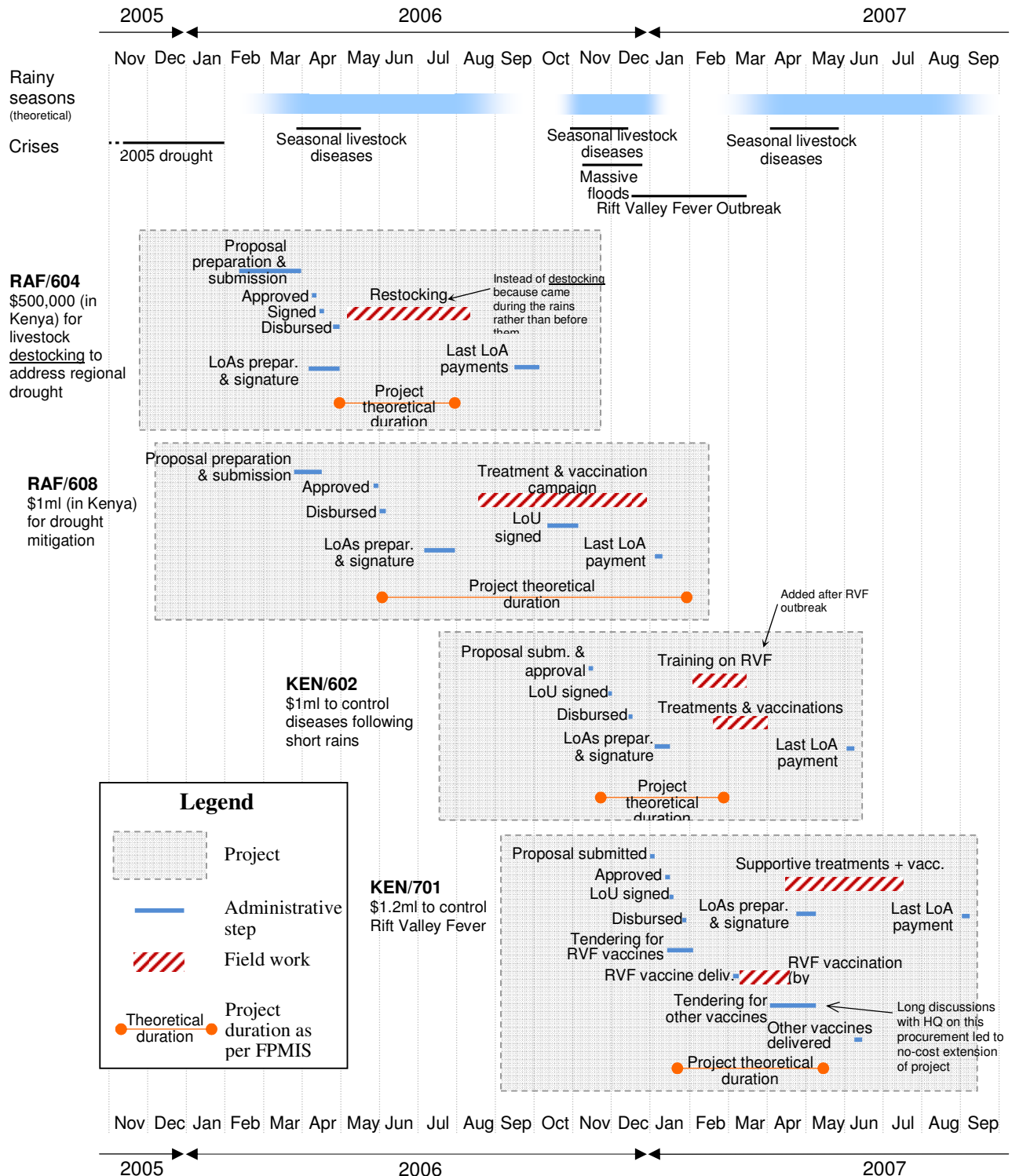
The 6 CERF projects implemented in Kenya (of which 2 were regional projects with significant involvement in the country) amounted to more than US\$7 million. They mainly focussed on animal health, with some additional work on livestock restocking, farmer field schools and cropping inputs. The evaluation and a thorough analysis of the project timelines (Figure 8) indicated that the animal health interventions were often well timed and in some cases vital for the protection of pastoralists' livelihoods in the country's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL)⁵⁴ in that they helped absorb severe climatic shocks. In two cases the activities were changed or adapted to suit evolving circumstances: in the first project (RAF/604), restocking replaced the intended destocking because the project started together with the rainy season; and in KEN/602, a Training on Rift Valley Fever (RVF) was added following an RVF outbreak.

The effort to train governmental staff and vaccinate livestock against Rift Valley Fever in March-April 2007 was credited with helping to control the outbreak of this deadly hemorrhagic fever transmittable to humans. It can be inferred that the project protected human lives and to some degree pastoralists' livelihoods. However, at that time the outbreak was already declining and the economic damage to the livestock industry in Kenya had already been done: in spite of

⁵⁴ Over two-thirds of Kenya (approximately 492,100 km²) is classified as ASAL. Raising of livestock by pastoralists, agro-pastoralists or commercial ranchers is the single most important economic activity in these areas.

a consumer information campaign by the Government and FAO, national consumers opted for other types of meat such as chicken, leading to the temporary collapse of the livestock and red meat market in the country.

**Figure 8:
Kenya CERF Projects Timelines
(animal health projects only)**



All these animal health activities were planned and implemented in strong partnerships with Department of Veterinary Services of the Government of Kenya and a small number of very capable NGOs (mainly Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, VET AID, VETWORKS and Terra Nuova) under the Agriculture and Livestock Sector Working Group (ALSWG).

A closer look at the timeline in Figure 8 indicate that field interventions (hacked bars) for different projects came in sequence: it seems like one project field work has to be completed before the other one can start. This was perhaps the price to pay for relying on a close-knit group of implementing partners whose field delivery capacity was not infinitely expandable. It also indicates that these livestock health interventions were funded almost exclusively by the CERF and managed as a pipeline. One FAO TCP complemented the CERF funding.

The later vaccination against Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) under project OSRO/KEN/802/CHA came after the outbreak had run its course. More generally, the two projects implemented in 2008-2009 (KEN/801 from the UFE window on Farmer Field Schools in refugee camps, and 802 addressing soaring food prices) were probably too complex for CERF funding and for this reason could not be completed on time. The soaring food prices project (802) achieved some success in supporting rice production in irrigation conditions. A voucher-for-work system was also set up in which beneficiaries could redeem the vouchers against farming inputs from FAO or food from WFP. Late delivery of the inputs lead many of the benefiting farmers to chose food instead of seed. Those who opted for the inputs often used them in the following season.

Lesotho

The 3 evaluated CERF projects responded to a drought (LES/701), soaring food prices (LES/802) and an anthrax epidemic in the West of the country (LES/801), providing a total of US\$3.3 million. The later project funded an anthrax vaccination campaign while the former two provided agricultural inputs through “input trade fairs”. The anthrax vaccination came in at the right time and seemed to have contained the outbreak, although delays in delivery of the vaccines from the Government of Lesotho’s own resources resulted in partial coverage as some of the pastoralists moved their animals to the mountains (transhumance) before they could be vaccinated. The disease – transmittable to humans – is endemic in the project area (Maseru and Mafeteng districts) and regularly vaccinated against, which may raise question about the use of CERF funds for a recurring activity. In the other two projects, there was limited time between the receipt of the grant and the onset of the rainy season and programme staff attention focused largely on organizing the input fairs in the shortest possible period, perhaps at the expense of beneficiary selection and information. Farming inputs came on time for the plains, reaching good impact, but may have been delayed vis-à-vis the cropping calendar in mountainous areas⁵⁵.

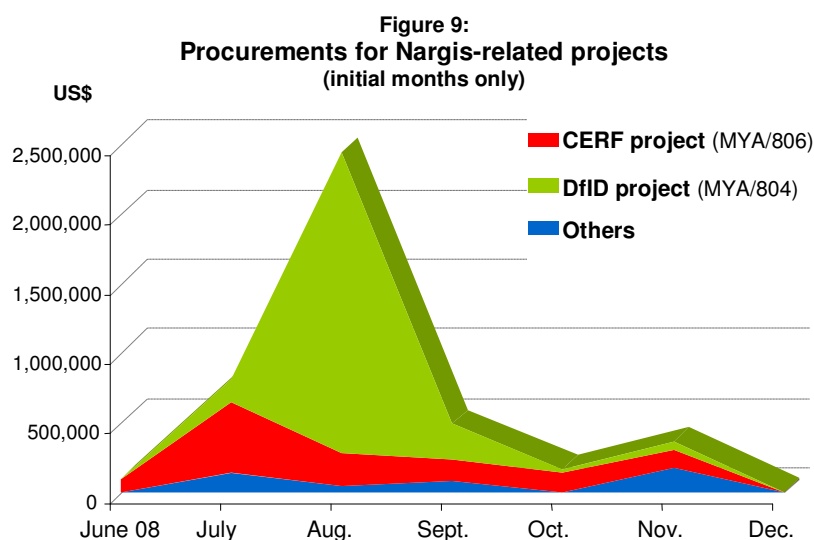
Myanmar

Two CERF projects were evaluated in Myanmar. Project MYA/806 provided US\$2 ml to prime the response to the Nargis cyclone wide-ranging destruction in the low-lying Irrawaddy Delta in May 2008 (rapid response window). The other project (MYA/903, US\$400,000 under the UFE window) supported landless women in the Northern Rakhine State (NRS), a state that has long been affected by ethnic discrimination and displacement.

⁵⁵ Altitude is always an important determinant for cropping calendars because it affects temperatures.

FAO had no emergency office in the country and struggled to establish sufficient capacity in Yangon in the initial few months after Nargis. Nevertheless, the organisation delegated large procurement activities to the field office helped by a procurement officer dispatched from headquarters, allowing for the procurement well-suited, good quality inputs within a very short time, thus catching the monsoon rice planting season of June-July 2008 with paddy seed, fertiliser and buffaloes used as drought power. Less successfully, the chickens and ducks that were also distributed faced more than 40 % mortality because of young age, unfavorable weather and long transportation. The international procurement of hand cultivation tools was also untimely. Generally, the inputs were difficult to source because of an economy dominated by governmental entities.

The CERF project MYA/806 provided the first resources made available to the Nargis response and paid for 67% of the items distributed for the 2008 monsoon rice crop (Figure 9), but many other donors such as DfID, SIDA or Italy contributed to subsequent activities.



The project in NRS delivered vegetable seed and fertilizers as well as young chickens with initial feed packs to a limited number of households 4,600 in total). The distribution of poultry birds was ongoing at evaluation time. This assistance complements other ongoing projects funded by the EU.

While implementing partners valued the support and advice of the FAO technical specialists (internationals or nationals, the latter often hired from line ministries), they were less satisfied with their contractual relationship with FAO. Several indicated that they felt they were treated more as service providers rather than as full partners.

Niger

The 3 CERF projects evaluated in Niger amounted to US\$2.7 million and addressed a flood disaster in 2007 (project NER/801) by way of cereal seed and fertiliser distributions for the 2008 campaign, soaring food prices in 2008 (NER/804) by a distribution of vegetable seed for the “counter-season⁵⁶” of 2008, and an important fodder deficit in 2009 (NER/903) through the

⁵⁶ Irrigated plots planted with vegetables immediately after the rainy season i.e. around October.

sale of animal feed at subsidized price in “input shops” operated by farmers organisations. The purchase orders were all placed very rapidly by the local FAO team, but a recurring issue was the late delivery from local suppliers, many of whom were small size such as the farmers seed production groups organised thanks to FAO development projects. These seed production groups as well as other small-scale suppliers in Niamey (animal feed) had limited capacity to provide large orders. The inputs were generally appreciated in terms of quality but not always delivered on time. Some late delivery of farming inputs may have contributed to millet seed being eaten by some of the most vulnerable farmers⁵⁷. However, the rains arrived late in 2008 in many locations, which was a saving grace of sorts for the NER/801 project. The project delivered short-cycle millet varieties which could produce a crop in spite of the late arrival of rains and subsequent short duration of the rainy season. The subsidized animal feed helped control rocketing feed prices and thus had an indirect impact on non-beneficiaries as well as beneficiaries.

The lesson from this case study, reflected again in Myanmar, is that local procurements tend to be timelier and to allow a better fit with local farming systems than international ones, but they sometimes run into difficulties when local suppliers are few or of limited capacity. In these cases, the size and speed of the FAO response may be constrained by the available supply of farming or livestock inputs. The Niger case study also highlighted the value of early warning systems to foster rapid response and broad coverage in situations of chronic food insecurity, and raised complex issues about the collaboration between emergency and development projects on the one hand, and between the state and civil society on the other. While relations between the FAO ERCU and the central, political level of the state were found weak, the collaboration was excellent with technical staff, regional civil servants and elected representatives in the provinces.

Pakistan

Five CERF projects totalling US\$ 3.6 million have been implemented by FAO in Pakistan, in response to cyclone Yemyin in Balochistan and Sindh (2007 and again in 2008 under the UFE), surge in food prices (2008), floods in Peshawar (August 2008) and an earthquake in Balochistan (28 October 2008). On these, only the last three could be evaluated because of poor security in the areas affected by cyclone Yemyin.

The project responding to the earthquake that jolted Ziarat, Pishin and adjoining districts of Balochistan was very small (US\$100,000). It delivered a hundred earthquake-resistant animal sheds in January 2009, probably too late to make a significant difference on livestock survival during the 2008-2009 winter. However, the animal feed distributed did help prevent distress sales of livestock. The other two projects were successful examples of time critical assistance. The FAO country office often showed great efficiency in issuing procurement orders within days of the CERF LoU signature. In Peshawar, entire communities were using whatever resources they had left to rebuild their houses and would not have been able to restart agricultural production without FAO and CERF assistance. The project dealing with food prices, which soared from 2007 to 2008 and created widespread social tension in the country, focused on the two conflict-affected districts of Buner and Shangla in the Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa Province (formally known as the North-West Frontier Province). Those were

⁵⁷ Implementing partners such as SOS Sahel and Save the Children took targeting very seriously, but it backfired at times, when some of the poorest households ate the cereal seed. Absence of food aid and late arrival of the seed may have contributed to this phenomenon.

found more affected than others because of remoteness, terrorism and inter-provincial restriction on trade of wheat and wheat flour. The inputs distributed in Buner and Shangla motivated farmers to revive agriculture production and generated an estimated additional production of 4,752 MT of wheat, which would cost approximately US\$3 million if it had to be delivered as food aid. However, farmers indicated that, in order to reach a better impact, the inputs should have been distributed 10 to 15 days earlier, to arrive before the planting season rather than during it. The project was submitted concurrently with a WFP project which provided food aid to the same beneficiaries as the seed aid of FAO.

All projects were implemented by locals and international NGOs with long-standing presence in the concerned areas. The role of Government was somewhat passive. By and large all partnerships achieved their targets but there was some frustration about administrative and other issues. While the IPs managed to reach the most deserving households, the evaluation team noticed some malpractices in beneficiary selection in all districts, usually as a result of local political pressure. FAO had insufficient capacity to monitor the projects.

In Pakistan, FAO's visibility and its links with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) as well as with relief agencies (except WFP) were found worthy of much improvement, in part due to the absence of an FAO Representative in the country over the past few years and the lack of a stable Emergency Coordinator. OCHA was not impressed with FAO's past cluster coordination role but noticed an improvement since the arrival of the new FAO Emergency Coordinator. The coordination with national agencies seemed better at the provincial level.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has been a frequent recipient of CERF funding through the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP). Five projects totaling US\$2.1 million were evaluated in the country, one of which from the UFE window and the other four as rapid response to the conflict in the North and East of the country, sharply escalating during the review period (districts of Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaithivu, Vavuniya, Mannar, Batticaloa and border villages of the Ampara district). The projects provided for seeds, fertilizer, hand tools, poultry and livestock vaccination for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities⁵⁸. The case study report makes a compelling case for the relevance of the projects, highlighting a deteriorating situation of food production and security linked to the conflict: travel restrictions blocked access to inputs and markets and constrained the capacity of farmers to access and work in their fields; fishing was banned in Jaffna; and households were decapitalizing by selling livestock in order to meet their daily food needs.

Three out of four RR projects were slightly delayed, with projects becoming operational at the start of the rainy season. As a result the farming inputs were not always handed out on time and some beneficiaries used them during the next season. Agricultural inputs were targeted to vulnerable households and resulted in improved household food security and nutrition (more diversified diet, higher protein and vitamin intakes), recovery of animal stock and increase in cash income. The paddy seed was well received and helped produce surplus for sale and barter; there were some local initiatives for sharing surplus seed after harvest by way of seed banks. Problems were reported with some of the vegetable varieties as well as quality issues with

⁵⁸ 46 percent of households displaced by the conflict were not residing in IDP camps but rather living with relatives, friends and host families - UNHCR and Batticaloa Government Agent, March 2007.

poultry and farm machinery provided to farmer organisations (single-axle tractors, water pumps and sprayers), which broke down rapidly. The training sessions were particularly appreciated, apparently also for symbolic or psychological reasons as they provided a sense of return to normality and hope.

Strong coordination and operational partnerships were built with other UN agencies (WFP, OCHA, UNHCR, IOM) and NGOs. As in Myanmar and Niger, collaboration with the Government was limited but useful especially with technical staff and district officials. Monitoring was identified as a weak point.

Red locust control in Southern Africa

This case study was added to the sample in order to allow for the evaluation of a locust control project almost in real time. A regional CERF project (coded RAF/909) was approved in April 2009 for a budget of US\$1.9 million after two earlier projects funded from FAO's regular budget (TCP) had failed to control an alarming build up in red locust populations in breeding areas of Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi. This posed a potential threat to crops of regional proportion, if the locusts were to reach such a density as to trigger outbreaks from their breeding areas into crop land at a time when the region was already facing a severe food shortage.

The operation, including surveying, aerial spraying with chemical and biopesticides, and monitoring of locust populations, were highly technical. It was implemented by the mandated regional red locust control organisation IRLCO-CSA (headquartered in Zambia) together with FAO and the concerned governments. The generally good teamwork between these institutions – stemming from decades of collaboration – was a critical factor for the success of the operation. The regional scope of the project was another success factor in that it allowed for control teams to meet an evolving threat with the necessary flexibility.

Timeliness in anti-locust control operations is crucial for success. There are two windows of opportunity to control the Red Locust: one at nymphal stage in January-February, another at adult stage in June-July. The first window implies higher costs (locusts are less concentrated hence larger areas to be surveyed and treated) but lower risks of failure since at that stage the locusts are not yet ready to swarm. The second window is more risky as by then the swarms may take off at any moment and any technical problem e.g. aircraft failure can be disastrous, but implies lower costs because the locusts are more concentrated and easier to target. Ideally, an efficient Red Locust control strategy should make use of both windows: the first one is perfect for the biopesticide Green Muscle® since there is ample time for the product to take effect and spraying large areas implies no ecological problem with Green Muscle® but would be an issue with synthetic pesticides⁵⁹. One can still make use of Green Muscle® at the beginning of the second window in June-July, but as the time for swarming and escapes comes nearer, synthetic pesticides must be preferred because they kill the locust faster and more effectively. The treatments under the FAO TCP projects occurred in February 2009 with the

⁵⁹ Green Muscle® is a biopesticide developed by FAO in the 1980s and 1990s from a particularly virulent strain of the fungus *Metarhizium anisopliae* var. *acridum*, effective only against locusts and grasshoppers. It acts relatively slowly, killing locusts over a period of a few weeks. The fungus spores germinate when they come into contact with the locust skin, invade and multiply in the host, and eventually kill it. Once locusts get infected, they become sluggish, making them easy prey for their natural predators and adding to the product effectiveness. Unlike conventional pesticides, surplus quantities of Green Muscle® do not represent a threat to human and environment health.

biopesticide Green Muscle®. The CERF project came into operation in May and applied both synthetic and biopesticides in May-June 2009. According to FAO and IRLCO-CSA, the spray operation could have been more efficient if spraying had started one month later and targeted swarming immature adults. But for the Government of Tanzania, the imminent threat of swarm escapes forced immediate control action to avoid a regional humanitarian catastrophe. Their point of view prevailed and the treatments started towards the end of May, i.e. as soon as feasible.

Tenders were launched and evaluated prior to project approval, so that as soon as the project proposal was approved, purchase orders could be issued. The operation team was swiftly formed on the ground. Some of the chemical pesticide was donated by Mali under the FAO “triangulation programme”⁶⁰ and transported to Tanzania by a WFP plane.

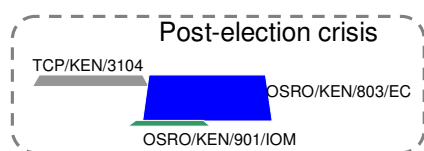
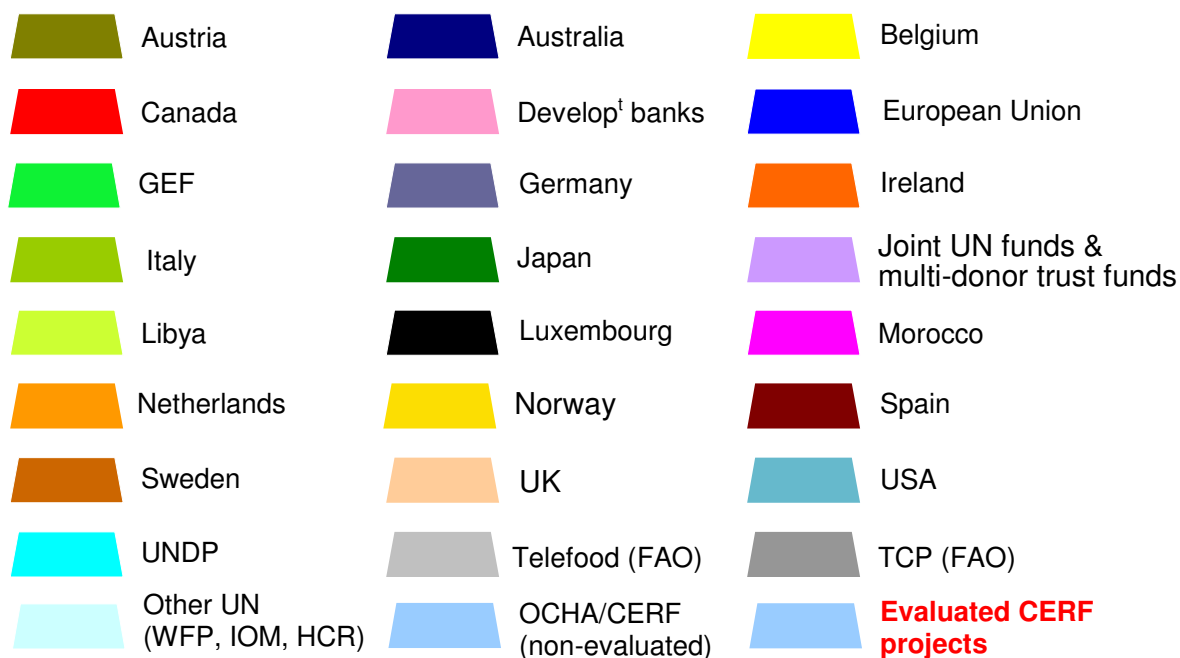
The project managed to effectively control red locust populations in all breeding areas. There were no escapes of swarms to agricultural areas. The operational capacity of IRLCO-CSA was re-enforced, although the case study also highlighted sustainability concerns in terms of arrear payments from some IRLCO-CSA member countries. The project pioneered the large-scale use of biopesticides in the Ikuu-Katavi natural park in Tanzania. Over and beyond this park, all red locust breeding areas are wetlands and produce much fish. Chemical pesticides are likely get into the food chain this way and thus wider use of biopesticides is not only important for the environment but to protect human lives as well.

⁶⁰ The FAO-sponsored “triangulation strategy” aims to manage stockpiles of pesticides available for control of various locust pest species in Africa. National pesticide stocks are constantly monitored and those stocks which approach their nominal expiry date regularly tested. If found within specifications, such stocks are shipped to countries urgently needing them for the prevention or control of a locust outbreak, so they can be used before becoming obsolete.

Annex 4: Programme Charts

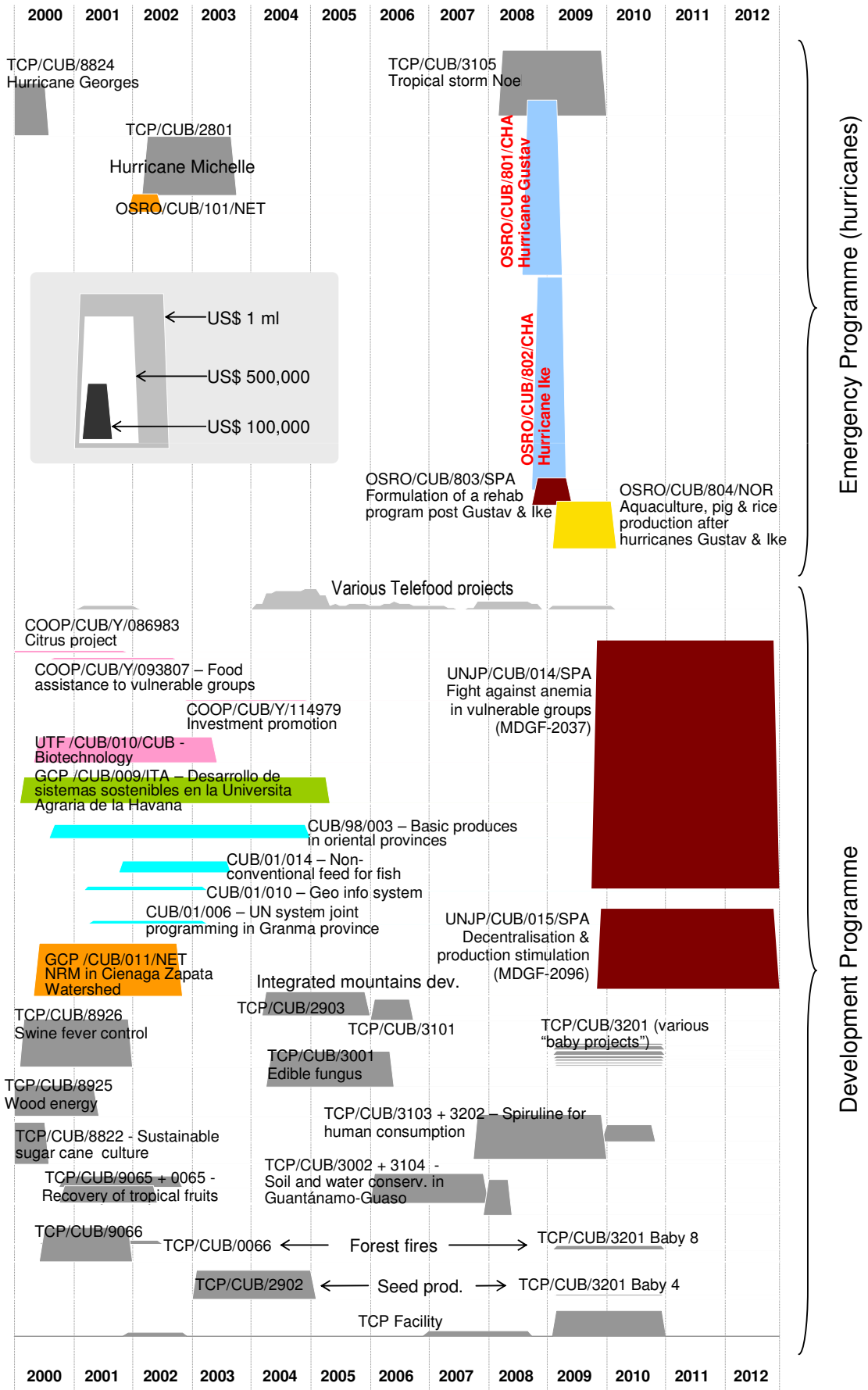
The following “programme charts” were developed based on lists of projects derived from the FAO Field Programme Management and Information System (FPMIS), to verify and illustrate graphically the extent to which CERF-funded projects were well integrated within broader emergency responses funded by a variety of donors.

Each page represents one of the eight country case studies contributing to the evaluation. In each programme chart, shapes represent national projects. The length of the shapes codes for project duration as per FPMIS data (in the case of CERF projects, the actual duration of project implementation is usually longer than what is reflected in FPMIS). The size (surface area) of each shape represents the project financial size (actual expenditures for closed projects, budgets for ongoing projects). Evaluated CERF-funded projects are captioned in red. Telefood and TCP projects are sometimes lumped together into one shape on account of their small individual size. Regional projects are not charted. The shape colour codes for donors, as follows:

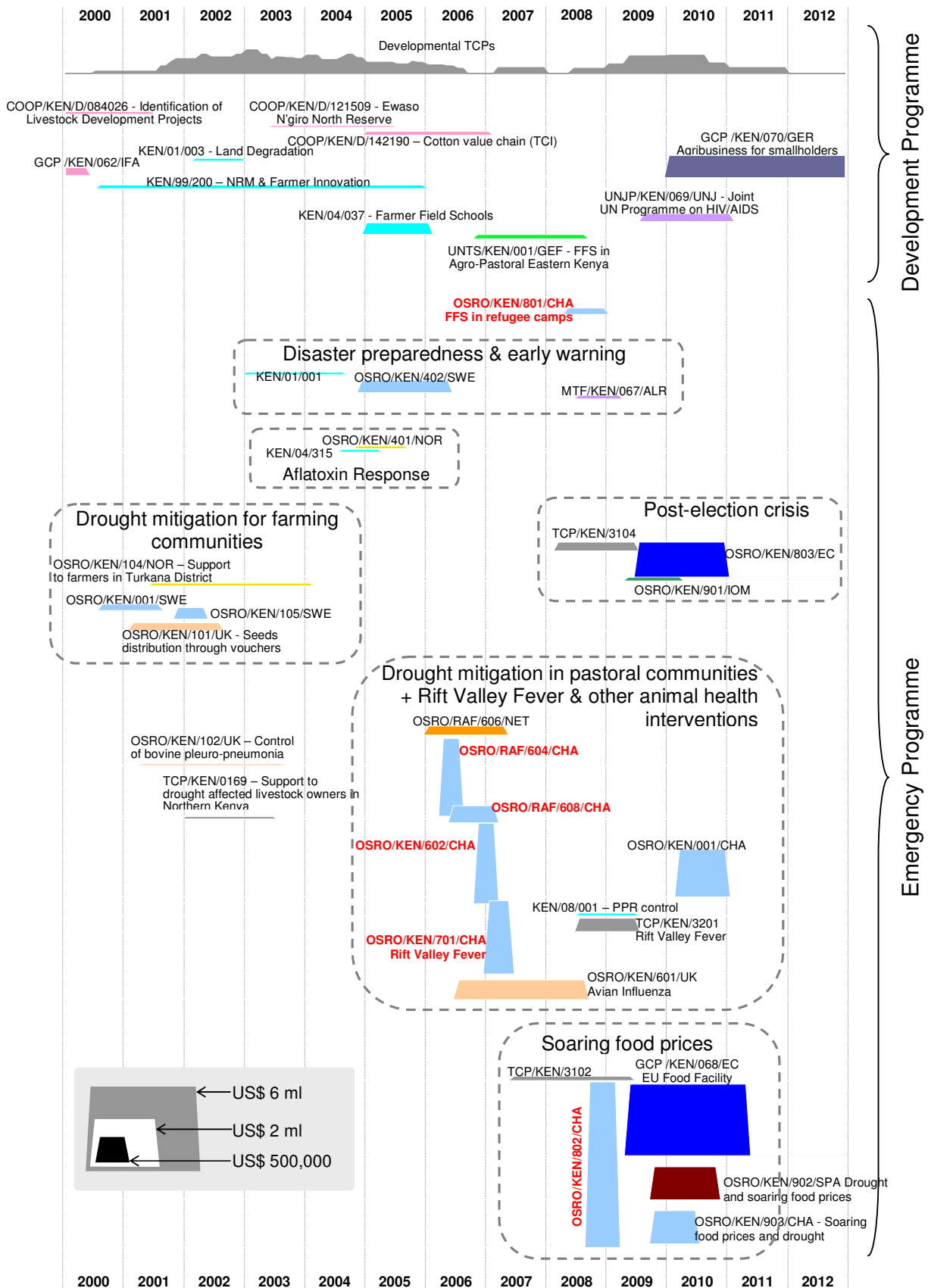


Programme composed of several projects

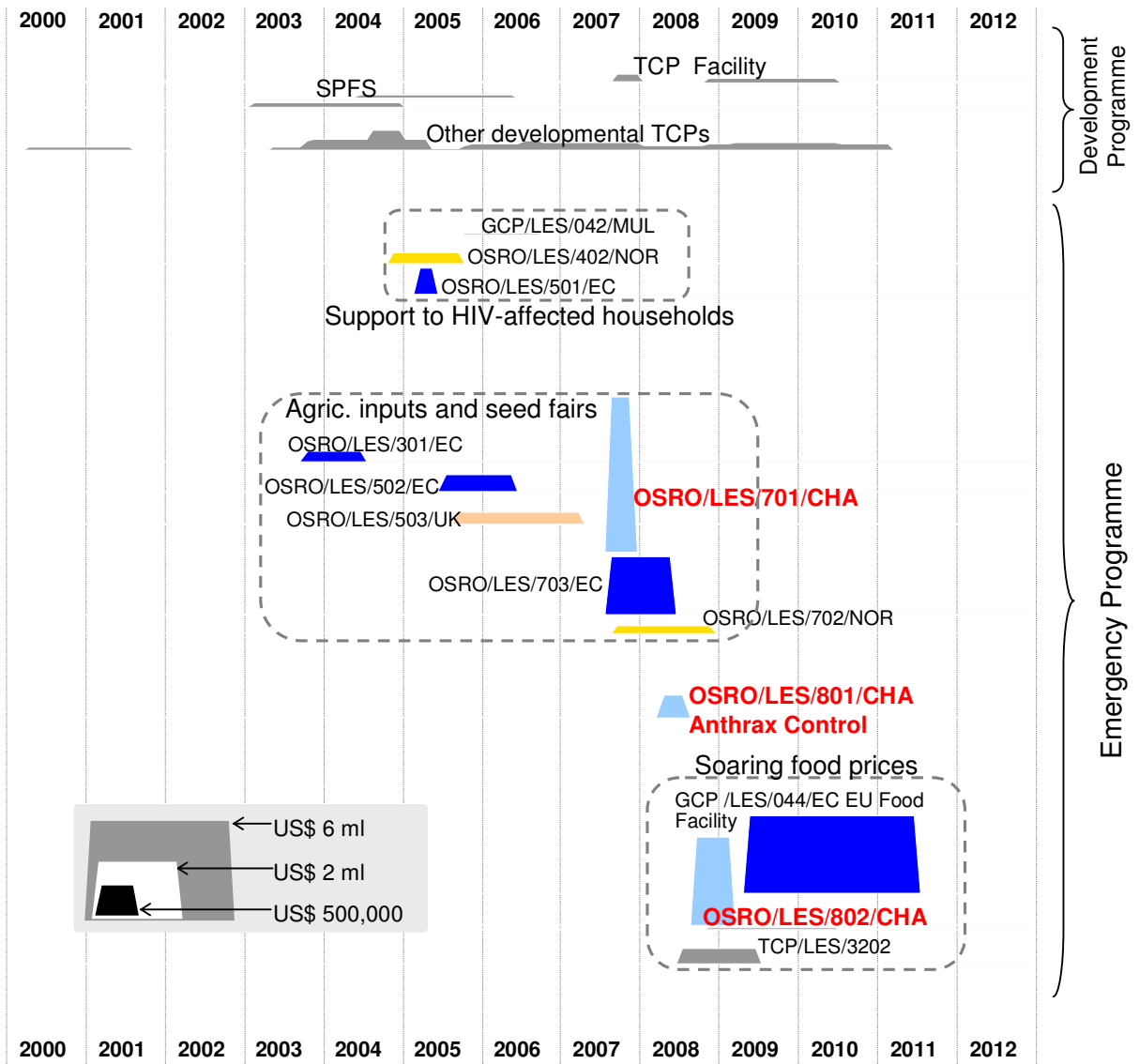
CUBA



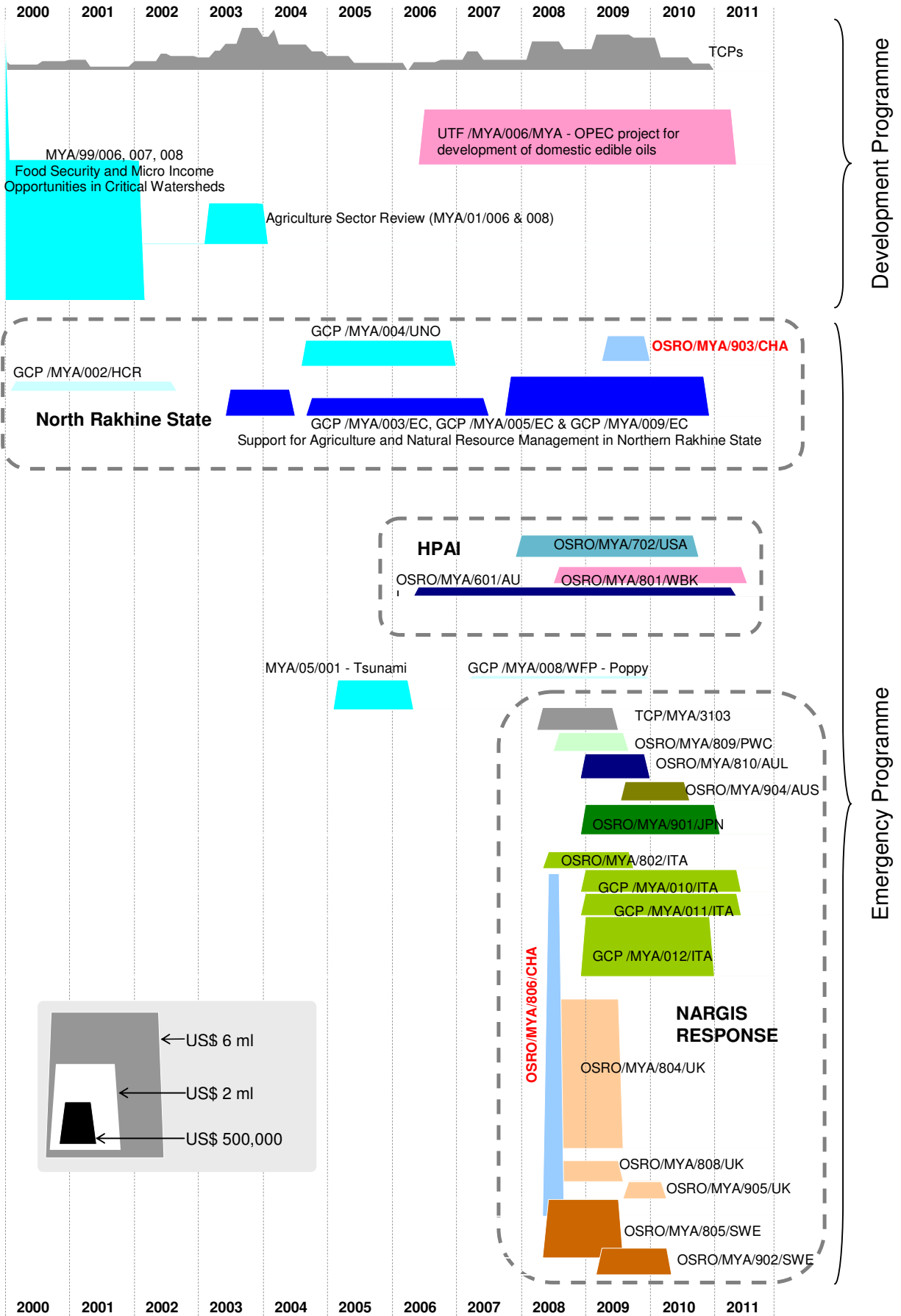
KENYA



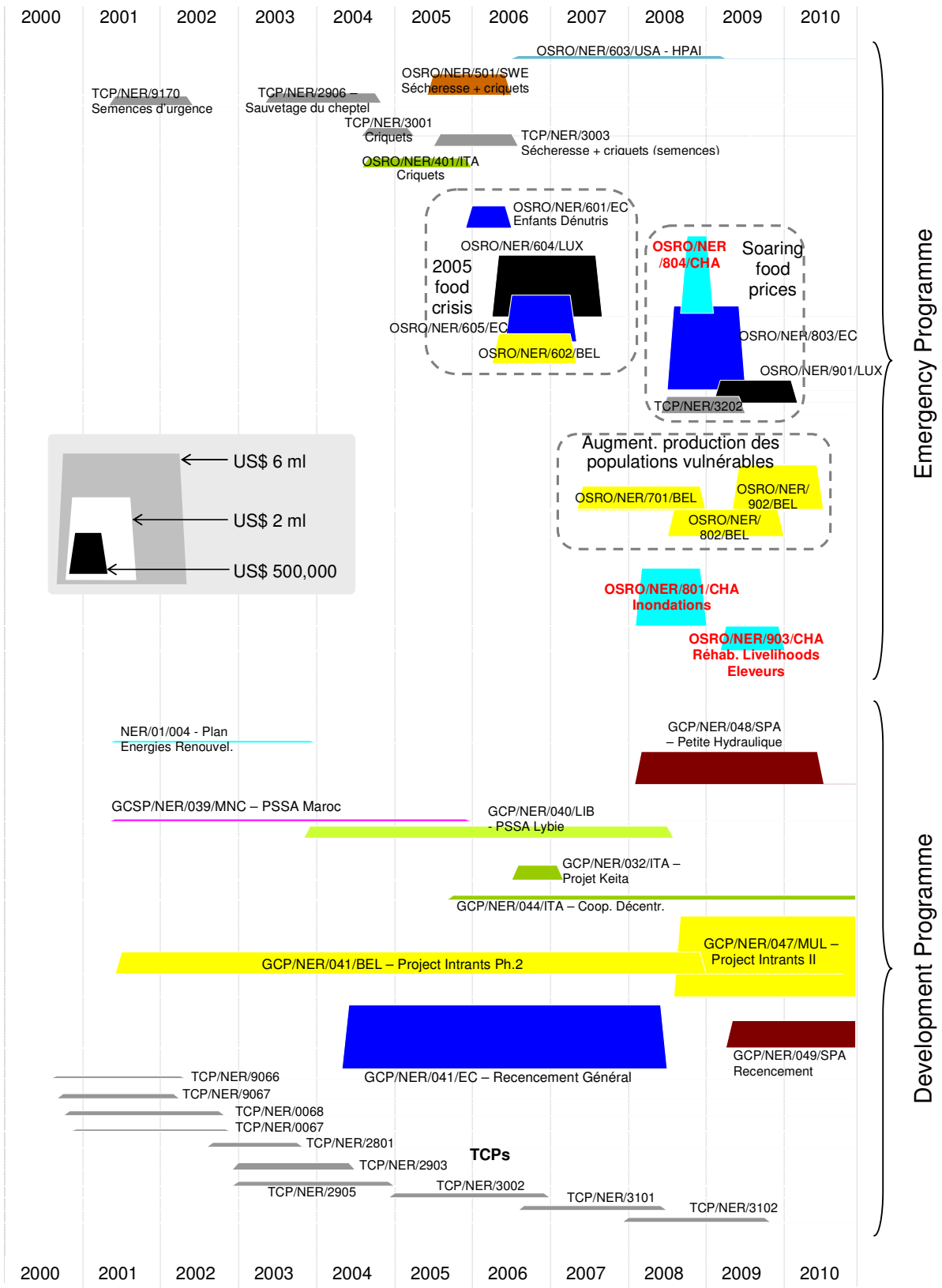
LESOTHO



MYANMAR



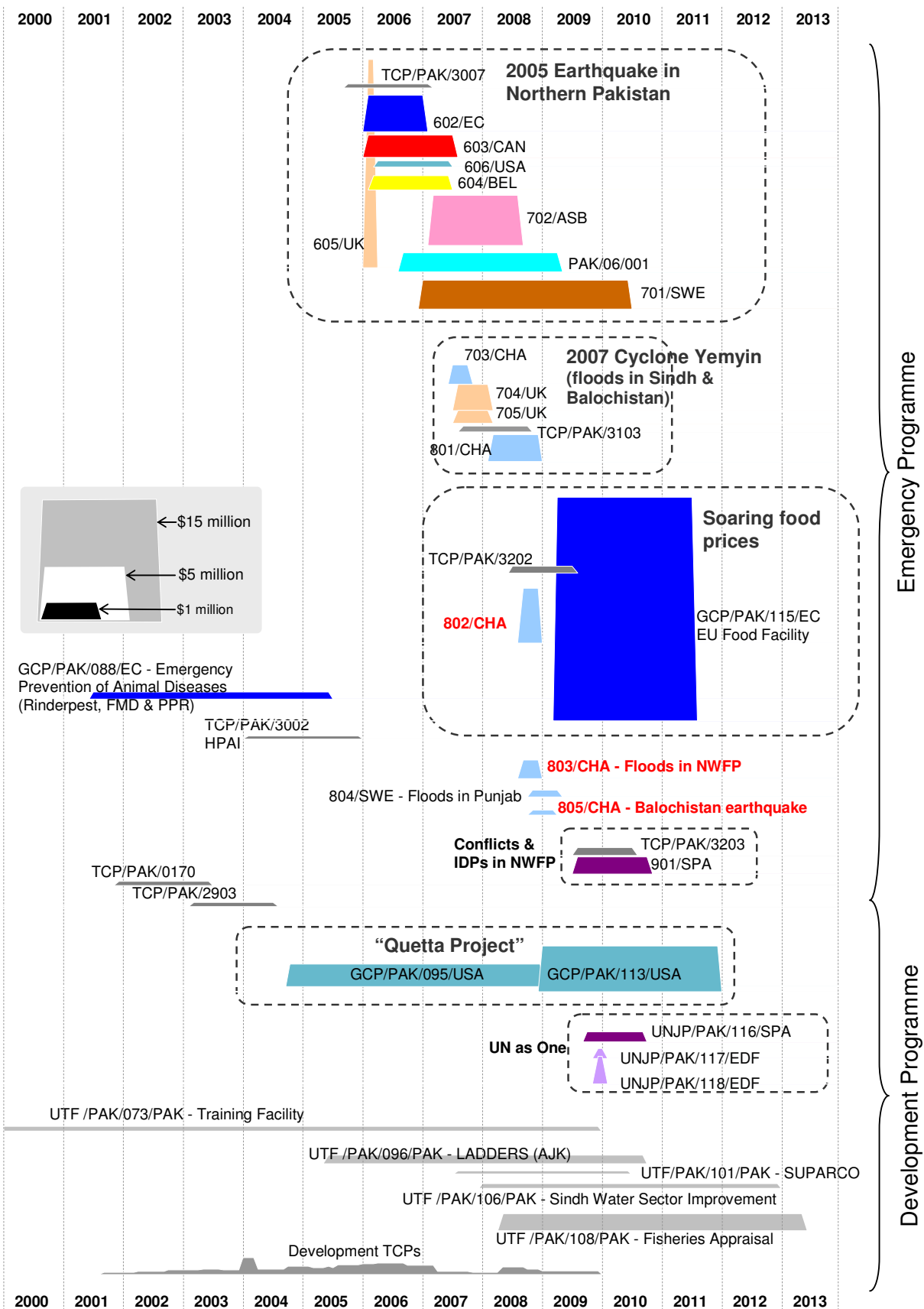
NIGER



Emergency Programme

Development Programme

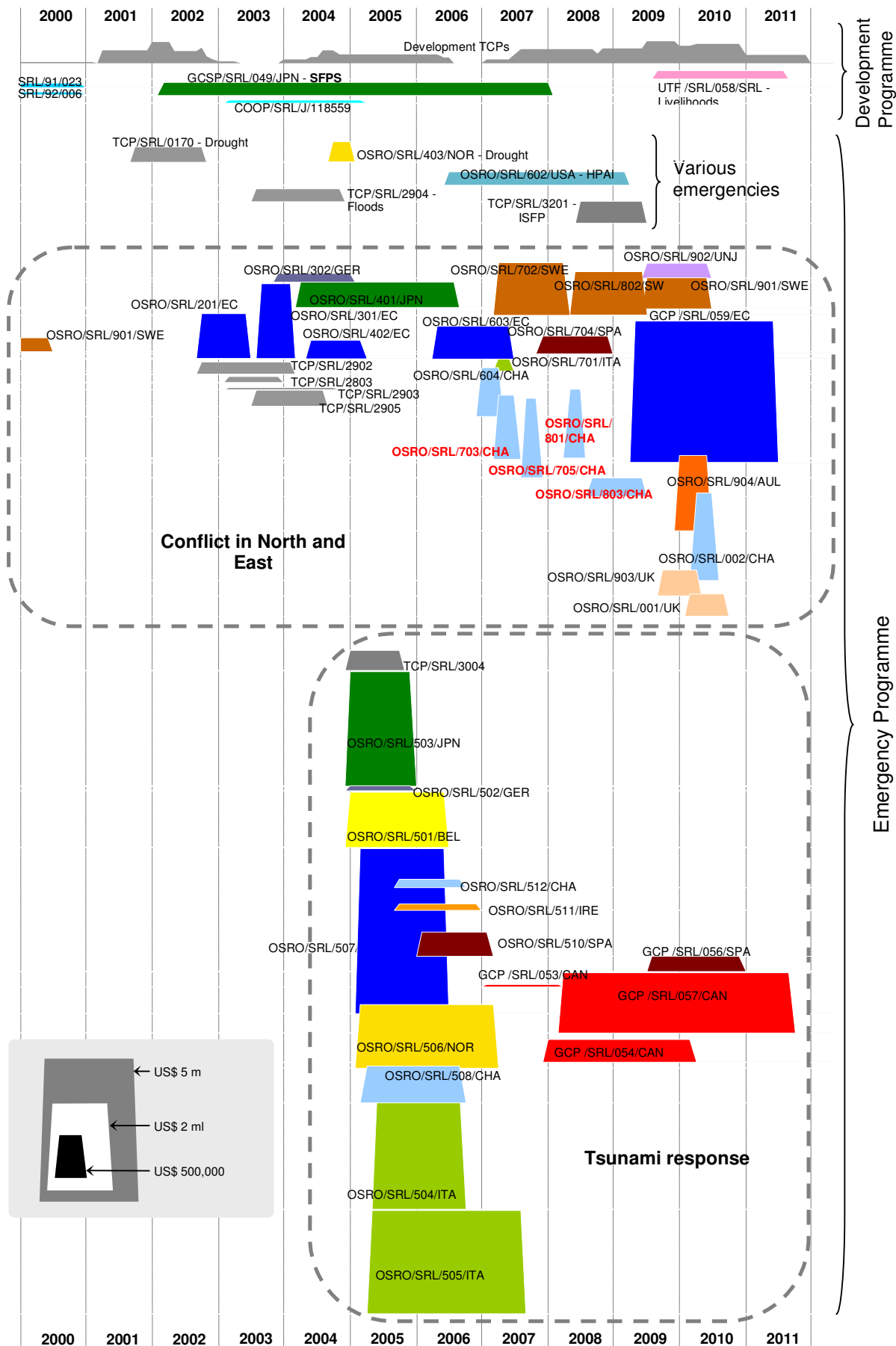
PAKISTAN



Emergency Programme

Development Programme

SRI LANKA



RED LOCUST CONTROL IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

