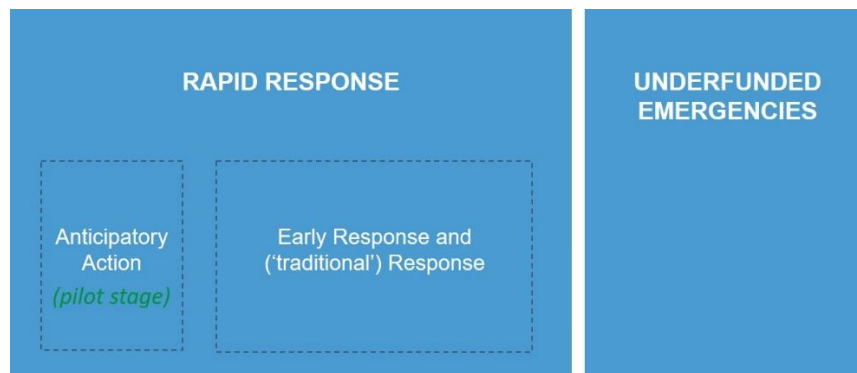




There is growing evidence and recognition that interventions undertaken before the full impact of a disaster can help save lives, mitigate suffering and lower the cost of responding to the humanitarian consequences of shocks. With forecasting and communication of early warnings improving over the years, work on financing solutions to translate early warning into anticipatory action has also advanced.

Over the last year, OCHA has worked with partners to promote change within the humanitarian system towards more anticipation. As part of this effort, OCHA is exploring a formalized approach for CERF to finance anticipatory humanitarian action, beginning with pilot case studies in 2019.<sup>1</sup> Given CERF's proven track record, funding volume, effective systems and global reach, the fund could fill a gap in the financing architecture in terms of supporting multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral anticipatory action at scale.

In view of CERF's mandated objective of enabling response to time-critical requirements<sup>2</sup> it is currently envisioned that a potential anticipatory action approach can be set up under the Rapid Response window, in addition to the early response and regular response approaches that CERF already supports (see figure).



CERF functions

Independent of anticipatory action, CERF's core funding functions as currently implemented under the Rapid Response and Underfunded Emergencies windows will be safeguarded; a potential formalised anticipatory approach shall be additional and complementary to these.

## 1. Early Response

Since its inception, CERF has kickstarted humanitarian response in over 100 countries and territories, triggered by natural disasters, disease outbreaks or escalation of violence resulting in displacement and based on demonstrable humanitarian needs. While CERF has often been the first funding to arrive for a crisis, independent reviews highlighted opportunities for CERF to provide funding sooner.<sup>3</sup> By pursuing a more pro-active engagement with country-level actors, using more data and trends analysis, and by better communicating CERF's role, remit and procedures, CERF is working to provide funding sooner. The objective is to respond to the first signs of the humanitarian impact of a disaster, before a more severe crisis unfolds (which would prompt a "traditional" humanitarian response). In contrast to anticipatory action, early

<sup>1</sup> 2018 saw the highest ever donor income for CERF and some of the additional top-up donor funding CERF received in late 2018 was provided in part because of the planned anticipatory action pilots.

<sup>2</sup> The UN General Assembly mandate for the CERF states: "Enhance response to time-critical requirements: For a number of important humanitarian actions, timing is critical, and they must be undertaken within specific seasons or time frames in order to protect and save lives effectively. The Fund will be used to ensure that such time-critical actions can be initiated within the period determined to be necessary to save lives and limit costs".

<sup>3</sup> In 2011, the independent review of CERF's added value to the 2011 Horn of Africa Drought Response first found that "early response offers an opportunity for CERF to support innovative programming".

response is based on an evidenced hazard and observable rather than forecasted needs and does not require pre-agreed implementation plans.

As an example, CERF was one of the first responders in 2017 to warning signs of famine in North-east Nigeria, South Sudan, and Somalia. By end-August 2017, CERF had released nearly US\$106 million to support the most critical response and life-saving activities prioritized by the humanitarian partners on the ground, making it one of the largest funding sources for the four affected countries in the early stages of the response. CERF also provided a \$22 million loan to FAO to bridge a cash flow shortfall, which threatened FAO's ability to continue its drought response in Somalia. With this timely and highly cost-effective support, FAO was able to scale-up life-saving activities and launch an unprecedented campaign to avert famine.

In 2018, CERF worked closely with field colleagues to analyse drought and food security forecasts in the Sahel and advised Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) in the highest-risk countries on how to access CERF funding. A total of \$30 million was allocated to Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Mauritania between March and June 2018. This enabled partners to bolster communities' resilience through animal health interventions and cash transfers to safeguard livelihoods.

Further information on applications for early response to drought can be found in the CERF drought guidance on the CERF website [<https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/Drought%20Guidance.pdf>]

## **2. Anticipatory Action<sup>4</sup>**

Although an anticipatory approach would be housed under the CERF Rapid Response window, it will represent a distinct way of accessing CERF funding as compared with early response and response. Funding requests will be based on forecasts of humanitarian need, with thresholds for action and implementation strategies agreed in advance of the occurrence of a shock and in line with national and agency contingency plans. Targeting will be based on vulnerabilities and risks rather than existing, assessed needs. Anticipatory action takes place before the humanitarian impact of a hazard event has materialised. The objective of anticipatory action is to prevent the impacts of an imminent event or protect vulnerable people against these impacts before they occur.

An anticipatory CERF funding approach will remain firmly humanitarian and true to CERF's life-saving mandate but with an increased focus on reducing or preventing the humanitarian consequences of imminent high probability shocks.

To learn about CERF's suitability as a financing mechanism for anticipatory action, OCHA will work with partners in a small number of carefully selected pilot contexts to set up an anticipatory action approach that may trigger anticipatory action allocations if pre-agreed thresholds are reached.

An anticipatory funding function for CERF will not emerge as one single approach to all hazards, but should be envisioned as a suite of different allocation approaches tailored to facilitate anticipatory actions to different types of shocks and contexts.

**Drought:** CERF-supported anticipatory action against drought is expected to take place in the six months before the forecast peak of humanitarian need caused by drought conditions. Interventions are expected to largely correspond with standard CERF-funded activities (such as emergency vaccination and livestock feeding, provision of seeds and tools, rehabilitation of water points or supply of hygiene items) but differ in timing. OCHA is planning to initiate CERF anticipatory action pilots against drought in the second half of 2019 and countries are being selected based on a set of agreed-upon criteria. The pilots will help determine whether CERF's current framework (for example, the life-saving criteria and six-month implementation period) would require adjustments for anticipatory action, as well as complement other initiatives, including the World Bank Famine Action Mechanism (FAM).

**Sudden-onset emergencies (flooding, storms):** Potential CERF support to anticipatory action against sudden-onset emergencies needs further refining before running pilots. These hazards are more difficult to

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<sup>4</sup> Working definition: Anticipatory humanitarian actions are actions taken in anticipation of a crisis, either before the shock or at least before substantial humanitarian needs have [fully] manifested themselves, which are intended to mitigate the impact of the crisis or improve the response. Anticipatory action is a proactive intervention, which takes place upon issuance of a warning or activation of a pre-agreed trigger. Effective anticipatory action requires robust forecasting and triggers/parameters linked to pre-agreed financing, along with risk monitoring and analysis, and ground truthing capabilities.

forecast with high accuracy and enough time to act. Recent studies<sup>5</sup> propose ways in which CERF could act earlier under its current framework to enable the earliest response possible. This includes greater use of seasonal forecasts, promoting the pre-drafting of CERF applications and providing greater assurances regarding stock replenishment to incentivize preparedness actions by agencies.

### **3. Getting ahead of disease outbreaks**

Anticipating disease outbreaks is significantly more challenging than anticipating hydro-meteorological shocks since probabilistic forecasting for epidemics is still in its infancy and surveillance remains fundamentally reactive. To support earlier action CERF could provide funding for life-threatening diseases as soon as an outbreak is confirmed, or risk increases, preventing further spread and excess mortality.

### **4. Way forward – piloting anticipatory action**

Building on the consultations and studies conducted over the past year,<sup>6</sup> OCHA is now in the design phase of anticipatory action pilots. Piloting anticipatory action in carefully selected contexts will help generate proof of concept and further develop the evidence base for advancing coordinated anticipatory action at the system-level. Pilots will help explore CERF's suitability as an anticipatory financing instrument and its potential niche in funding anticipatory action. Furthermore, the pilots will be designed to reveal the programmatic, process, coordination and policy issues that need to be addressed to effectively scale up anticipatory action.

#### **Ad-hoc opportunities for more anticipation and learning**

In addition to the work on a potential formalized approach for CERF anticipatory action, OCHA sought to capitalize on opportunities to use CERF sooner in situations requiring time-critical interventions to reduce humanitarian needs. Thus, in January, the Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated US\$10 million from CERF to Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda that were facing a high risk of being affected by the spreading Ebola outbreak in neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo. CERF funded activities such as positioning of equipment and supplies, training of and supplying health workers for detection, treatment and containment activities, risk communication, and bolstered logistics services.

Although not informed by a formal framework nor linked to pre-defined indicators or triggers, CERF will use these allocations to learn lessons that can help inform the development of a more anticipatory allocation model for future similar emergencies. While the CERF secretariat plans an independent review of the added value of the allocations through the standard Performance and Accountability Framework, the recent confirmation of a case of Ebola in Uganda also presents a real-time opportunity to determine if the CERF funding indeed enhanced operational readiness and can prevent further spread in the country.

#### **Learning objectives of pilots**

Specifically, OCHA aims to learn about (1) collective anticipatory action, using CERF as an instrument to convene partners; (2) CERF's suitability, potential niche and added value in funding anticipatory action; (3) the use of forecasting methods, including predictive analytics models; (4) the design and application of thresholds to trigger funding; (5) the types of interventions that can modify the impact of a shock; (6) the use of layered, complementary finance to support different interventions; and (7) the potential to change how the humanitarian system works.

The anticipatory action pilots are envisioned as an exercise driven by OCHA as a whole and conducted in close collaboration with technical experts from partner organizations, including FAO, WFP, IFRC, the Start

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<sup>5</sup> ODI's study on CERF and anticipatory action and an independent review of CERF's response to the 2017 hurricane response in the Caribbean

<sup>6</sup> Including: Pichon, F. (2019). *Anticipatory humanitarian action: What Role for the CERF*. London.; Baker, J. and Hidalgo, S. (2019). *Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in Cuba and the eastern Caribbean for the Response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria. September 2017 – June 2018*. Geneva.; Mowjee, T., Baker, J., Poole, L. (2018). *Independent Review of the Value Added of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in the Countries Affected by El Niño*. London. See annex for detailed list of consultations and studies completed since the last Advisory Group meeting in October 2018.

Network, the World Bank and other financing initiatives, particularly the FAM and the Global Risk Financing Facility.

CERF funding allocations will form part of the pilots, but these will not cover all anticipatory action interventions and instead narrow in on CERF's specific life-saving niche within anticipatory action.

### **Selection of pilot countries**

Based on the outlined learning objectives, OCHA in consultation with partners has developed a set of minimum selection criteria for the anticipatory action pilots and resulting from these put forward countries as pilots.

In determining appropriate criteria, the following key aspects were considered: (1) the type of anticipated shock; (2) the potential impact of the anticipated shock; (3) existence of forecasting frameworks; (4) the parameters and triggers that would inform decisions; (5) windows of opportunity for anticipatory action interventions; and (6) the level of country-level leadership, buy-in, coordination capacity, understanding of and experience with anticipatory action.

Based on these considerations drought was found to be the most suitable shock for first anticipatory action pilots, given its predictability and slow-onset character that provides significant lead time to plan and implement interventions that modify humanitarian impact.

To select suitable contexts for piloting anticipatory action to drought, the following minimum selection criteria were agreed on:

1. Highly accurate and trusted data and forecasting tools or early warning frameworks;
2. Sufficient lead time to undertake action to mitigate impact;
3. Presence of partners and implementation systems as well as a permissive environment to effectively implement interventions to reduce the impact of shocks;
4. Minimal complicating factors.

An analysis of drought-prone countries and current forecasts shared with and agreed by OCHA's partners,<sup>7</sup> showed Somalia and countries in Southern Africa to be the best match for the above criteria and to provide the greatest learning opportunities.

### **Somalia – context and windows of opportunity**

Somalia is regularly hit by droughts which affect the rainfalls patterns of the two rainy seasons: April-June (long "Gu") and October – December (short "Deyr"). The two main livelihoods groups (agropastoralist and pastoralist) depend on rainfed productions and natural resources (crops, pasture, water).

Somalia is the fourth biggest recipient of CERF funding in the history of CERF, having been allocated US\$300.5 million in assistance. Almost half of this funding, or \$138.3 million, has been provided for drought-related humanitarian needs through a series of allocations (2006 (2x), 2008, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017 (2x), 2018, 2019).

At present, the already fragile situation of the rural population due to droughts and a heat wave in 2018 is deteriorating as a rainfall deficit has affected the 2019 long rainy season. As a result, 1.5 million people currently food insecure (IPC Phase 3+ in April June 2019) may raise to 2.2 million people in July September 2019. A total of 2.6 million are internally displaced. An already overstretched and underfunded humanitarian community is currently responding to the needs (food assistance, Global/Severe Acute Malnutrition (GAM/SAM) treatment, protection of pastoral livelihoods (fodder distribution; animal health; livestock destocking; access to water, and others).

In June, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) announced \$45 million in CERF rapid response allocations to immediately scale up food and nutrition assistance, safe water provision, livelihoods protection, and other urgent humanitarian support to drought-affected people across parts of Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya who are facing acute food problems following another season of failed rains. The bulk

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<sup>7</sup> See annex for detailed list of consultations.

of the funds, \$30 million, will go to Somalia where 2.2 million people are projected to face acute food insecurity by September, over 40 per cent more than in January this year. A further 3.2 million people are expected to struggle just to meet minimum food requirements over the same period.

In parallel to the CERF rapid response allocation, OCHA is laying the groundwork for a more systematic anticipatory action approach to drought in Somalia beginning with an anticipatory action CERF pilot that looks towards risks of shocks with a lead time of several months. The forthcoming 2019 and 2020 rainy seasons are critical for the affected population to recover from the current situation and to restore their livelihoods. However, a possible rainfall disruption of the next rainy season may happen and could undermine communities' access to food and incomes and put an additional plight to the affected population. If forecasts demonstrate a high likelihood of this threat materializing for the next short "Deyr" season, humanitarian agencies have an opportunity to implement anticipatory actions from August 2019 to February 2020 (Alternative livelihoods, WASH-Health, Food assistance, GAM/SAM treatment). Similarly, anticipatory actions could be carried out from January to June 2020 in case of forecasts for a bad Gu 2020 rainy season (April – June 2020).

### **Southern Africa – context and window of opportunity**

Southern Africa is regularly affected by the El Niño event which generally provokes droughts and rainfall deficits during the single rainy season (October to March). Madagascar, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe have received significant CERF funding (\$62.3 million, \$67.2 million and \$109.4 million respectively). Lesotho and Madagascar have most frequently requested CERF funding for drought in the region. All six countries received CERF allocations to respond to the 2015/2016 El Niño.

The 2018/2019 season was the driest since at least 1981 in central and western parts of the region, resulting in crop failure, reduced forage, and poor water availability. Conversely, a few north-eastern parts of the region have received good rainfall, including central and northern Malawi, northern Mozambique, parts of Tanzania, and north-eastern Zambia. Good harvests are expected in some of these areas. However, as the ongoing El Niño event is expected to continue till the end of the year, a drought for the next rainy season cannot be excluded.

Should a drought be forecasted in southern Africa for the October 2019 - March 2020 rainy season, anticipatory action interventions could be implemented before February 2020.

### **Next steps for drought pilots**

For both contexts, OCHA will work together with partners to put in place an anticipatory action plan. This will involve work at headquarters and country level in close cooperation with UN agencies, the World Bank, climate research centers, national authorities and other partners to reach agreement on: (1) an adequate coordination mechanism at country level for anticipatory action; (2) thresholds/triggers for action; (3) sets of activities to be implemented when thresholds are reached; (4) defining which parts of this plan would be funded by CERF and by others.

This will allow CERF funding to be released as soon as a threshold is reached signaling the high probability of an additional severe deterioration in the humanitarian situation. To maximize the impact of this approach, OCHA is engaging closely with the World Bank, on the analytics, as well as the planning and release of finance. Thus, CERF funding would be not only coordinated with funding disbursements from the Somalia Humanitarian Fund, but also with disbursements from the World Bank's Famine Action Mechanism, market-based instruments and the Global Risk Financing Facility.

OCHA is also carefully considering challenges that could arise in relation to the drought pilots and will look to propose mitigating measures. Potential challenges identified relate, for example, to the development of appropriate triggers for action and the required capacity from in-country humanitarian partners to plan for anticipatory action.

In parallel to country-level and headquarters preparations, OCHA is collaborating with the London-based Centre for Disaster Protection on the design of an independent evaluative learning component that will accompany the pilots throughout the planning, disbursement and implementation stage. Findings from the learning workstream will be presented to the Advisory Group and feed into the decision-making regarding the further development of a CERF anticipatory action approach.

### **Potential pilot for cholera prediction tool**

At present, OCHA is exploring scaling out the use of a cholera risk model developed Department for International Development (DFID), the UK Meteorological Office, NASA, University of Maryland and University of West Virginia to predict the spread of cholera. The model has been used in Yemen as a targeting tool, with the positive result in 2018 of faster localized responses to treat and prevent the spread of cholera that have helped significantly flatten the epidemiological curve compared to outbreaks in 2016 and 2017 OCHA is looking into the possibility of using the model in other contexts, including in support of CERF-funded interventions.

### **For further background on CERF and anticipatory action, refer to:**

[Update on workstreams identified in 'A revised operating model for a larger CERF](#). CERF Advisory Group meeting, October 2018.

[CERF for the future: anticipatory humanitarian action](#). Update for the CERF Advisory Group, October 2018.



## Milestones since October 2018

### **Findings from independent studies**

In April, the DFID-funded study by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on anticipatory action entitled “Anticipatory humanitarian action: What role for the CERF?” was published along with two other studies as part of ODI’s research project on taking anticipatory action to scale. The main findings of the study are:

1. Funding anticipatory action is consistent with CERF’s mandate
2. Anticipatory actions differ in timing more than in content from the types of actions that CERF already funds under its life-saving criteria
3. CERF is not the right instrument for all anticipatory action and may be more appropriate in the later stages of the anticipatory action timescale, when impacts are imminent.
4. CERF should approach a dual approach for slow- and sudden-onset situations: (1) In slow-onset events when a forecast indicates with high probability that needs will increase significantly CERF funds can be triggered early to mitigate the expected humanitarian consequences. (2) In sudden-onset events CERF should use forecast information to mobilize a rapid humanitarian response - one that can start before large-scale emergency aid arrives.

The independent review of CERF’s support to the response to hurricanes Maria and Irma in the Caribbean in 2017 was published in June. The following lessons learned relating to CERF’s potential for supporting anticipatory action to sudden-onset emergencies were identified:

1. The case of Cuba demonstrates how a functioning early warning system and existing protocols together with CERF’s current framework can be used to implement anticipatory action and enable an early response in a sudden-onset emergency. In particular, CERF’s predictability as a first responder and its ability to fund replenishment of pre-positioned stocks were seen as key.
2. When country-level early warning capacity (government and international presence) is low-as was the case in the eastern Caribbean in 2017-CERF should pro-actively pursue an earlier engagement with countries most at risk based on seasonal forecasts and consider providing funding for a capacity assessment. This should provide an incentive to help kick-start collective mobilization of humanitarian agencies, leverage additional funding to support anticipatory action and preparedness by individual agencies, provide an opportunity to assess UN agency capacity and generally increase the value-added of CERF support for an eventual disaster.

OCHA’s Humanitarian Financing and Strategy Analysis (HFSA) Unit commissioned an independent study on terminology around anticipatory action, entitled “Getting Ahead of Crises: A Thesaurus for Anticipatory Humanitarian Action”. The thesaurus helps to clarify key concepts and their use by different actors. A working draft is being distributed in June ahead of the CERF Advisory Group and the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG), and final version is expected to be published in July.

### **Key Consultations**

The CERF secretariat engaged with technical experts on anticipatory action in the lead up to and during Humanitarian Networking and Partnerships Week in February in Geneva. CERF held an informal consultation to discuss best practices and lessons learned in pilot selection and planning with technical experts.

CERF participated in a workshop on moving from reaction to anticipation in humanitarian financing, organized by OCHA’s HFSA together with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre.

The OCHA-internal Anticipatory Action Working Group (AAWG) was created in April, led by Lisa Carty, the Director of OCHA's Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division (HFRMD). Within the group OCHA colleagues coordinate on relevant workstreams, including progress and planning for anticipatory action pilots and CERF's role within these. The group includes staff of HFRMD (including HFSA, CERF and Country-Based Pooled Funds), the Operations and Advocacy Division (OAD) and the Coordination Division.

On 30 April, OCHA participated at a roundtable event at ODI together with other key stakeholders in anticipatory action to discuss the findings of ODI's research and present CERF's perspective on how to take the findings forward.

In early April, OCHA's HFRMD presented proposed selection criteria for pilots and options for pilot countries to Under-Secretary-General (USG) of OCHA and ERC Mark Lowcock.

On 11-12 April, CERF participated in a workshop on predictive analytics in humanitarian response hosted by OCHA's Centre for Humanitarian Data in The Hague to discuss the potential of using predictive analytics for prediction of humanitarian impact of natural hazards in connection with CERF-funded anticipatory action.

CERF joined the newly founded Forecast-based Financing/Action (FbF/A) Monitoring & Evaluation Practitioner Group, which is led by the Start Network and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre. The group serves as a space to discuss, develop and share methodological approaches and practical guidance, incl. templates and tools, for monitoring, evaluation and learning around anticipatory action. Discussions will inform the design of a learning element for the anticipatory action pilots.

During OCHA's Global Management Team Retreat in Montreux (2-3 May) CERF and HFSA briefed OCHA Heads of Offices on anticipatory action and on what role CERF could play in promoting earlier action. The presentations were followed by discussions in small groups, with participants highlighting the importance of Humanitarian Coordinators in driving collective anticipatory action and noting challenges in translating early warnings and analysis into action.

During the Humanitarian Coordinators' Retreat in Lausanne (5-6 May) anticipatory action was highlighted in a session on how to improve the humanitarian business model. Potential CERF anticipatory action pilots were discussed informally.

The CERF secretariat and HFSA arranged several calls with the Early Action Focus Task Force to discuss best practices in trigger development and contingency planning, forecasts, and experiences with anticipatory action in proposed pilot countries.

CERF secretariat staff participated in a meeting of the Start Network's Forecast-Based Warning Analysis and Response Network (FOREWARN) London. The meeting served to engage with and learn from forecasting experts from academia and think tanks and Start Network members working in anticipatory action.

OCHA will collaborate with the Centre for Global Disaster Protection in London on developing and implementing a learning-oriented evaluation of the pilots. Initial calls took place in May and June to discuss scope and learning priorities. The work of the Centre will be funded by DFID and is part of DFID's support for the anticipatory action pilots.

OCHA is also engaging the World Bank in high-level advocacy and technical-level cooperation to design and expand development instruments for crisis contexts. Most recently, OCHA and the World Bank held a one-day technical workshop in New York on 14 June to discuss in more detail opportunities and options for layered risk financing for anticipatory action in Somalia.