

Executive Summary

CERF ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT 2020



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2020 was yet another exceptional year for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). With the generous support of donors, CERF responded to the dramatic increase in humanitarian needs, disbursing a record \$848 million to support humanitarian action worldwide – up from \$539 million in 2019.

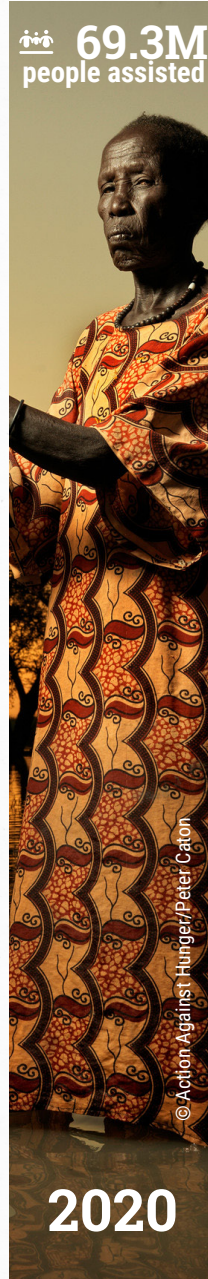
Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

CERF was instrumental in facilitating the humanitarian community's response to COVID-19. The global pandemic, which created unprecedented challenges for the humanitarian system, called for a flexible and innovative approach. CERF rose to the challenge, disbursing – with pace and agility – \$225 million to 39 countries. CERF funding helped initiate an immediate response. On 1 March, ahead of the declaration of a global pandemic, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) released \$15 million to help fund global efforts by WHO and UNICEF to contain the virus. Later in March, CERF allocated \$80 million in multi-country block grants to jump-start UN agency responses, focusing on health care, water and sanitation, and logistics. When funding for front-line NGO responders was critically low, CERF led the way, releasing \$25 million through IOM to support NGOs in delivering life-saving health, water and sanitation assistance in six countries – the first allocation in CERF's 14-year history to directly target NGOs.

Later in the year, CERF also responded to the secondary humanitarian impacts of the pandemic, including through an \$80 million allocation to address rising food insecurity in six countries in Africa and the Middle East, as well as a dedicated allocation of \$25 million to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) in humanitarian settings – which saw a dramatic increase during the pandemic.

\$ \$848M

69.3M
people assisted



\$ \$539M

29.4M
people assisted



“The CERF allocation will also strongly signal the affirmative action intended by the ERC to focus on the most vulnerable, including women and children, and on protection, GBV, SRH and women’s empowerment. Efforts will be made to use CERF funding as a catalyst [for] additional sources of funding for the activities proposed.

- Jessica Faieta, RC a.i. Colombia
(UFE allocation, October 2020)

Supporting people caught in crises

Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, CERF again demonstrated the difference that it makes to the lives of people caught in humanitarian crises across the world. A record 69.3 million crisis-affected people received CERF-funded humanitarian assistance in 2020 – more than twice as many as in 2019. Almost half of these (32.5 million people) were affected by disease outbreaks – a 37 per cent increase from 2019 – reflecting CERF’s unparalleled response to the COVID-19 pandemic. CERF also supported 16.7 million people affected by conflicts and 12.2 million by natural disasters – a slight decrease from 13.7 million and 12.7 million respectively in 2019. CERF funding allowed UN agencies and partners to assist an additional 7.8 million people affected by severe economic disruption and other compounding factors.

CERF was also there to meet the needs of over 40.6 million refugees, IDPs, returnees and members of communities hosting displaced people. This represents 59 per cent of all people targeted with 2020 CERF funding. Several allocations in 2020 had a specific focus on addressing the consequences of displacement, most notably an historic \$100 million allocation to Sudan at a critical transitional juncture in its recent history. CERF’s intervention contributed to the Government’s agenda on peacebuilding, freedom and justice, and schools for all, including through support to durable solutions for the displaced and returnees.

Again, in 2020, CERF was often the first funding source in new emergencies. As well as providing some of the earliest humanitarian funding, CERF continued to demonstrate its speed – for example, in its response, in August, to the explosion in a warehouse in Beirut that caused widespread damage and loss of life. CERF approved \$6 million for response activities allowing WHO and WFP to kick-start their response on the day of the explosion, safe in the knowledge that CERF funds were imminent. In addition to making fast and timely allocation decisions, CERF also improved the speed with which applications are processed, reducing the average grant processing time by more than 11 per cent compared to 2019, leading to faster disbursements. Thanks to CERF’s speed and flexibility, agencies were able to initiate CERF-funded activities, on average, only 3.5 days after the submission of applications.

CERF continued to be a lifeline for people caught in crises that attract limited donor attention and funding but where needs are just as urgent. Through its Underfunded Emergencies window (UFE) CERF provided a record \$225 million for life-saving assistance to 20 underfunded and neglected crises. In the first round of UFE allocations in February 2020, CERF allocated \$125 million towards 11 underfunded crises, assisting more than 7.7 million people. In the second UFE round, CERF released \$100 million to boost severely underfunded humanitarian responses, targeting 6.8 million people in 10 countries, including through dedicated funding to address the rising prevalence of GBV during the pandemic. In Burkina Faso, UN agencies and partners utilized the earmarked GBV funding to strengthen services for GBV survivors, support local women-led organizations and extend GBV activities to areas least covered by the humanitarian response.

“The CERF UFE allocation of \$35 million has critical importance for the ability of the humanitarian community to continue providing life-saving health-related assistance to the most vulnerable people in Yemen and is based on very well-defined synergies and complementarity with other funding sources. [...] The CERF UFE will capitalize on this approach and will enable the continuation of top priority health-related interventions with a focus on women and girls, which are at risk of stopping due to lack of funding.

- Lise Grande, former RC/HC Yemen
(UFE allocation, October 2020)

Reaching the most vulnerable

In 2020, CERF continued to make significant headway in helping the humanitarian community reach the most vulnerable. CERF continued to prioritize four critical yet underfunded areas of humanitarian response: women and girls, people with disabilities, education in protracted crises and protection. Building on momentum from 2019, further positive results were achieved in 2020, with a record level of CERF funding going towards these important priorities. More than \$29 million was allocated to emergency education projects – up from the previous record of \$19 million set in 2019. CERF funding to the protection sector also reached record levels in 2020, with \$82 million allocated – a significant increase over the previous record of \$52 million in 2019. In addition, CERF strengthened support to projects focusing on GBV, including through a \$25 million allocation to UNFPA and UN Women dedicated entirely to GBV programming. Overall, an estimated

record \$65 million in CERF funding went towards the prevention of and response to GBV. Furthermore, over 8.1 million of the people targeted with 2020 CERF funding were people with disabilities, of which the majority – 4.2 million or 53 per cent – were women and girls.



Beyond the operational results, the CERF allocation will also assist in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable people in Uganda, particularly people living with disabilities, women and girls, refugees, youth, elderly, widows, female-headed households, market women, street vendors, people living with HIV and TB, migrants and those displaced by natural disasters.

- Rosa Malango, RC Uganda
(UFE allocation, October 2020)

Advancing system change

Record donor support allowed CERF to not only facilitate priority life-saving assistance and protection, but also to advance strategic initiatives and support positive change in the humanitarian system. Leveraging its speed, funding volume, effective systems and global reach, CERF in 2020 scaled up anticipatory action, enabling partners to get ahead of predictable hazards and mitigate humanitarian impacts by collectively providing timely life-saving support to people at risk. During the year, CERF successfully supported the activation of multi-stakeholder anticipatory action frameworks in three countries – Bangladesh (for flooding), and Somalia and Ethiopia (for severe food insecurity linked to drought) – allocating a total of \$33.4 million. In Bangladesh, for example, CERF funded the provision of safe storage drums to protect grains, seeds and other assets; cash transfers to help at-risk communities take preparatory measures; and the distribution of essential hygiene items to women, girls and transgender people. These allocations were key to supporting partners in tackling complex humanitarian challenges in the most effective and efficient way – and reaffirmed CERF’s role as a strategic tool in humanitarian response.

Promoting the use of cash

In 2020, CERF also made great progress in promoting the use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) in humanitarian action. CERF’s support to CVA-based programming almost tripled in 2020 compared to 2019, with \$138 million in cash and vouchers provided to a record 5.7 million people in 38 countries. This was reinforced by large-scale targeted allocations specifically to promote the use of CVA in response to food insecurity, including \$80 million for CVA programming to address rising levels of food insecurity in six countries; and \$20 million

to scale up WFP’s cash operations in Zimbabwe to strengthen social safety nets in urban and peri-urban areas. In Zimbabwe, unrestricted cash transfers helped around 151,500 people to meet their basic food and nutrition requirements, reduce the need for urgent assistance, and improve access to services, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP prioritized the most vulnerable and food-insecure households, especially women-led households, and those caring for people with disabilities and people living with HIV. CVA also served as a response modality in CERF’s anticipatory action pilots in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Somalia. In addition to promoting CVA as response modality, CERF also aimed to support the increased use of multi-purpose cash, improve cash-coordination at country level, and promote strong links between CVA and gender equality.

Growing partnerships and localization

CERF continued to expand its reach through its ever-growing partnership network, which included a record number of national and local organizations. With record funding of \$848 million in 2020, CERF was able to provide 12 UN agencies with the means to deliver life-saving assistance to people trapped in crises across the globe. A total of \$126 million was sub-granted by UN agencies to 735 implementing partners, including a record-equaling \$73 million (58 per cent) to 588 national and local actors – the highest number of national and local actors benefiting from CERF funding in a single year. CERF also actively promoted greater localization through its allocation decisions. A third of the recipients under CERF’s first-ever dedicated NGO allocation were local NGOs and the \$25 million global allocation to UN Women and UNFPA to tackle GBV included the condition that at least 30 per cent of funds were passed on by recipient agencies to local women-led or women’s rights organizations. An early estimation suggests this target will be exceeded by a wide margin.

Supporting humanitarian leadership

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) continued to reiterate the Fund’s strategic added value in enabling fast, timely and more coordinated responses, as well as in catalysing the mobilization of additional resources.¹ Overall, 94 per cent of CERF allocations enabled partners to respond to time-critical needs, 83 per cent helped improve coordination and 74 per cent helped increase resource mobilization from other sources. For instance, the RC/HC in Burkina Faso confirmed that an allocation from the Rapid Response funding window in response to massive displacement at the beginning of 2020 helped leverage additional funding to one of the fastest growing displacement crises in the world. In addition, RC/HCs reaffirmed that CERF Rapid Response allocations led to the fast delivery of assistance.



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“The CERF anticipatory action in Ethiopia presents a new strategy for the country facing recurrent drought episodes. By anticipating shocks and mitigating the effects before they can cause lasting damage to people's lives and livelihoods, the multi-sector package of interventions provides an opportunity to anticipate and reduce needs, which will prove to be more effective and cost-efficient.

- Catherine Sozi, RC/HC Ethiopia
(RR Anticipatory Action allocation for drought, December 2020)

Continuing focus on learning

During the year, CERF maintained its focus on continuous learning to ensure that the Fund's approaches and processes are adapted to the changing requirements of the humanitarian landscape. In addition to systematically gathering lessons learned through consultations with partners at the global and field levels, CERF concluded two external studies in 2020, one on CERF's support to four underfunded priority areas of humanitarian response, and the other on the role of CERF in smaller emergencies. CERF also launched studies to explore unique CERF allocations undertaken during the year, including the first-ever NGO allocation; the \$80 million cash allocation to help stave off famine in six high-risk countries; and CERF support to the prevention of and response to GBV.

Ensuring transparency

In 2020, CERF renewed its efforts to improve transparency, particularly the availability of real-time data on CERF support to humanitarian operations. In 2020, CERF launched an [online allocation tracker](#) that provides real-time information on CERF allocations and developed a [CERF Data Hub](#) with a wide array of interactive visuals, allowing stakeholders easy access to data on individual contributions. Together with OCHA's Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs), CERF also improved funding visibility across the two funding mechanisms through the OCHA Pooled Funds Data Hub, which provides a one-stop gateway to funding data for CERF and the 19 CBPFs.

In 2020, the Secretary-General appointed 10 new members to the Advisory Group. During the year, the Group held two official meetings, as well as three thematic webinars focusing on CERF's COVID-19 response, anticipatory action efforts and CERF global reporting. During the year, the Advisory Group discussed, among other things, CERF's COVID-19 response, advised the ERC on CERF's strategic positioning in the humanitarian landscape, explored CERF's ability to promote positive system change and considered ways to mobilize additional resources to help CERF achieve its \$1 billion target.

Thanks to the generous support of donors, CERF continued to demonstrate its unparalleled global reach. Following record contributions in 2019 – partly due to an exceptional one-off donation – CERF again in 2020 enjoyed strong support from its partners, receiving a total of \$639 million, the second highest annual income in CERF's history. Since 2006, 130 CERF donors (as of March 2021) have contributed more than \$7.5 billion to the Fund; this includes 55 countries that have also benefited from CERF allocations, demonstrating the extraordinary levels of solidarity that make CERF truly 'a fund for all, by all'. It is thanks to the continued support from Member States that 2020 was such a remarkable year.

“The CERF allocation enables the UN and partners to augment Government response in critical gap areas in a swift and well-coordinated manner. A rapid scale-up and quality delivery will showcase the essential role that the UN and partners can play in emergency relief and more broadly in assisting the most vulnerable people in Viet Nam.

- Kamal Malhotra, RC Viet Nam
(RR allocation for floods, November 2020)

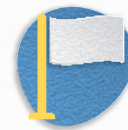
2020 CERF RESULTS AT A GLANCE



\$848M
ALLOCATED



69.3M
PEOPLE ASSISTED



59
COUNTRIES/
TERRITORIES

CERF GRANTS ENABLED HUMANITARIAN PARTNERS TO ASSIST:



32.6M
people impacted by
disease outbreaks
including COVID-19



16.7M
people trapped in
conflict-related
emergencies



12.7M
people impacted by
natural disasters



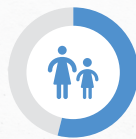
7.8M
people impacted by
severe **economic**
disruption



CERF REACHED THE MOST VULNERABLE:



59%
of people assisted were
affected by **displacement**



54%
of people assisted were
women and girls



12%
of people assisted were
people with disabilities

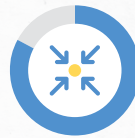
ACCORDING TO RC/HC REPORTS ON THE USE OF CERF FUNDING:



94%
of CERF allocations led
to **fast delivery** of
assistance



94%
of CERF allocations
helped respond to
time-critical needs



83%
of CERF allocations
helped **improve**
coordination



74%
of CERF allocations
helped **improve** **resource**
mobilization from
other sources

*From reports on all CERF funding provided in 2019 and implemented in 2019 and 2020.

IN 2020 CERF GRANTS ENABLED PARTNERS TO DELIVER

SECTOR	PEOPLE TARGETED	FEMALE	MALE	CHILDREN	ADULTS
 Critical Health Care	41.7M 	53% 	47% 	41% 	59% 
 Food Assistance & Agricultural inputs	16.2M 	51% 	49% 	49% 	51% 
 Water and Sanitation	12.0M 	53% 	47% 	48% 	52% 
 Protection services	8.6M 	56% 	44% 	53% 	47% 
 Nutrition support	3.7M 	66% 	34% 	65% 	35% 
 Education	2.9M 	48% 	52% 	82% 	18% 
 Camp Management	1.5M 	53% 	47% 	59% 	41% 
 Shelter and NFIs	1.2M 	53% 	47% 	51% 	49% 
 Early Recovery assistance	0.2M 	54% 	46% 	38% 	62% 
 Multisector Refugee	0.1M 	54% 	46% 	41% 	59% 