

1. Background:

UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established in 2005 and has become a key partner in emergencies providing quick and timely funding to support life-saving assistance to people affected by natural disasters and armed conflict. CERF is replenished year-round by voluntary contributions from UN Member States and Observers, regional and local authorities, the private sector, foundations and individuals. Reaching out with timely and relevant information in a compelling and consistent way across all groups of partners is important to convey and reinforce the global visibility and credibility of CERF as a partner of choice for humanitarian funding.

In a rapidly changing resource mobilization landscape, building on and expanding the global credibility of CERF are critical as we look forward to the next 10 years of the Fund, especially in a context where the availability of resources is a priority theme in the humanitarian community.

2. Purpose of the paper

This paper highlights key issues that drive the global credibility and reputation of CERF. These issues will be addressed in a revised Resource Mobilization and Communications Strategy which will be presented during Advisory Group meeting in November 2015.¹

3. Key issues:

External environment:

In a crowded global humanitarian landscape with many organizations competing for public and private funding, it is important to distinguish CERF and convey its comparative advantage in reaching people that need help the most. Despite record levels of global funding for humanitarian activities, growing demand for assistance has outpaced contributions. In this context, articulating the value and impact of CERF also contributes to global discussions on humanitarian financing and helps position CERF as a partner of choice for actors contributing to humanitarian response.

While there is significant recognition of CERF among a key group of Member States, this largely reflects traditional donors – including OECD DAC countries – which constitute 90 percent per cent of CERF's resource base. More needs to be done to diversify the recognition of the value of CERF among other partners. In addition, public visibility of CERF is relatively limited, especially when compared to key humanitarian agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP). This is also an important area to reinforce with a view of resource mobilization from private sources.

Challenging financial environments, especially for traditional donors, call for strong prominence of CERF, its effectiveness and added value, to help justify the Fund as the

¹ The current Strategy was prepared for the period 2014-2015.

vehicle of choice for humanitarian assistance, especially in light of trade-offs with internal domestic priorities. Promoting the visibility of CERF and donor support to CERF are important areas to help donors 'make the case' for CERF in resource-tight environments under high public scrutiny.

Key crises drive global media coverage where 'big' disasters generate more media and public interest than others. In addition, dramatic natural disasters (earthquakes and floods) tend to attract more interest than slowly building crisis (droughts) or protracted conflicts². Global media coverage is a key driver of global visibility. Harnessing the power of global media helps generate greater awareness, interest and familiarity with CERF. A CERF allocation made in the immediate aftermath of a severe crisis has the potential to be headline news – but only for a limited time period. Maximizing this window of opportunity with content generated from CERF while also leveraging content from humanitarian agencies on the ground is a powerful combination to drive greater coverage and visibility. E.g., the recent Nepal earthquake and the immediate allocation of \$15 million got good global media play, including through social media. However, the role of CERF in providing assistance to 'silent emergencies' which are often protracted and under-funded is challenging especially as these crises are often out of the global media spotlight.

Rapidly improving communication technology has transformed the frequency, pace and delivery of information exchange and communication. Communications that use traditional media and powered by digital media – such as twitter, facebook and the web - are pivotal to amplify and drive the exponential outreach of key messages, especially in a hyper-connected, 'user centric' world. CERF has a basic foundation of online platforms that offer significant potential to drive public outreach and engagement.

Telling the CERF story: Giving a voice, face and heart beat

The Secretary General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) are the key global champions for CERF. They provide the political leadership and voice for the CERF and give it the global gravitas. Signalling the importance of CERF in key moments - briefings to Member States, press interviews, bilateral meetings with key partners - reinforces the perceived value and visibility of CERF.

The interface with agencies to provide regular content showcasing 'on the ground' humanitarian work reinforces the role of CERF in promoting lifesaving assistance. In particular, references to CERF related funding in agency public communications is important in conveying the concrete and tangible value of CERF. In addition, capitalising on the power of digital media by linking and actively reinforcing content on their social media platforms has a multiplier effect in expanding coverage and reach new audiences in particular. Current arrangements are largely ad hoc, and efforts to systematize the collaboration with key agencies to provide regular content, especially during key crises, is important while minimizing the operational burden on partners. This is an area where some agencies such as WFP and UNMAS, have requested guidance to promote CERF in their public communications.

² For example, in the week from 5th to 8th May, the Nepal earthquake still dominated the media while the news of an agreement with armed groups in CAR to release thousands of child soldiers went largely unreported.

CERF driven content based on agency contributions also helps to showcase agency specific activities and promote their brand to a more focused audience of Member States – which is also an important ‘pull’ factor for greater collaboration.

Contributions to CERF are un-earmarked, which gives the ERC the flexibility to prioritize and make allocation decisions based on changing humanitarian needs, whenever and wherever those arise. While this is the core operational strength of CERF, it poses a challenge in terms of demonstrating the impact of individual contributions to CERF and in providing emergency specific visibility for individual donors that support CERF. However, telling the CERF story also includes highlighting contributions from donors as critical in ensuring CERF’s effectiveness and success. Various steps are already being taken to provide donor visibility in a more systematic way and around concrete deliverables (Annex draft checklist).

Ways to Tell the Story:

There is no substitute for regular, relevant and compelling content – whether videos, photos, text stories – to convey the power of change through humanitarian assistance. This includes communicating the difference that CERF makes especially in the lives of real people. A mix of mediums and channels of communication that convey and reinforce messages in ways that connects with different audiences, motivates action and inspires loyalty, is vital for a voluntarily funded mechanism.

While certain Member States and agencies acknowledge the quick and action oriented nature of CERF, additional efforts are required to further expand and inspire instant recognition and value among a wider group including the general public. Consistency in messaging about CERF is important. Reinforcing the CERF story through offline, online, direct and multimedia communications helps to convey a consistent and compelling story.

Aligning messages with key events and partnership platforms – High Level Conference, ECOSOC event - reports (Secretary General’s Report and CERF Annual Report) and media related outreach will help maximize the reach and effectiveness of the CERF story. As we head towards the 10 year anniversary of CERF, a compelling narrative that is reinforced through various communications tools and across various products and platforms will be important to connect and engage with different partners.

Getting the Story Out:

While developing and leveraging content is important, proactively disseminating it is equally relevant. Establishing and nurturing a network of key actors linking to Member States, media and agency specific communication platforms and people will be reinforced to drive the pace and delivery of messages across different groups.

Conclusion:

The upcoming 10-year anniversary of CERF is a timely milestone to review past successes and look towards the future. In preparation for this and as part of CERF’s ongoing work to strengthen its Resource Mobilization and Communication Strategy, the strategy will be reviewed and updated to address a number of the key issues raised in this paper.

Annex: Draft Donor Visibility Checklist

Platform	Availability	Action
Social media	Yes	Tweet mentioning contribution
Social media	Yes	Facebook post with photo mentioning the contribution
Web	Yes	Top 10 contributions with flags (previous year) on CERF landing page
Web	Yes	Current year contributions with flags (rolling) on CERF landing page
Web	On demand	Story mentioning the contribution
Web	Yes	Contribution page updated
Web	On demand	CERF website landing page thumbnail (1 week)
Press and publications	Yes	Contribution mentioned in CERF Quarterly
Press and publications	Yes	Contribution mentioned in CERF Annual Report
Press and publications	Yes	Contribution mentioned in CERF SG report
Press and publications	Yes	Contribution mentioned in CERF Annual Summary
Press and publications	Yes	Contribution mentioned in CERF About CERF factsheet (with flag)
Press and publications	Yes	Contribution mentioned in OCHA Annual Report
Press and publications	Yes	Standard language on contributions to donors
Press release	On demand	Assist the donor with the local press release
Multimedia	On demand	Video produced by CERF in donor's language, ending with reference to donor's contribution
Multimedia	On demand	Animation explaining CERF in donor's language, ending with reference to donor's contribution
Events	On demand	Field visit for donor counterparts
Events	Yes	Donor exposure at the CERF High-level Conference
Events	Yes	Donor exposure at the ECOSOC humanitarian segment
Events	Yes	OCHA SM visits to donor capital, briefing the parliamentarians
Custom request	On demand	Custom, ad hoc requests by donors
Information provision	On demand	Custom information provided to donors