



CERF



A SOUND HUMANITARIAN INVESTMENT
THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND

CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND

Interim Review

Submitted to: Evaluation and Studies Section
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

By: Shelia Dohoo Faure
Max Glaser
OCHA FP: Alice Green

Date: 19 September 2007

**Central Emergency Response Fund:
Interim Review**

Final Report

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Although many people contributed to this review, the opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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List of Acronyms

AMISOM	African Union Mission Somalia
AP	Action Plan
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHAP	Common Humanitarian Action Plan
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund (aka Pooled Fund)
CIDA	Canada International Development Agency
CPIA	Coordination Provincial Inter-Agence (DRC)
CRD	Coordination Response Department (OCHA)
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DMT	Disaster Management Team (Ethiopia)
DO	Designated Official
DPKO	Department Peace Keeping Operations
DPPC	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Centre (Ethiopia)
DRC	Democratic Republic Congo
ECHO	European Communities Humanitarian Coordination
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (UN)
EDMT	Expanded Disaster Management Team (Kenya)
EPF	Emergency Program Fund (UNICEF)
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
ESS	Evaluation and Studies Section (OCHA)
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FTS	Financial Tracking Service (OCHA)
GA	General Assembly
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
HAG	Humanitarian Advisory Group (DRC)
HAP	Humanitarian Action Plan
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HQ	Headquarters
HRF	Humanitarian Response Fund (specific name for an Emergency Response Fund)
IAHCC	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Coordination Committee (Ivory Coast)
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IC	Inter-cluster
ICRC	International Committee Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMCI	Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRA	Immediate Response Account (WFP)
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
LoU	Letter of Understanding
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MONUC	United Nation Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MT	Metric Ton
NFI	Non Food Items (NFRI – Non Food Relief Items)
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NY	New York

OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDA	Overseas Development Agency (USA)
PF	Pooled Fund (see CHF)
QUIPS	Quick Impact Projects (DPKO)
RC/HC	Resident Coordinator /Humanitarian Coordinator
RR	Rapid Response
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
RVF	Rift Valley Fever
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SDMT	Strategic Disaster Management Team
SG	Secretary General
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
TFC	Therapeutic Feeding Center
TOR	Terms of Reference
UF/UFE	Under Funded (emergencies)
UN	United Nations
UNCAS	United Nations Civil Air Services
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDSS	United Nations Departments for Safety and Security
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Services
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children and Education Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOCI	United Nations Operations in Cote d'Ivoire
UNOPS	United Nations Operations
UNRCO	United National Resident Coordinator's Office
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
Watsan	Water and Sanitation
WHO	World Health Organization
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

Introduction

The report reflects the results of an independent interim review of the grant component of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) carried out by two international consultants between March and July 2007. The purpose of the review was to explore how the CERF, as a humanitarian financing tool, is contributing towards effectively promoting a more timely, predictable, equitable, effective and accountable humanitarian response. (See the text box for an overview of the CERF.)

Overview of the CERF

The Central Emergency *Response* Fund (CERF) was created on 12 December 2005 and launched in March 2006. It expanded the previous Central Emergency *Revolving* Fund (created in December 1991) by adding a grant component to the existing loan component. The purpose of the expanded CERF is to ensure the rapid and coordinated response of United Nations (UN) agencies to emergencies, with the following objectives:

- To promote early action and response to reduce loss of life
- To enhance response to time-critical requirements based on demonstrative needs and
- To strengthen the core elements of humanitarian response in under-funded crises.

The CERF includes two components: a loan facility of up to \$50 million and a grant facility with a target of up to \$450 million. Funding from the grant facility is split into two windows – rapid response window and under-funded emergencies window. Only UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are eligible to apply for funding under the grant facility of the CERF.¹ The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) is the fund manager and plays a role in advocacy and fund-raising for the CERF. Grant proposals for the rapid response window are prepared by the UN agencies under the leadership of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). It is a field-driven process that aims to strengthen the role of the RC/HC. For the under-funded window, the ERC initially makes block allocations of funds for countries and then UN agencies submit proposals, through the RC/HC, for this funding. Proposal under both windows are submitted to the ERC by the RC/HC.

As one element of the financing pillar of the humanitarian reform agenda, the CERF would be expected to contribute to other pillars, including the development of effective partnerships between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors.

Methodology

This review was based on case studies in six countries that had received CERF funding – Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These countries, which were among the countries that received the most CERF funding,² represented a range of humanitarian response contexts:

- Countries receiving both under-funded and rapid response grants;
- Representation from different geographic regions;
- Mix of types of emergencies;
- Different humanitarian response contexts; and

¹ OCHA cannot apply for grant funding, but is eligible for a CERF loan.

² As of April 2007, Democratic Republic of the Congo (\$US 74.6M), Kenya (\$US 29.1M), Somalia (\$US 25.8M), Sri Lanka (\$US 18.9), Ethiopia (\$US 17.1M) and Ivory Coast (\$US 11.95M)

- Countries with different contexts for UN coordination.

The case studies involved short site visits in each country and included, for the most part, interviews of staff of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN agencies, NGOs and donors. The case studies were followed by telephone interviews with UN agency headquarters, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors at the global level and debriefings and presentations at OCHA in New York (NY).

In addition, OCHA's Evaluation and Studies Section (ESS) conducted an online survey of UN agencies in countries receiving CERF funding (not including those that were included in the country case studies) and the results of this survey are integrated into the report.

The review results are somewhat constrained by the limited scope, time and documentation for the review. As a result, the review team cautions against extrapolation of the findings from the six country case studies. In spite of these limitations, the review provides valuable insights into the operations of the CERF in the first year.

In reviewing the findings of this report, it is important to understand the context for the review. It was undertaken only one year after the launch of the CERF – a year during which a small CERF Secretariat and policies and guidelines for the Fund were being developed, focal points for the Fund in the UN agencies were being established, and awareness of the Fund at both the HQ and field levels was being created. While OCHA (and particularly the CERF Secretariat) has played a key role in the implementation of the CERF, this review covered the CERF as a funding mechanism, not OCHA or the Secretariat as key actors in its implementation. As a result, the findings reflect on all actors engaged in implementing the CERF.

Results of the CERF

Results at the global level

Two significant results of the CERF impact at the global level stand out: firstly, that OCHA was able to attract \$US 582M in paid contributions since its launch in March 2006, and secondly, that US\$ 446M have been disbursed over the same time period,³ while setting up the support infrastructure. Recently, OCHA has also expanded the capacity of the Secretariat to improve the efficiency of the Fund management. The longer-term impact of these achievements on the humanitarian response is yet to be assessed.

All donors interviewed reported that they see CERF as a valuable mechanism for humanitarian funding and are keen to invest in it, though also indicated that future investments depend, to a certain extent, on CERF results and outcome of the two-year

³ The sectors receiving the most CERF funds were food and health and the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF were the biggest UN agency recipient of grants.

review planned for 2008. Some donors indicated they find the CERF a convenient funding channel because it confers the management of funds to the UN, reducing their transaction costs, particularly for donors that have limited capacity in countries and/or regions to administer bilateral humanitarian funds. However, there is anecdotal information to suggest that the transaction costs may have increased for the UN system – including OCHA and the UN agencies.⁴

UN agency representatives interviewed at the global level expressed satisfaction with the CERF as a fast, reliable and effective mechanism and with the broad interpretation of the life saving criterion.

The response of the international NGOs (INGOs) was more guarded. Several INGO CERF critiques have expressed concern about the fact that NGOs do not have direct access to CERF funding and the lack of systematic information with respect to the forward disbursement of CERF funds to NGOs.

Results at the field level

While the global level results are important, the ultimate goal and purpose of the CERF is expressed in the CERF-funded projects and activities at the field level. While it is too early, and there is limited documentation, to assess the actual impact of CERF-funded projects, the review identified some potential impacts.⁵ The allocation of CERF funding is based on two key criteria: projects must cover life-saving activities and be needs-based. The under-funded window requires specifically that grant allocations be made towards chronically under-funded projects.

The case studies indicated that the CERF has funded a wide range of projects. The life saving criterion has been defined very broadly to include immediate response activities in acute disasters, prevention activities and rehabilitation and early recovery activities. CERF projects have funded:

- Activities designed to have a direct impact on beneficiary populations,
- Activities to strengthen the capacity of the humanitarian system to provide humanitarian response; and
- Funds for locally-managed projects that provide access to CERF funds by NGOs.

A rationale can be made that links all the funded activities to life saving. Some projects are likely to have a more direct or immediate impact on beneficiaries than others, such as system strengthening or rehabilitation/reconstruction.⁶

⁴ It was beyond the scope of this review to measure these changes in transaction costs.

⁵ In most countries, OCHA and the UN agencies had not completed any reports on, or conducted any evaluations of, CERF implementation, making it difficult to assess the impact of the CERF, either on intended beneficiaries or on the humanitarian response system

⁶ In first months of the Fund, the life-saving criterion had not been defined. Working criteria were developed over the first year of the Fund. At the time of the writing of this report a paper on life saving criteria/guidelines was being developed under the auspices of the CERF Secretariat in collaboration with

Appropriateness of CERF

The broad interpretation of the life saving criterion was helpful to the UN agencies, as it allowed them to define projects to address country and context specific needs that were in line with their respective mandates. The review team notices that, on the one hand, this broad interpretation of life saving criterion potentially strengthens the connectedness of CERF funded projects, while on the other hand, it may make the prioritization of proposals more difficult.

In practice, the life saving criterion serves two purposes – eligibility for CERF funding as such and prioritization of proposals within the portfolio of proposed projects. Although the former led to some initial confusion, this became clearer as more guidelines were developed. However, with regard to the latter, challenges remain, given the great variety in the types of project proposals and specific objectives they are addressing.

It is recommended:

1. That OCHA, in consultation with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group, clarify the scope of the life-saving criterion for the CERF, including how it applies to the two funding windows and how it is used for the prioritization and approval of projects.
-

The distinction between rapid response and under-funded appears to be unclear as countries with similar contexts received funding from both the rapid response and under-funded window. Some limitations are also observed with regard to establishing under-funded allocations on the basis of existing Consolidated Appeals Processes (CAPs). In some cases, donors did not agree with the identified proposed activities in the CAP and, in other cases, argued that as time passed the actual context had changed significantly making some activities more development-focused than humanitarian.

The review also identified some challenges related to the availability of needs assessment information to support the CERF proposals. In initial allocations under both the rapid response and under-funded windows, time frames for submission of some proposals were very short. For some rapid response proposals, rapid assessments were conducted in spite of the short timeframes; whereas for the under-funded window, the needs identified in the CAP were re-affirmed through the cluster, inter-cluster mechanisms.

It is recommended:

2. That, given the critical importance of needs assessment information in the allocation of CERF funds, OCHA, in collaboration with IASC members, continues to strengthen the development and use of high quality needs assessment information in the allocation of CERF funding.
-

the UN agencies. (“CERF Life-saving Criteria and Sectoral Activities (Guidelines)”, CERF Secretariat, 7 August 2007)

There were expectations that CERF, as one component of the financial pillar of the humanitarian reform agenda, would, among other things, contribute to forging partnerships between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors and strengthen coordination mechanisms. However, although UN respondents indicated that indeed the CERF process brought the UN agencies together, they did not observe significant change in the coordination *per se*. The review team observes that where coordination mechanisms functioned well before the introduction of the CERF, they continued to do so. Where this was not the case, the introduction of the CERF, as such, did not bring any observable change. The review team noted the efforts made by OCHA to develop training materials for HCs and UN agency and OCHA staff, in order to strengthen the possibilities for coordination.

It is recommended:

3. That OCHA continues initiatives to strengthen the RC/HCs by:
 - Extending the HC training on the CERF (also) to RCs;
 - Identifying techniques to assist RC/HCs with their roles; and
 - Including specific references to the CERF in the RC/HC Terms of Reference.
 4. That OCHA continue initiatives to strengthen the OCHA country offices, UNRCO and the UN agencies at the country level, by encouraging the CERF Secretariat and OCHA Regional Support Office to provide in-country training of OCHA, UNRCO and UN agency staff.
-

Similar observations were made with respect to the CERF's impact on inclusiveness, particularly with NGOs. Where UN agencies had established relations with NGOs as implementing partners, it appeared they continued to do so. Where UN agencies did not have regular and established work relationships with NGOs, the advent of CERF in itself did not cause observable changes. In fact, both some UN and NGO respondents noted that the CERF may have introduced tensions between UN agencies and NGOs, as both were now competing for the same humanitarian funds from donors.

It is recommended:

5. That OCHA, in consultation with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group, clarify the relationship between the CERF and the humanitarian reform agenda, specifically with respect to increasing partnerships, particularly with NGOs.
-

There has been limited time to observe the interaction of the CERF with other humanitarian funding mechanisms (i.e. Emergency Response Funds, common funds). The little information that was available from the case studies suggests that, at the country level, some progress is being made to addressing a range of issues of complementarily raised by stakeholders (e.g. joint governance structures that are more inclusive of the NGOs and using CERF funds to replenish ERF accounts). However, there remain a number of issues to be addressed in the 2008 review with respect to the impact of focusing different mechanisms on different target organizations and the impact on the CERF as the “donor of last resort.”

CERF Structures, Processes and Underlying Assumptions

CERF organizational structures

Global and field level actors have different roles to play in the allocation of CERF funds. Global-level actors ensure that the proposed projects are consistent with the CERF objectives, are appropriate in the country context and provide adequate financial information. At the global level, there was extensive engagement of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) members with OCHA in addressing common operational issues related to guidelines and criteria, proposal formats and reporting templates.

Field level stakeholders (and the review team) did not have a clear sense of the responsibilities of the various actors in OCHA NY. They were unclear on the added value provided by the project review role of OCHA NY staff – whether it is the CERF Secretariat’s staff who do the technical and financial reviews of proposals, or the Coordination and Response Division (CRD) staff who do the substantive review.

It is recommended:

6. That OCHA, in consultation with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group, clarify the responsibilities and accountabilities of the field and global levels for the preparation of recommendations to the ERC for CERF funding, the disbursement of funds and the monitoring, evaluation and reporting on CERF grants.
-

OCHA is responsible for implementation of the CERF. The CERF Secretariat has played a support role within OCHA. The role of the CERF Secretariat is to support the Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC), who is also supported by other OCHA branches.⁷ However, it is the Secretariat that is most closely associated with the Fund’s operations in the minds of both global and field stakeholders.

The initial assumption was that the Fund management would not be “heavy” in terms of the requirement for extensive guidelines/criteria or staff to manage it. Yet, this assumption appears, in the end, to have not been realistic, as there were increasing demands for more clarity on the guidelines, processes, criteria and reporting templates for the Fund during the first year. As a result, the Secretariat that, for most of the twelve months after the launch of the Fund, had only five staff did not have sufficient resources to address a number of outstanding operational issues.

It is recommended:

7. That OCHA clarify the roles and accountabilities of the CERF Secretariat and identify the appropriate resources for the Secretariat to meet its tasks.
 8. That OCHA clarify the roles of the Coordination Response Division and other OCHA Branch units in support of the CERF.
-

⁷ “Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Establishment and operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund”, ST/SGB/2006/10, 10 October 2006

Field-level actors are responsible for identifying the humanitarian needs, developing appropriate responses, identifying the most appropriate stakeholders to implement the activities and setting the CERF-funded projects in the context of the overall humanitarian response.

OCHA offices were the key source of information for the CERF implementation. The case studies indicated that the presence of a strong OCHA office and a strong RC/HC was key to the implementation of the CERF as shared funding mechanism for the UN agencies but also as a vehicle for inclusive consultations with humanitarian stakeholders in country.

It is recommended:

9. That OCHA, in consultation with IASC members and donors, clarify the roles and accountabilities for field level actors and identify the appropriate resources, including for the RC/HC offices and OCHA field offices, where necessary.
-

CERF policies and procedures

Although the CERF is referred to as a funding mechanism for humanitarian response, there is no clear statement in CERF guidelines and criteria that outline explicitly how the Fund is linked to humanitarian principles and the specific criteria referred to in UN Resolutions.⁸ Field level stakeholders base their understanding of the key principles of the Fund mainly, if not solely, on the definitions and criteria in the Fund procedures and guidelines. Yet, they were unclear about how the humanitarian principles apply in the identification and prioritization of CERF proposals, while supporting the idea that humanitarian principles are relevant.

A key issue for the CERF is the timeliness of its funding – particularly for the rapid response window. There are two elements to the timeliness issue – are the funds available to the field faster than they were at the beginning of the CERF and are the funds available faster than they would be if disbursed directly by donors to UN agencies through bilateral channels. While there is no systematic information on the time frames for decision-making and/or disbursement of CERF funds for the first year, the anecdotal information, based on the perceptions of stakeholders, suggests that, in the beginning, there were considerable delays – delays that may occur at various points in the submission, review, approval and disbursement processes. However, some information from the Secretariat suggests that, at least with respect to the decision-making components of the process, there is some improvement in the timeframes.⁹

⁸ UN Resolutions: A/res/46/182 – “Strengthening of the coordination of the emergency assistance of the United Nations”, 19 December, 1991 and A/RES/60/124 – “Resolution - Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations”, 8 March, 2006

⁹ However, the Secretariat cannot, without information from the UN agencies, track the timeframes beyond the disbursement of the funds to the UN agencies.

The issue of whether the funding is more timely than bilateral funding is more difficult to judge. However, the majority of UN agency respondents to ESS's online survey indicated that, in their view, the CERF did provide "faster" money.

CERF accountability

Information about CERF grants is not readily available in a user-friendly way for all stakeholders. The website is the key source of public information on the CERF and also the primary tool for donor reporting on the CERF. However, there was limited awareness of the website in the field, perhaps, in part, because of limited web access in the field. In addition, the site does not link narrative and financial information and the quality and detail of narrative information varies from country to country and provides, as yet, limited information on CERF results. The website appears to be more geared to providing public information for promoting the Fund than in providing systematic and comprehensive information on results for donors.¹⁰ In spite of having developed a number of mechanisms for financial and narrative reporting, the review team notes that there is, as yet, no overall framework for the measurement of CERF performance. A performance framework would identify, among other things, key results, monitoring and evaluation information needs, methodologies for addressing some of the more challenging issues (such as additionality and how to assess the impact on beneficiaries) and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation.

It is recommended:

10. That OCHA, in consultation with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group, develop a performance framework for the CERF.
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It is recommended:

11. That OCHA improves the CERF website to make it more accessible and transparent, enabling stakeholders to link financial and narrative project information.
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Underlying assumptions

The review team observed that the CERF is based on two key underlying assumptions. These assumptions need to be explicit in the CERF performance framework since, if they are not true, they may limit its ability to achieve its expected results. The first is that the humanitarian system has the capacity to deliver effective results for beneficiaries. This includes the capacity of the UN agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance or to work effectively with implementing partners (UN agencies and NGOs) to achieve this. The second is that the humanitarian partners are willing and able to work collaboratively in the CERF allocation processes. The reviewers noted that, while the UN agencies are generally willing and able to do so, there were more constraints on the engagement of the

¹⁰ As the agency and country-level narrative reports become available, the Secretariat plans to post these on the site. The Secretariat has posted a range of agency humanitarian response and/or CERF-specific reports on the website – <http://ochaonline2.un.org/Default.aspx?tabid=10195>.

NGO community in the CERF processes – constraints that may, to some extent, be overcome once the processes are more widely understood and implemented.

It is recommended:

12. That OCHA, in collaboration with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group work proactively with INGOs at the global level to encourage them to stimulate their country offices to engage in the CERF processes at the country level.
-

General Assembly-mandated CERF review

The General Assembly (GA) mandated that a review be conducted of the CERF in 2008. Based on the experience of this review, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed to prepare for that review.

It is recommended:

13. That OCHA put in place measures to ensure that complete documentation on CERF processes and grants is maintained and readily available, at the field and global levels, for the GA-mandated review.
 14. That OCHA include in the review Terms of Reference a systematic analysis of CERF grants at the global level in order to profile adequately the full range of CERF funding.
 15. That OCHA initiate the review process early and include sufficient resources to allow for an in-depth evaluation at both the country and project level.
-

Conclusions

The review concludes that significant progress has been made in the implementation of the CERF in its first year of operations. However, there are a number of issues which need to be clarified, including ensuring a common understanding of the scope of the CERF, providing more effective management of the CERF within OCHA, strengthening working relationships with UN agencies and the NGO community at both the global and field levels, and finally, providing more effective and transparent information on CERF as a mechanism and on its performance.

1.0 Introduction

This report reflects the results of an independent interim review of the grant component of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), carried out for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) by two international consultants between March and July 2007.¹¹

1.1 Purpose of the review

The overall purpose of the review was:

(...) to take stock of the CERF's first year of operations and to provide performance (effectiveness) and management (efficiency) feedback to CERF stakeholders with the intention to contribute to strengthening the effectiveness of the mechanism and its potential impact on overall humanitarian response in [response] to the needs of people affected by humanitarian crisis.¹²

The review explored how the CERF, as a humanitarian financing tool, is contributing towards effectively promoting a more timely, predictable, equitable, effective and accountable humanitarian response.¹³ (See Appendix 1 for the complete Terms of Reference (TORs) for this review.)

1.2 Methodology

This section outlines the methodology for this review and the limitations of that methodology.

1.2.1 Overall approach and review components

The review was, by its nature and timing, formative and based primarily on qualitative information. The review was carried out when the CERF had only been in existence for one year and, over the course of this first year, the CERF infrastructure was being developed. As a result, the review focused primarily on an assessment of management processes, operations and, only to the extent possible, results.

The key methodology for the review was case studies of the management and use of the CERF in six countries. (Full details of the review methodology are provided in Appendix

¹¹ The loan component, although described in Section 2.1, was not included in this review.

¹² Terms of Reference, para 2

¹³ Ibid

2.) Although the selected countries represented some of the major recipients¹⁴ of CERF funding, they also included, for the most part, different country contexts:

- Countries receiving both under-funded and rapid response grants – the sample includes five countries that received funding under the rapid response window (Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Ivory Coast) and five that received funding from the under-funded window (Ethiopia, DRC, Kenya, Somalia and Ivory Coast)
- Representation from different geographic regions – the sample includes East and West Africa and South Asia;¹⁵
- Mix of types of emergencies – rapid onset or natural disasters (Kenya, Somalia), complex emergencies (DRC, Ivory Coast) and conflict-affected populations (Sri Lanka);
- Different humanitarian response contexts – including countries with peacekeeping missions (Ivory Coast and DRC);
- Countries with different context for UN coordination (a RC/HC, a separate HC and/or Deputy SRSG); and
- All countries have some OCHA presence.

Although the case study information was primarily qualitative, the review team attempted, to the extent possible, to corroborate information by conducting interviews or focus groups in each country with a range of key stakeholders – including staff of the OCHA, UN agencies,¹⁶ international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors. In addition, the country case studies were supplemented by interviews at the global level with representatives of a range of UN agencies, donors and international NGOs. In addition, the review team interviewed (and had meetings with) OCHA staff in New York.¹⁷

While the review team was conducting the case studies, OCHA’s Evaluation and Studies Section (ESS) designed and conducted an online survey in all countries that benefited from CERF funding. The online survey was sent to the RC/HC who was asked to distribute it to all UN agencies in the country that had received CERF funding, requesting one response from each agency. Thirty-seven agencies responded.¹⁸ Although an exact response rate cannot be calculated, it is estimated that there were about 195 possible

¹⁴ While the terms “recipient countries” or “countries receiving CERF funding” are used throughout the report, it is recognized that the countries themselves (or their national governments) do not receive the funding. The terms are used to reflect that the funding goes to a number of agencies for use at the country level.

¹⁵ The geographic spread of countries was limited by the time and budget available for the review. The methodology originally included a case study in Afghanistan but, for security reasons, this case study had to be cancelled at the last minute and replaced with Sri Lanka.

¹⁶ When the term “UN agencies” is used in this report, it should be read to include the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

¹⁷ The review also drew heavily on the results of a desk review of the first year of CERF operations, commissioned in early 2007 by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

¹⁸ Two responses were from the pre-test carried out with respondents from the countries included in the case studies. These responses cannot be counted in the response rate calculation, as these countries were not included in the distribution of the survey, as they had been subject to a case study.

respondents.¹⁹ This means that the responses represent about 18% of all possible respondents.²⁰ The respondents cannot be compared to the total population of respondents, so there remains a risk that those who responded tended to be those who had received significant amounts of funding and/or who held strong views (either positive or negative) on the CERF. The overall response rate is reasonable enough to warrant including findings in this report. The analysis of these responses was carried out by ESS and, where possible, the results have been integrated into this report.

1.2.2 Methodology limitations

Given the scope of the review, there are limitations to the way in which the review results can be used. These limitations derive from both the design and the implementation of the review.

Review design

- Since the review included only six countries, it would be difficult to extrapolate the findings from these countries to the CERF as a whole;
- The six countries were among the ten countries that have received the most CERF funding since the launch and all countries had OCHA offices. As a result, the review does not provide any insights into the implementation of the CERF in countries that received small amounts of funding or in which there is no OCHA office;
- Apart from the initial briefing, no interviews, *per se*, were conducted with OCHA HQ staff. There was not sufficient time after the conduct of the case studies to allow for HQ interviews in addition to the debriefings on results. The views of OCHA staff were integrated into the review findings through working sessions/presentations and comments received on the draft report; and
- The TORs for this review did not include interviews with beneficiaries. As a result, their views are only reflected in this review to the extent that other stakeholders were able to reflect them.

Review implementation

- OCHA office staff had only a short time to organize the case studies and there was limited time (between three and five days) for data collection in each country. As a result, it was not always possible to complete interviews with representatives from all stakeholder groups expected for each case study;²¹

¹⁹ It is based on the assumption that one response was expected from each agency. However, depending on the number of projects – and hence, project managers – in each agency, it might have been reasonable to request more than one response from each agency.

²⁰ Based on 37 responses, minus the two from the pre-test, and 195 possible respondents

²¹ For example, the review team did not interview any donor representatives in either Ethiopia or Sri Lanka and, in some countries; key stakeholders were unavailable for an interview – for example, the OCHA Head of Office and the RC/HC for Somalia.

- The review team received almost no documentation on the CERF allocations in each country prior to the case study visits²² and only limited documentation once in the field. This meant that the interviews in each country were not as productive as they might have been had the review team been better prepared prior to the visit;
- In most countries, OCHA and the UN agencies had not completed any reports on, or conducted any evaluations of, CERF implementation. As a result, the review team was not able to collect information on the impact of CERF, either on intended beneficiaries or even on the humanitarian response system. This means that it is not always possible to determine when, in the evolution of the CERF, specific activities took place;
- The limited time in each country and the lack of documentation meant that the review team was not able to collect detailed information on CERF allocations. For example, it was not possible to distinguish under which window specific activities had been funded, or whether they had been funded early in the first or later, as the CERF criteria were becoming clearer;
- There is a limitation to the online survey results. While the estimated response rate to the ESS-managed online survey is 18%, the survey was distributed only to RC/HCs and to UN agencies that received CERF funding. Therefore, it reflects only the views of those agencies that benefited from the CERF. There is also a risk that those respondents were only those who held strong views (either positive or negative) on the CERF.

In spite of these limitations, the review provides valuable insights into the views of key stakeholders in the field about how the CERF was implemented in countries that received considerable CERF funding, as well as the perceptions of key global stakeholders. However, the findings are based primarily on the perceptions of key stakeholders. Where possible, the information was corroborated with information from documents and from the online survey of UN agencies representatives.

1.3 Report outline

The report is organized into six chapters including:

- Chapter 1.0 – an introduction to the review;
- Chapter 2.0 – an overview of the CERF, its objectives, structures and accountability mechanisms;
- Chapter 3.0 – short summaries of the six country case studies conducted for the review. Details of the case studies are included in Appendix 2;
- Chapter 4.0 – a discussion of the impact of the CERF that focuses, at this stage of the CERF, on an assessment of the appropriateness of the CERF funding and the contribution of the CERF to the humanitarian reform agenda;
- Chapter 5.0 – a discussion of the CERF structures, processes and underlying assumptions of the CERF design; and
- Chapter 6.0 – conclusions and recommendations from the review.

²² The only country for which document was received prior to the visit was DRC.

The key methodology for this review was the case studies in six countries. As a result, the review report focuses mainly on the CERF's results and challenges at the country, as opposed to the global, level. However, immediately prior to the conduct of this review, a desk study was commissioned by the Canadian International Development Agency.²³ It was based on a document review and interviews with OCHA staff and other stakeholders at the global level and identified many of the global issues for the Fund. Information from this desk study provided the background for this review and the analysis of many issues identified by the review.

²³ *Central Emergency Response Fund: Review of First Year of Operations Final Report*, Goss Gilroy Inc., 14 June 2007

2.0 Overview of the CERF

The Central Emergency *Response* Fund (CERF) was created on 12 December 2005 (Resolution 60/124 General Assembly) and launched in March 2006. It expanded the previous Central Emergency *Revolving* Fund (created in December 1991) by adding a grant component to the existing loan component.

2.1 Objectives and components of the CERF

The purpose of the expanded CERF is to ensure the rapid and coordinated response of UN agencies to emergencies. In his report to the General Assembly (GA) on the CERF, the Secretary General (SG) describes the three objectives of the CERF as follows:

- Objective 1: Promote early action and response to reduce loss of life. The primary objective of the upgraded Fund will be to ensure that early action can be taken in the case of newly emerging crises or in the case of deterioration in existing crises. (...) early response funds will be available for rapid disbursement at the onset of a crisis or recognition of a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian environment, but will be limited in amount and time bound.
- Objective 2: Enhance response to time-critical requirements based on demonstrable needs. (...) 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.
- Objective 3: Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in under-funded crises. In the case of under-funded crises, the objective will be to ensure that core humanitarian activities can be undertaken where there are high levels of humanitarian need. Core activities will be defined as those that are essential to ensure effective life-saving interventions.²⁴

The CERF includes two components: a loan facility of up to \$50 million and a grant facility with a target ceiling of up to \$450 million (a target to be reached by 2008). Funding from the grant facility is split into two windows – rapid response window and under-funded emergencies window.²⁵ The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) has allocated two-thirds of the Fund to rapid response and one-third to existing under-funded emergencies, while maintaining a minimum reserve of \$30 million (the maximum allocation for a single emergency) under the rapid response window.²⁶

Only UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) are eligible to apply for funding under the grant facility of the

²⁴ SG A/60/43:6

²⁵ This review focused on the grant component of the CERF.

²⁶ As reaffirmed in the “Secretary-General’s bulletin Establishment and operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund”, ST/SGB/2006/10, 10 October 2006, p 4

CERF.²⁷ Based on the procedures and guidelines developed over the first year of operation, the key criteria for CERF funding include the following:

- Projects must be developed at the country-level and endorsed by the RC/HC;
- Projects must be needs-based;
- Projects must include only life-saving activities; and
- CERF must be an emergency funding source – that is, all other donor and agency funds have been exhausted before applying for CERF funding;²⁸ and
- Projects must respect the fund commitment deadlines.

2.1 Management and evolution of the CERF

The process for identifying priority needs at the country level is slightly different for the two windows. (See Exhibit 1 for a summary of the processes for the two windows.) For the under-funded window, a preliminary allocation of funding is made to countries by the ERC twice a year, based on the analysis of funding levels of Consolidated Appeals and recommendations received from UN agencies and IOM for countries without a Consolidated Appeal.²⁹ Other sources of needs information, such as the Global Needs Assessment scores of the European Communities Humanitarian Coordination (ECHO), are also taken into account. Under-funded resources may also be allocated for emergencies without an appeal, or to severely under-funded sectors in otherwise well-funded appeals. RC/HCs in the eligible countries are then asked to identify the priority under-funded life-saving projects for CERF funding.

At this point, the process is similar to that for the rapid response window. At the country level, it is expected that the RC/HC will coordinate the engagement of agencies involved in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), country team or similar structure, in consultation with sector/cluster leads and NGOs. This group is expected to develop recommendations for priority projects for either of the two grant windows and the submission to the ERC comes from the RC/HC.

The project proposals are reviewed at OCHA by the CERF Secretariat and the Coordination Response Division (CRD). CERF Secretariat staff review applications for technical and financial issues and CRD desk officers review them for substantive coherence and methodology, in order to ensure that projects fit within the context of the specific country. Often proposals are sent back to the field for editing and clarification. Numerous conference calls and meetings have been frequently required with the UN agencies, the OCHA regional and field offices, and the RC/HCs in order to clarify proposals and obtain sufficient detail on the project scope and activities.

²⁷ OCHA cannot apply for grant funding, but is eligible for a CERF loan.

²⁸ The CERF Application Template (available on the CERF website) entitled “Project and Budget Template (July 2006), including PSC Calculation Guidance” requires applicants for both windows to confirm “that agency internal reserves or other donor funds are not immediately available and/or appropriate to fund the proposed activities.”

²⁹ The consultation process is institutionalized through the inter-agency meetings on the CERF, which is composed of members of the IASC.

Exhibit 1: CERF Structure/Components

Component		Eligible Organizations	Process	Conditions
Loans Target \$US 50M		UN organizations (including OCHA) and IOM	Global: If funding is en route, a loan can be taken to jump start activities. The entirety of the loan must be repaid within the loan period, which is usually 6 months. CERF Secretariat and CRD review the proposal, ERC decides.	Loans are taken for humanitarian activities/projects/services to bridge until the expected voluntary funds are received. Applicant needs to show evidence of en route voluntary funds within 6 months of application.
Grants Target \$US 450M	Rapid Response: Sudden onset emergency, deterioration of humanitarian situation and time-critical interventions (2/3 of funding)	UN operational organizations and IOM (excluding OCHA)	Global: Based on request from RC/HC and UNCT and building from Flash Appeals or initial assessments by agencies, the ERC decides on country allocation. CERF Secretariat and OCHA review criteria and financial aspects of submission.	Three types of emergencies a) rapid onset; b) rapid deterioration of existing emergencies; c) time critical interventions in complex emergencies. Based on demonstrated needs. Core life-saving activities. Three months obligation period (up to 6 months implementation). ³⁰ Maximum \$ 30 million for one emergency.
	Under-funded: Under-funded emergencies and sectors (1/3 of funding)	UN operational organizations and IOM (excluding OCHA)	According to the procedures governing the under-funded window, funding is provided to two types of crises: those where the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) has been instituted and those where there are humanitarian needs, but with no Appeal. The process for determining CAP countries eligible for under-funded grants is initially based on level of humanitarian funding captured by the Financial Tracking Service (www.reliefweb.int/fts) for each Consolidated Appeal. In principle, the bottom one-third of Consolidated Appeals is considered. For humanitarian crises where a Consolidated Appeals has not been instituted, UN agencies and IOM at the headquarters level may make recommendations for countries to be considered for funding. Information on the humanitarian needs and funding requirements/shortfalls for both CAP and non-CAP countries is then supplemented with data gained from consultations with stakeholders, including	As this window supports existing humanitarian operations, the CERF funds support broad, core humanitarian activities, including common humanitarian services to enable life-saving activities. Funding is usually provided toward projects listed in Consolidated or similar (Action Plan or Work Plan) Appeals as well as to programmes that form part of a coordinated, country-wide humanitarian plan/strategy. Proposed projects must be based on needs assessments, essential for the humanitarian response, and under-funded, in addition to falling within the mandate of the CERF.

³⁰ Information from the Secretariat indicates that the six month implementation period is only suggested and not enforced at this time.

Component		Eligible Organizations	Process	Conditions
			<p>participants of the inter-agency meetings on CERF, OCHA staff, and RC/HCs. Other data, including ECHO Global Needs Assessment scores, humanitarian aid per affected beneficiary, and IASC early warning analysis are also taken into account. Under-funded resources may also be allocated to severely under-funded sectors in otherwise well-funded appeals.</p> <p>Funding is allocated in two rounds per year, following key points in the CAP cycle (CAP Kick-off in January and CAP Mid-Year Review in July).</p>	

Source: OCHA CERF Secretariat

Final recommendations are prepared by the CERF Secretariat for approval by the ERC. As a general principle, the CERF does not provide 100% of the funding for CERF-supported projects as CERF is considered to be ‘seed money’ to jump-start the humanitarian response to rapid onset disasters or under-funded emergencies. Once the ERC has committed CERF funding to a project, a Letter of Understanding (LoU) is completed for signature by senior managers at agency headquarters and in OCHA.³¹ The LoU provides details on the specific project activities, amount of funding and details of reporting requirements for all projects.

Once the LoU has been signed, the funds are disbursed to the UN agencies’ HQ and, from there to the field. While NGOs cannot apply for funds directly, many NGOs are involved in the implementation of CERF-funded projects as partners or contractors.

The ERC is the CERF fund manager and, as such, is responsible for deciding on all CERF grants, under the overall authority and direction of the Secretary General (SG).³² The CERF is “a mechanism under the auspices of the General Assembly, which will continue to oversee and scrutinize the operations of the upgraded fund.”³³ The ERC also plays a role in advocacy and fund-raising for the CERF. The ERC is supported by OCHA’s CERF Secretariat.³⁴

The Secretariat noted that it was initially envisioned that existing OCHA staff would support a majority of the CERF work. Similarly, it was initially expected that the Fund would receive \$250 million in funding in the first year (2006) and that, as a result, there would be about 150 funded projects. The planned CERF Secretariat, with five staff, was expected to be able to manage this workload. However, in the first few months of the Fund, there were only two staff – one professional and one administrative assistant – in the Secretariat. The complement of five staff was only achieved in July 2006.³⁵

As the first year evolved, it became apparent that the Fund would exceed expectations and, by August 2006, there were over 200 CERF projects approved.³⁶ An increase in workload in other divisions of OCHA meant that the CERF Secretariat was primarily responsible for the processing of CERF applications and other supports for the CERF.³⁷

In addition to its responsibilities for processing projects, the CERF Secretariat supports senior management and the Advisory Group; has developed policy documents,

³¹ The Letter of Understanding was developed in July 2006 and agencies are required to complete one LOU for each disbursement. Some components of the LOU are completed by the agencies and other sections by the CERF Secretariat.

³² *Improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund – report of the Secretary General*, 20 October, 2005, UN Resolution A/60/432, para 28

³³ *Ibid*, para 32

³⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, throughout this report, the term “Secretariat” will refer to the CERF Secretariat, which is distinct from the UN Secretariat.

³⁵ Even after the five posts were authorized, only four were staffed until July 2006.

³⁶ Information provided by the CERF Secretariat

³⁷ For example, there was reportedly a lack of clarity within OCHA on the division of responsibilities with respect to the CERF website.

guidelines, training materials, a basic database and a CERF website; developed and improved the workflow process; produced public information material and provided briefings to member states and other interested parties; provided inputs to the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and drafts the SG reports. In addition to the high volume of projects, donors, the Advisory Group members, agencies, and other stakeholders are reportedly increasingly demanding more effective public accountability for the CERF, particularly through the website. In addition, the Secretariat recognizes the importance of a well performing project database for the effective processing of, and reporting on, project applications. However, the volume of work in the first year has meant that many of these issues have not yet been addressed. Both individual donors and the CERF Advisory Group have questioned the level of resources available for the CERF Secretariat.³⁸ (See Section 5.1.2 for a further discussion of the management of the CERF.)

At the same time, the UN agencies were identifying their focal point staff for the CERF, which was initially a very new concept for all stakeholders in both HQ and the field.

2.2 CERF reporting and accountability

Mechanisms for both narrative and financial reporting have been developed. The CERF is managed in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the UN and the Office of the Controller determined the financial reporting requirements. They are reportedly in line with the UN Rules and Regulations for trust funds.³⁹ They include annual interim certified financial statements (mid-February) and final certified financial statements (end of June). These are consistent with the financial reporting requirements for all UN trust funds. However, some agencies reported that the financial reporting requirements have not yet been finalized to their satisfaction.

The narrative reporting requirements, on the other hand, were developed by the CERF Secretariat, in consultation with the UN agencies and country teams. Narrative information comes from two sources – the UN agencies and the RC/HC (on behalf of the country teams). The headquarters of the UN agencies that have received grants are required to provide annually:

- The agency's regular annual narrative report on humanitarian operations (in early April); and
- Information on lessons learned and analysis of the impact of the CERF on the agency as a whole (in mid-March), for input to the Secretary General's report.⁴⁰

³⁸ Minutes of the Advisory Group meetings are at <http://ochaonline.un.org/cerf/CERFAdvisoryGroup/AdvisoryGroupArchive/tabid/1941/Default.aspx>

³⁹ These were originally determined by the General Assembly.

⁴⁰ "Central Emergency Response Fund: Reporting", Presentation, 10 January 2007

RC/HCs, on behalf of the country team, in countries receiving CERF funding, provide:

- An annual narrative report (early April); and
- Mid-year progress report (1 August).

2.3 CERF funding and allocations

In 2006, the CERF received paid contributions of \$US 298.6M from 50 countries and two other organizations (one local government and one NGO). This represented 4% of total global humanitarian contributions funding in 2006, as identified on the Financial Tracking Service.⁴¹

As of July 2007, the CERF had received \$US 346M in pledges for 2007 – \$US 283.3M in paid contributions and another \$US 62.8M in, as yet, unpaid pledges – from 60 countries and three other organizations and private donations (including from individuals, through the UN Foundation).⁴² This means that the CERF has received a total of \$US 582M in paid contributions since its launch in March 2006.

Many non-traditional donors have contributed to the CERF. Although the contributions of some of these non-traditional donors were small, they also include, in some cases nominal, contributions from CERF recipient countries (e.g. Indonesia and, in 2007, Lebanon and the Philippines).

As of 21 June 2007, the CERF had disbursed \$US 425M to 44 countries.⁴³ The ten countries that received the most CERF funding are shown in Exhibit 2. Another four countries (Guinea, Mozambique, Central African Republic and Lebanon) each received more than \$10M (or more than 2% of CERF funding) each. The UN agencies located in the six countries visited received 35% of the total funding as of 21 June 2007.

Exhibit 2: CERF Funding for Top 10 Countries (1 March 2006 to 21 June 2007)

Country	Amount	% of total CERF funding
DRC*	\$69,768,658	16.4%
Sudan	\$43,199,099	10.2%
Afghanistan	\$32,304,627	7.6%
Kenya*	\$29,130,975	6.9%
Somalia*	\$24,856,338	5.9%
Sri Lanka*	\$18,944,099	4.5%
Chad	\$16,701,907	3.9%
Ethiopia*	\$14,997,340	3.5%
Burundi	\$12,569,847	3.0%
Cote d'Ivoire *	\$11,929,035	2.8%

* Case study countries for the interim review

⁴¹ www.reliefweb.int/fts (Table ref: R18)

⁴² Private donations through the UN Foundation account for \$118K of the unpaid pledges.

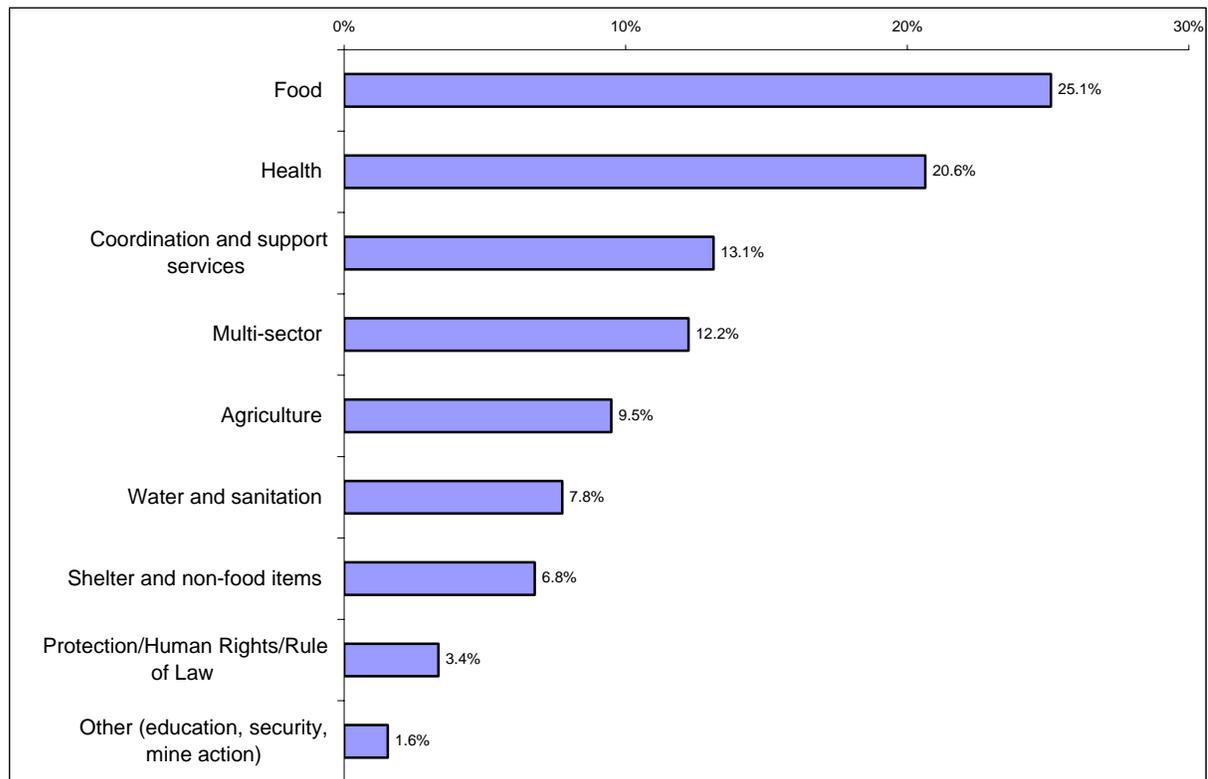
⁴³ The analysis in this section was done with data from June 2007, whereas figures elsewhere in the report were updated as of July 2007.

Source: <http://ochaonline.un.org/cerf/CERFFigures/CountriesreceivingCERFfunds/tabid/1799/Default.aspx>

Of the 44 countries that received CERF funding, 41% are countries with an HC, but these countries accounted for 66% of the CERF funding. The remaining 59% of the countries are under the leadership of an RC and they received 34% of the funding.

As shown in Exhibit 3, the two sectors that together account for almost half of the CERF funding are food (25%) and health (21%). Another one-quarter of the funding was allocated to coordination and support services (13%) and multi-sector (12%) together.⁴⁴

Exhibit 3: Total CERF Funding by Sector (1 March 2006 to 21 June 2007)

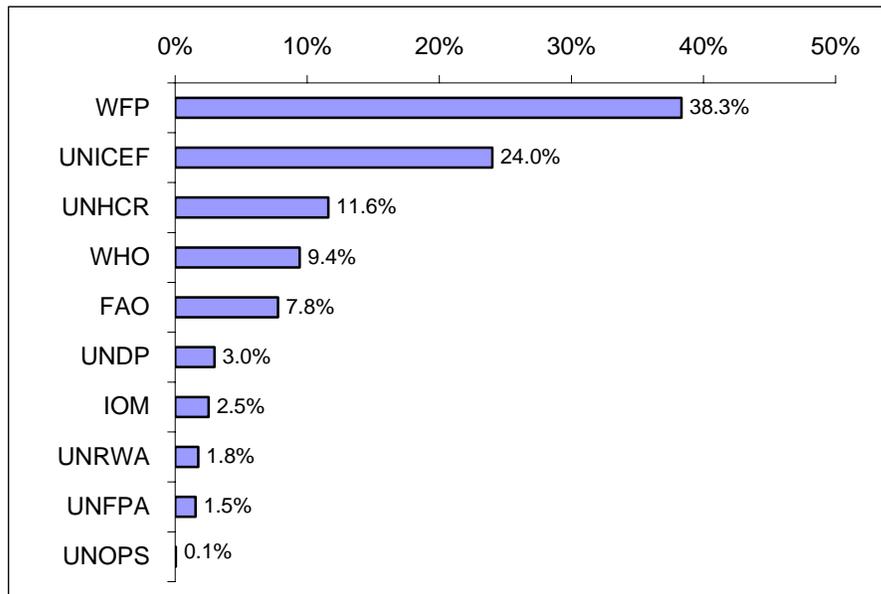


Source: <http://ochaonline.un.org/cerf/CERFFigures/SectorsreceivingCERFfunds/tabid/1797/Default.aspx>

Over one-third of the CERF funding since the launch went to the World Food Programme (WFP). Just less than one-quarter went to UNICEF. The next three UN agencies (UNHCR, WHO and FAO) accounted together for just over another one-quarter of the funds. The remaining UN agencies (UNDP, IOM, UNRWA, UNFPA, UNOPS) accounted for less than 10% of all the funds allocated (see Exhibit 4).

⁴⁴ Coordination and support services include such things as security and other common logistical support services. Multi-sector includes primarily funding for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and covers shelter, protection, health, and water and sanitation activities.

Exhibit 4: Percent of CERF Funding by UN Agency (1 March 2006 to 21 June 2007)



Source: <http://ochaonline.un.org/cerf/CERFFigures/AgenciesreceivingCERFfunds/tabid/1802/Default.aspx>

3.0 Summary of Case Study Countries

This section provides very brief summaries of the context and CERF funding for the six case studies conducted for this review. More details on each case study are included in Appendix 3.

3.1 Kenya

CERF response: CERF provided funding to Kenya (as well as other Horn of Africa countries) in response to drought and flood emergencies, influx of refugees and Rift Valley fever outbreak.

CERF Allocations for Kenya (March 2006 – April 2007)⁴⁵

Appeal	CERF funding (window)	Comments
Drought	\$US 8.4M (rapid response)	
Refugees	\$US 1M (under-funded)	
Refugees	\$US 3.5M (rapid response)	
Floods	\$US 11.8M (rapid response)	
Other	\$US 2.5M ⁴⁶ (rapid response)	WFP/UNHAS logistical support
Rift Valley Fever	\$US 1.9M (rapid response)	
Total	\$US 29.1 M	

Source: CERF Secretariat

Context specifics: Though not known for emergencies, Kenya has areas of chronic food insecurity and poverty, particularly in the arid north and north-east. It is also host to long-term refugees from Sudan and Somalia.

Coordination: In Kenya, the government plays a strong role in the coordination of humanitarian response. The UN did not implement an IASC cluster approach as capacities at sector level are known and coordination networks were in place. Humanitarian assistance and coordination of the UN agencies are provided by the RC and the UNCT supported by the Expanded Disaster Management Team and sector working groups. OCHA has a small office in Nairobi, as well as an OCHA Regional Support Office. Many NGOs are active in Kenya, with a main focus on development.

Decision-making: Allocations of CERF funding were initially made by the UNCT with no involvement of international NGOs (INGOs) or the government and little discussion on the definition of CERF criteria. Later allocations involved the INGOs through the sector working groups.

⁴⁵ This CERF funding table was developed by extracting information on CERF grants from the CERF website and attempting to match the individual grants to specific emergencies in the case study countries, primarily through interviews with OCHA and UN agency staff. Occasionally the information was supplemented with information in documents. However, this matching proved difficult and the results, by emergency, may not be completely accurate, although the total amount is correct, according to the CERF website. Figures may be rounded.

⁴⁶ For flood assistance

3.2 Somalia

CERF response: CERF provided funds from the rapid response window for rapid onset (floods) and slow onset (drought) disasters. The under-funded window was used to respond to an under-funded sector (security sector) in an otherwise well-funded appeal.

Context specific: Due to the insecurity, the UN has limited presence in Southern Somalia with all UN country offices being located in Nairobi. Humanitarian activities are largely implemented by national and international NGOs,

CERF Allocations for Somalia (March 2006 – April 2007)⁴⁷

Appeal	CERF funding (window)	Comments
Drought (2006)	\$US 6.2M	
Floods	\$US 10.4M	\$US 2M went to HRF for immediate support to NGOs
Drought (2007)	\$US 5.6M ⁴⁸	
	\$US 2.6M	Air logistics/support services
	\$US 1M (under-funded)	Security sector
Total	\$US 25.8 M	

Source: CERF Secretariat

Coordination: UN coordination for Somalia is the responsibility of the RC/HC, supported by an OCHA office. Humanitarian sector coordination was the responsibility of the UN Country Team (UNCT) (although an IASC was being introduced) until the introduction of the cluster approach in March 2006. Some sector groups still exist.

Decision-making: Initially allocations of CERF funding were made by the UNCT, with no involvement of the NGOs. Subsequent allocations involved NGOs in sector or cluster meetings and a few international and national NGOs in discussions at the IASC.

Other funding mechanisms: Since 2004, a Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF),⁴⁹ managed by OCHA provides quick, flexible funding to UN agencies and NGOs for humanitarian assessment and response. Proposals are reviewed by a board, which includes representatives of all UN agencies and three NGOs. All projects include a monitoring and evaluation plan. \$2M in CERF funding was provided to replenish the HRF in order to provide NGOs better access to funding to meet immediate emergency needs of flood-affected populations.

⁴⁷ As with the table for Kenya, this CERF funding table was developed by extracting information on CERF grants from the CERF website and attempting to match the individual grants to specific emergencies in the case study countries, primarily through interviews with OCHA and UN agency staff. Figures may be rounded.

⁴⁸ Although these tables chart CERF allocations from March 2006-April 2007, these grants (which are on the chart in the draft report) were submitted and disbursed in May and June 2007.

⁴⁹ HRF is the specific name in Somalia for the more generic term Emergency Response Fund.

3.3 Ethiopia

CERF response: CERF provided funds to respond to severe drought and then flooding, which affected the whole of the Horn of Africa.

Context specific: Ethiopia suffers from food insecurity – some of which is related to chronic food shortages and some to insecurity caused by crises.

CERF Allocations for Ethiopia (March 2006 – April 2007) ⁵⁰

Appeal	CERF funding (window)	Comments
Drought	\$US 5M (rapid response)	
Refugees	\$US 1.1M ⁵¹ (rapid response)	
Floods	\$US 4M (rapid response)	
	\$US 1M (under funded 2006)	
	\$US 6M (under funded 2007)	
Total	\$17.1 M	

Source: CERF Secretariat

Coordination: The Ethiopian government coordinates the national humanitarian response through the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Centre (DPPC). UN coordination is provided by an RC/HC. Humanitarian action is organized through the UN Strategic Disaster Management Team (SDMT). There is no IASC in Ethiopia, but the UN, in collaboration with the government, is in the process of setting up the cluster approach. OCHA has a relatively large mission, which includes various field offices and provides field information support, general humanitarian coordination and technical support for HRF and CERF management. Though there are many NGOs in Ethiopia, both in development and humanitarian response, there is limited consultation or coordination among NGOs.

Decision-making: The NGO community and the government were not involved in the initial CERF allocations; however, the latest CERF allocation was made using the same mechanisms as the allocation of ERF funds, involving NGOs and the government.

Other funding mechanisms: Since March 2006, a Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF) provides small-scale emergency assistance for UN agencies and NGOs, managed by OCHA. Funding recommendations are made by a review board, which includes representatives of UN agencies, three international NGOs and, as of January 2007, the government.⁵² In 2006, the HRF received over \$15M.

⁵⁰ As with the table for Kenya, this CERF funding table was developed by extracting information on CERF grants from the CERF website and attempting to match the individual grants to specific emergencies in the case study countries, primarily through interviews with OCHA and UN agency staff. Figures may be rounded.

⁵¹ This grant was also submitted in May 2007 but is on the chart in the report.

⁵² The HRF is the specific name in Ethiopia for the more general term Emergency Response Fund.

3.4 Sri Lanka

CERF response: CERF provided funds to respond to the humanitarian situation resulting from renewed hostilities between the Government and the opposition, bridging a funding gap in the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) 2006.

Context specific: The aid community was able to respond to the effects of the Tsunami crisis of 2004, while peace talks between the opposition Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Government being held. In 2006, the conflict reignited, causing renewed massive displacement.

CERF Allocations for Sri Lanka (March 2006 – April 2007)

Appeal	CERF funding (window)	Comments
IDP crisis 1 st allocation 2006	\$US 5M (rapid response)	
IDP crisis 2 nd allocation 2006	\$US 5M (rapid response)	
IDP crisis 1 st allocation 2007	\$US 8.9M (rapid response)	
Total	\$18.9 M	

Source: CERF Secretariat

Coordination: The IASC, chaired by the HC, includes UN agencies as well as national and international NGOs. There is no formal cluster structure in Sri Lanka, but the IASC is organised into sector working groups.

Decision-making: The CERF proposals were formulated by the UN agencies, supported by OCHA and selected and approved by the UNCT and HC.

3.5 Ivory Coast

CERF response: CERF provided rapid response funds to address the relapse of violence in the West of the country in 2006 and address IDP flows. It served as a mechanism to fill gaps in the under-funded CAP and provided funds for vaccination campaigns.

CERF Allocations for Ivory Coast (March 2006 – April 2007)

Appeal	CERF funding (window)	Comments
Epidemic Outbreaks	\$US 2.7M (rapid response)	
IDP crisis	\$US 750K (rapid response)	
	\$US 4M (under funded 2006)	
	\$US 4.5M (under funded 2007)	
Total	\$11.95 M	

Source: CERF Secretariat

Context specific: In 2002, the country fell into full-scale war between government and opposition, effectively splitting the country in two and causing massive displacement. Since 2004, UN peacekeeping forces are in country and a slow peace process is ongoing.

In January 2006 an outbreak of violence in Guiglo, ravaged many UN and INGO premises.

Coordination: Coordination among UN agencies takes place through the UNCT, chaired by the RC/HC who also fulfills the role of Deputy SRSG, as Ivory Coast is an integrated UN mission. There is no official cluster mechanism except for the protection cluster. Inter-agency coordination is done through the IASC (called IAHCC), which includes the UN agencies and INGOs and is chaired by the HC.

Decision-making: The CAP is formulated by all participating UN agencies and organisations and forms the basis for coordinated (humanitarian) response. CERF proposals were formulated by UN agencies and endorsed by UNCT and RC/HC.

Other funding mechanisms: There is also a small ERF of £15,000.

3.6 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

CERF response: CERF funds were distributed over a wide array of projects, based on priorities, as formulated in the CAP. CERF also funded the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM).

Context specific: Since 1994 the DRC has been through a long period of internal conflict. A peace process started in 2001, introducing UN peacekeeping forces and bringing about democratic elections in 2006. Still, large areas in the East remain prone to fighting and instability and the DRC is heavily under-resourced

CERF Allocations for the DRC (March 2006 – April 2007)

Appeal	CERF funding (window)	Comments
1 st allocation, 2006	\$US 17M	
2 nd allocation, 2006	\$US 21M	
1 st allocation, 2007	\$US 36.6 M	
Total	\$US 74.6 M	

Source: CERF Secretariat

Coordination: The DRC has a fully implemented cluster mechanism, an inter-cluster meeting on country level and provincial IASC coordination (CPIA). Humanitarian coordination takes place through the Humanitarian Advocacy Group (HAG), chaired by the HC in which UN agencies, INGOs and DPKO are members. OCHA has a fairly large office in Kinshasa and five field offices throughout the DRC. OCHA provides field information support, acts as secretariat for the HAG, and organizes coordination meetings and supports the inter-cluster coordination. It also has dedicated staff for the administration and management of Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF)/CERF funds.

Decision-making: CERF proposals were formulated by UN agencies, reviewed by the Inter-cluster meeting with support from OCHA to the UNCT. CERF was primarily utilized by UN agencies as the CHF provides funds to INGOs.

Other funding mechanisms: There is a sizeable CHF (Pooled Fund) in the DRC which, in 2006, had US\$ 92.2M and included the RRM.

4.0 Impact of the CERF

This chapter presents the review team’s findings with respect to the impact of CERF. The review distinguishes between three levels of impact:

- The global impact of the CERF;
- CERF’s potential impact, based on the appropriateness of the CERF grants; and
- CERF’s impact as an element of humanitarian reform.

The first section provides an overview of CERF results at the global level, including the success of its fund-raising and its implementation over the first year.

The second section explores the application of the CERF selection criteria, as they provide the link between the CERF objectives (see Section 2.3 above) and the CERF-funded projects. It includes a review of the types of projects funded by the CERF, using a theoretical typology of outputs and examples of the reported results of CERF projects. This review of the funded projects provides a tool to assess the appropriateness of CERF funding, including the aspects of complementarity, coherence and connectedness.

Finally, the links between the CERF and humanitarian reform are discussed. This will include the IASC cluster structure, inter-agency coordination and the dimension of strengthening partnership between UN and non-UN actors.

There are two factors that set the context for the reader’s review of the following sections:

- The first is that, while OCHA (and particularly the CERF Secretariat) has played a key role in the implementation of the CERF, this review covered the CERF as a funding mechanism, not OCHA or the Secretariat as key actors in the implementation of the mechanisms. As a result, the findings reflect on all actors engaged in implementing the CERF.
- The second is that there were two underlying assumptions behind the design of the CERF. It was assumed that there was an effective delivery capacity within the humanitarian response system. Without that capacity, the CERF could not be expected to provide a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies. It was also assumed that the various humanitarian actors (UN agencies and NGOs) were willing and able to engage in CERF processes. The extent to which these assumptions have been upheld has an impact on the effectiveness of the CERF, as a whole. (These are discussed in detail in Section 5.5.)

4.1 Results of the CERF

There are a number of challenges in assessing the results of the CERF in its first year of operations. Perhaps the most significant is that attempting to do so amounts to assessing the results of a “moving target.” As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.0, the

CERF structures and processes were being set up – by both OCHA and the other UN agencies at HQ and field levels – as the Fund was disbursing money for the first CERF grants. As a result, the review team’s observations of the activities at both the global and field levels need to be understood in the context of these evolving practices. To be clear: this review is a snapshot of CERF in practice and many of the observations noted refer to the most hectic time in the development and evolution of the CERF. Observations should hence not be seen as a statement necessarily of the current state of practice, but as steps in its evolution.

4.1.1 Global impact of the CERF

Two significant results of the CERF impact⁵³ at the global level stand out: firstly, that as of July 2007 OCHA had been able to attract \$US 582M in paid contributions since its launch in March 2006 (see Section 2.3), and secondly, that US\$ 446M have been disbursed over the same time period, while at the same time setting up the necessary support infrastructure (the CERF Secretariat), and developing procedures and guidelines for the CERF process, as well as launching and maintaining the CERF website. Recently, OCHA has also expanded the capacity of the Secretariat to improve the efficiency of the Fund management (see Section 5.1.2). The longer-term impact of these achievements on the humanitarian response is yet to be assessed.

The first disbursements to the CERF were made within two weeks of the launch of the Fund. It is the impression of the review team that this would likely not have occurred without the efforts of the ERC (in his proactive role of recommending countries in crisis) in promoting the Fund (notably in the Horn of Africa and Ivory Coast), and the CERF Secretariat, which set up the mechanisms for the initial allocations.

The CERF is designed as an additional funding source parallel to bilateral channels.⁵⁴ Most donors interviewed for this review stated that their CERF contributions were additional, compared to the funding they previously contributed for humanitarian operations.⁵⁵ However, case study interviews indicate that some INGOs had reportedly been referred to the availability of CERF funding when requesting bilateral funding from donors. This raises the question whether CERF contributions are really additional to previous bilateral humanitarian funds.

Some donors mentioned that they find the CERF a convenient funding channel because it confers the management of funds to the UN. It therefore reduces otherwise necessary transaction costs incurred if they were to disburse these funds directly through bilateral

⁵³ In this report the term “impact” includes the impact of the CERF on processes. It is recognized that the process impacts are only intermediate impacts in a chain of impacts leading to impacts on beneficiaries. As will be seen in the discussion, there was very limited information available on the impact on beneficiaries.

⁵⁴ The calculation of additionality, however, is complex methodologically. It was not within the scope of this review to address the issue of additionality, beyond collecting the perceptions of stakeholders on the issue. The issue of the measurement of additionality needs to be addressed in the CERF accountability framework and then in the 2008 review.

⁵⁵ Includes representatives of The Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom

channels. This is particularly true for donors that have limited capacity in countries and/or regions to administer bilateral humanitarian funds.⁵⁶ However, there is anecdotal information to suggest that the transaction costs may have increased for the UN system – including OCHA and the UN agencies.⁵⁷

All donors interviewed reported that they see CERF as a valuable mechanism for humanitarian funding. However, most donors indicated that they consider the first year of CERF operations as a “honeymoon” period and are generally interested in strengthening and improving the Fund. Various countries have committed multi-year funding for the CERF, enhancing the sustainability of the Fund.⁵⁸ Interviews with donors indicate that they are enthusiastic about the CERF and are willing to invest in it, though they also indicate that future investments depend, to a certain extent, on CERF results and outcome of the two-year review planned for 2008.

Overall, UN agency representatives interviewed at global level expressed satisfaction with the CERF as a fast, reliable and effective mechanism to respond to crises to a timely manner.⁵⁹ They also expressed their satisfaction with the broad definition of life saving criteria, as this provided the necessary flexibility to adapt responses to agency-specific mandates as well as to the local, country-specific and contextual conditions. Most agencies interviewed indicated that the CERF provided additional funds to their agencies.⁶⁰ Some concerns were raised with respect to procedural matters including:

- Timeframes for signing LoUs;
- Timeframes for the disbursement of funds; and
- Financial and narrative reporting formats

These issues reportedly have been, or are being, addressed with the CERF Secretariat.

4.1.2 Field level impact of the CERF

While the global impact on funding is crucial, the focus of the CERF is at the field level – as it is expected to contribute to address the humanitarian needs of populations. In this, the UN agencies are the principal interlocutors between the CERF, as a funding source, and the needs in the countries, as identified by those UN agencies. UN agency respondents met by the review team were generally enthusiastic about CERF funding, as it provided easily accessible money to respond to those needs. As will be seen in reference to the online survey results throughout this report, the UN agency respondents

⁵⁶ Among others, this was mentioned by some Nordic countries missions.

⁵⁷ It was beyond the scope of this review to assess, beyond the perceptions of stakeholders, the impact on donor decisions or measure changes in transaction costs.

⁵⁸ As reported by the CERF Secretariat: The Netherlands, €120M for 2008-2009; United Kingdom, £80M for 2008-2009; and Saudi Arabia, US\$50K for the next 20 years. A number of other donors have expressed interest in multi-year pledging, but not yet formalized commitments.

⁵⁹ Agencies interviewed were: UNHCR, UNICEF, FAO, WHO, WFP and UNDP

⁶⁰ One agency representative indicated that the agency was receiving less bilateral funding since it began receiving CERF funding.

to the survey were generally very positive about the CERF. In addition, respondents from some UN agencies with an evolving role in humanitarian response (WHO, FAO) reflected that CERF funding enabled their UN agencies to engage in humanitarian activities, which they would not otherwise have been able to do.

During the country visits, some UN agencies indicated that the fact they received CERF funding actually attracted funding from other donors as well (e.g. WFP in Kenya). Some UN OCHA offices reported to the review team that CERF possibly stimulated renewed donor response to appeals in Kenya and Sri Lanka). This may reflect a potential for the additionality of CERF funds. The team notes the ‘potential’, since the necessary evidence to affirm this was not available for this review.

However, this may not be a structural phenomenon, as the majority of respondents in the online survey (60%) did not agree that CERF funding made it more likely that bilateral donors would also fund (other) humanitarian activities by these UN agencies. This, therefore, suggests that the views provided to the review team are not widespread.

4.1.3 Impact of the CERF projects

The ultimate goal and purpose of the CERF is expressed in the projects and activities to which CERF funds are allocated. This section proposes a possible typology for CERF funded projects that emerged empirically from the six case study countries. This section reflects, therefore, the review team’s assessment of the potential result of the CERF projects, based on the nature of the activities that were funded by the CERF.⁶¹

The review team observed that CERF has funded a broad range of activities, ranging from what can be considered as ‘classic’ humanitarian aid (such as the provision of shelter, water and sanitation, food and nutrition and health services) to what could be regarded as new approaches (such as emergency agriculture and emergency education). The review team also found a few examples of the provision of “common services”, such as pre-paid humanitarian flights, which were appreciated by the NGOs. However, NGO respondents also noted that, when they needed to cover the costs themselves, the UN flights were more expensive than other options (Somalia). This range of activities is categorized, in the theoretical typology in Exhibit 5, into direct assistance, preventive/mitigation, system strengthening, and rehabilitation/reconstruction – each of which has a different type of potential impact.⁶²

⁶¹ The reader should bear in mind the caveats mentioned in Section 1.2.1, as well as the fact that an extrapolation of theoretical observations in this paragraph to overall CERF is not warranted.

⁶² This framework is offered as a ‘tool’ to plot different activities in relation to their direct, indirect or intermediate impact on recipient populations. It is not a formal categorization of CERF funded activities.

Exhibit 5: Typology of CERF-funded Activities*

Direct assistance / Crisis response	Prevention / mitigation	System strengthening	Rehabilitation / reconstruction
Immediate impact on beneficiaries	Prospected future impact on beneficiaries	Impact on humanitarian response system to access beneficiaries	Impact on country infrastructure and socio-economy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter & NFI • Food supply • Nutrition • Water & sanitation • Vaccination & immunization • Direct health inputs (kits, etc.) • Protection actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early warning systems • River banks protection • Cattle redistribution • Agricultural support • Education support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up field & regional offices • Radio & communication equipment • Cluster strengthening • Purchasing trucks • Humanitarian flights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road reconstructions** • Rehabilitation of trains (locomotives)** • Strengthening national ministries and health systems

* This typology reflects the range of types of projects funded by the CERF. It does not by any means represent the emphasis given to any particular type of activity, but only a theoretical model by which CERF funded activities could be categorized.

** Some types of projects could be included in more than one category. For example, these types of projects could also be included as system strengthening.

The typology covers a wide array of projects, ranging from those that are expected to have a direct impact on beneficiaries to those that have an impact on infrastructures. The following presents examples of the links, as put forward by UN agencies:⁶³

- Early warning and intervention in epidemics – a cost-effective and efficient method to prevent loss of lives (Kenya, WHO);
- Emergency agriculture – more efficient and cost-effective approach to food security by preventing the loss of livelihoods (Sri Lanka, Ivory Coast, DRC, FAO);
- Livestock and livelihood – vaccination and redistribution of cattle as an effective method of preventing the loss of livestock and livelihoods (Kenya, FAO);
- Emergency education – trauma prevention and restoring dignity in children (Sri Lanka, UNICEF);
- River bank strengthening – prevention of loss of life in prospected possible future floods coinciding with areas of massive displacement (Somalia, UNDP);
- Radio and communication provisions – provision of safe and secure access to aid workers – protecting the provider of aid to save lives (Somalia, UNDP/WFP);
- Road construction – facilitating access to crisis prone areas, lowering costs of food transport and reconnecting areas to restore markets, securing income and livelihood (DRC, IOM);
- Train locomotive rehabilitation – rehabilitation of train locomotives to enable rail transportation, lowering the costs of food transport and ensuring flow of food to areas prone for malnutrition (DRC, WFP);⁶⁴
- Purchase of transportation means – providing essential trucking capacity to areas with high malnutrition and no transportation facilities (Sri Lanka, DRC, WFP);

⁶³ Obtained from interviews and some project proposals

⁶⁴ As reported by the CERF Secretariat, this activity formed part of a larger infrastructure rehabilitation project.

- Capacity building – strengthening a UN agency country office and establishing a sub-office in an emergency-prone region to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian services (Kenya, WHO);⁶⁵ and
- System strengthening – providing funds for strengthening the cluster leads of three clusters in the DRC (OCHA).

However, in spite of the wide range and diversity of the above-mentioned activities, they can all be linked to life saving criterion as required by CERF.⁶⁶ As suggested by various UN respondents during the field visits, as well as pointed out by the CERF Secretariat – building field response capacity (e.g. setting-up offices) may be necessary in the case of new emergencies/disasters in countries where there is no ongoing emergency situation.

In addition to the above, CERF also provided funds for locally-managed rapid response funds that gave access to resources for, in some cases, smaller projects:

- The Emergency Response Fund (ERF) in Somalia (UNDP); and
- The Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) in DRC (UNICEF/OCHA).

As NGOs cannot access CERF funds directly, these locally-managed funds provided access by NGOs to CERF funds indirectly.⁶⁷

4.2 Appropriateness of the CERF

The appropriateness of the CERF can be assessed through a review of the CERF allocation processes and, specifically, on how the CERF criteria have been applied, as the criteria connect the project objectives to those of the CERF.

4.2.1 Life saving criterion

Undoubtedly the most critical criterion for the application of the CERF is the concept of “life-saving.” It is reiterated in all three CERF objectives (see Section 2.1): (Objective 1) ... *reduce loss of life*; (Objective 2) ... *to save lives*; and (Objective 3) ... *core humanitarian activities essential to life saving*.

The review team observes that the life-saving criterion was interpreted very broadly in all six countries visited. UN agencies reported that they appreciated that the CERF has left room for a broad interpretation of life saving, as it allowed for the adaptation of the

⁶⁵ “World Health organization: Report to Secretary General: Health sector response to Drought victims in north Eastern Kenya”

⁶⁶ See Section 4.2 for further discussion of the life-saving criterion.

⁶⁷ This reflects the observations made in a global evaluation of ERFs. See *Review of OCHA Emergency Response Funds (ERFs)*, OCHA, January 2007, and observations made during the Humanitarian Financing Workshop –see *Humanitarian Financing Workshop Report*, OCHA Addis Ababa, January 9-10, 2007

criterion to the country-specific context, as well as to the agencies' specific mandates.⁶⁸ This was reiterated also in the interviews with representative of the UN agencies. Since the CERF is designed to be country-driven (so that funding can be adapted to the particular needs in the country), the review team notes that the freedom to adopt a broad definition of life saving is helpful. The context and specialized knowledge necessary to identify needs and define an adequate response is assumed to be available at the country level through UN agencies and NGOs.

The online survey also reflected the satisfaction of the UN agencies at the field level with the current interpretation of the criteria. The majority of the UN agency respondents to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that:

- Funding was targeted to meet the highest priority humanitarian needs of the emergency at the field level (89%); and
- The CERF provides funding for humanitarian activities that other donors will not finance (70%).

The review team observes that the broad interpretation of life saving potentially strengthens the connectedness of CERF-funded projects.⁶⁹ Projects that supported early recovery or post-conflict activities clearly link humanitarian response to development.

A few respondents from UN agencies interviewed articulated a link between the projects and humanitarian principles, for example maintaining dignity.⁷⁰ Some projects highlighted efficiency and/or humanitarian arguments in addition to, or in support of, the life saving dimension (e.g. emergency education and emergency agriculture).

4.2.2 Prioritization of CERF proposals

The review team notices that the broad interpretation of life saving served the intended purpose, as it produced a wide range of CERF projects. At the same time, the review team observes that the broad definition of life saving also has inherent limitations. These need to be considered in light of two main uses of criteria:

- As a tool to delimit the eligibility for CERF funding during the formulation of project proposals; and
- As a tool to assign priority to proposed projects during the selection and approval of projects.

⁶⁸ Seventy percent (70%) of the UN agency respondents in the online survey agreed or strongly agreed that the CERF allows for a broad definition of the concept of “life saving” to address local needs.

⁶⁹ Connectedness is a term substituting sustainability (of aid projects) as the adequacy of the last for humanitarian activities is questioned. Humanitarian aid projects are a temporary measure to save lives rather than addressing underlying causes for suffering. Connectedness is described as the need to assure activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context which takes longer-term and inter-connected problems into account (see: ALNAP Quality Performa).

⁷⁰ WHO in a proposed mental health project in Sri Lanka and UNICEF in Emergency Education projects

As stated by most, if not all, UN agency respondents interviewed, in the beginning, use of the life saving criterion resulted in some confusion during the first allocations. Over time, however, the confusion has been reduced somewhat as the CERF Secretariat worked with the UN agencies to clarify the guidelines.

The second application of the life saving criterion (assigning priority to a range of proposals) remains problematic. The broad interpretation makes it more difficult to choose among eligible proposals. From the country case studies, it appears to the review team that UN agencies interpreted life saving criteria mainly according to their own mandates (WHO – health, UNHCR – protection and so forth). This, in itself, is neither surprising nor inadequate, as such. Most project activities may well be argued to be life saving. However, it raises the question which projects or activities are regarded as higher priority.

In practice, as observed by the review team, the broad interpretation of the life saving criterion potentially led to inconsistencies in the prioritization process. Thus, for example, a proposal for trauma prevention support in suicide-prone people (Sri Lanka, WHO) was rejected. However, emergency education, which was at least partly justified, in similar terms of trauma prevention, was accepted (Sri Lanka, UNICEF).⁷¹ As reported to the review team by various respondents of UN agencies, similar projects, accepted in one country, were rejected in another – particularly in the areas of emergency education or emergency agriculture. One possible explanation for this is that the criteria were being developed over the first year.⁷² At the time of writing of, however, a paper on life saving criteria/guidelines was being developed under the auspices of the CERF Secretariat in collaboration with the UN agencies.⁷³

Though life-saving criteria reportedly were widely debated, at least informally, within UN agencies, the review team has the impression that this did not seem to have occurred at the inter-agency level. The review team observes that only in a few cases was the discussion on the CERF allocations held collectively among Heads of UN agencies on the total package of proposals. In some cases, the proposals were discussed by telephone or email, or only bilaterally between the applicant UN agency and the RC/HC.

The review team observes that the emphasis on life saving may have detracted from a more global humanitarian perspective. In view of the review team, a clear example of this is the difficulty that UNHCR reportedly faced in defending the contribution of its protection activities to life saving, whereas it is one of the few UN agencies that have a clear humanitarian mandate, as defined in International Refugee Law.⁷⁴

Although the CERF is flexible in interpreting the life saving criterion in a way that meets specific agency mandates and capacity and the specific needs in the sector in which the

⁷¹ It is unknown, however, on which grounds the WHO project was rejected.

⁷² According to the CERF secretariat the eligibility for emergency education was accepted in December 2006.

⁷³ “CERF Life-saving Criteria and Sectoral Activities (Guidelines)”, CERF Secretariat, 7 August 2007

⁷⁴ *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951)

agency is active, the review team notes that, at the same time, this also weakens the potential complementarity of CERF-funded projects to address overall needs. As a result, some OCHA respondents noted in interviews that the total package of proposed projects in a given country tends to get fragmented and leads to “atomisation” of the projects. This is not due to the UN agencies’ specific mandates, but to the “projectization” of CERF funds, as result of the way in which the various proposals for CERF funding are prioritized.

The review team observes that maintaining a complementary and coherent approach is particularly difficult in large countries with many actors and a wide variety of needs, spread over distinct sectors and different settings (e.g. DRC). On the other hand, in the DRC, the approach to the use of the various funds available, in addition to the CERF, (mainly the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) or “Pooled Fund”) has changed over the past year. The HC and OCHA are now using the CERF more strategically to using the CERF primarily and firstly to fund activities implemented by UN agencies, thus “freeing up” the CHF to the maximum extent for NGOs (since the latter do not have direct access to CERF). It appears to the review team that access to multiple funds may facilitate the coherence of the humanitarian funding.⁷⁵

4.2.3 Rapid response and under-funded windows

From the country visits and the review of the CERF grants, the distinction between rapid response and under-funded windows is unclear to the review team. Some projects, presented as rapid response proposals, were subsequently funded from the under-funded window (DRC). The use of the two windows for funding in countries with similar contexts contributes to the lack of clarity. For example, Ivory Coast had both rapid response and under-funded grants, whereas the DRC had only under-funded grants.

This may be partly explained by the fact that the under-funded allocations are initiated by the ERC (top-down) and hence, proposals for this window are defined after the initial allocation from the ERC. From interviews with respondents in UN agencies, it appeared that the distinction between the rapid response and under-funded windows was not clear to them.

The allocations from the under-funded window are based, in large part, on the level of funding for the CAP through the monitoring of the Financial Tracking System (FTS). (See Section 2.1 for a discussion of the process for the under-funded window.) The country case studies identified a number of limitations to basing these allocations on CAP funding levels.

Firstly, as reported to the review team, donors expressed concerns about using CAPs, which were not well funded by the donors, as the basis of under-funded window grants. Donors argued that sometimes they are not funding the CAP because they do not agree

⁷⁵ A similar observation is made in the global evaluation of ERFs. See *Review of OCHA Emergency Response Funds (ERFs)*, OCHA, January 2007

with the priorities of the proposed activities, particularly in cases where those are not considered to pertain to humanitarian activities. Donors raised this specifically with respect to the DRC and Ivory Coast. This argument is well demonstrated with the example of the DRC Action Plan. In 2006, the Plan identified three lines of action:

- Saving lives – activities to ensure adequate and rapid emergency response and immediate protection capacity to meet the need of those at acute risk;
- Building a protective environment for communities – safeguarding the ability of existing local structures and communities to function;
- Promoting stability – high-impact activities fast tracking key elements of the country Poverty Reduction Paper (PRSP) (during the critical post-election period).⁷⁶

Reportedly, donors indicated that the third dimension was, in their eyes, to a large degree oriented towards development rather than on humanitarian needs. Possibly as a consequence, the DRC Humanitarian Action Plan 2007 was limited to two goals:

- Saving lives – emergency response to humanitarian crises, protection against violence; and
- Support for a return to self-sufficiency – support to basic and essential primary services.⁷⁷

Donors in Ivory Coast expressed similar concern to the review team, arguing that the country, in their view, was no longer in a crisis situation and that many CAP proposed activities were more developmental than humanitarian. Various UN agency respondents also agreed with this view.

Secondly, the review team points out that, since CAP documents may be formulated well in advance of the CERF allocations, the needs on the ground may have changed by the time the CERF under-funded allocation is made. For example, Sri Lanka developed a specific Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) for the current crisis. Yet, in other countries that received under-funded allocations, existing project proposals from the CAP were used as the CERF proposals, often without being adapted to the current situation. This does not mean that the proposals, as such, were not sound, but raises the question of whether they reflected the current “high level humanitarian needs.”⁷⁸

4.2.4 Needs assessment

The last observations in the above section highlight the importance of adequate needs assessment for the identification, formulation and approval of CERF proposals. The importance of needs assessments, as a basis for CERF proposals, is highlighted in the CERF objectives, which refer to “demonstrable needs” and “high levels of humanitarian needs” (see Section 2.1). Needs assessment is a universally accepted method for proposal

⁷⁶ Action Plan 2006 Democratic Republic Congo, p. 9

⁷⁷ Humanitarian Action Plan 2007 Democratic Republic Congo, page 5, 31 and 32

⁷⁸ As mentioned in CERF objective three, pertaining to under-funded window

formulation and is recognized as a basic requirement to ascertain the impartiality of aid as stated in the GHD principles.⁷⁹

During the field visits, the review team interviewed representatives of UN agencies and OCHA on the degree to which needs assessments have been performed and which methodologies have been used for these. In these interviews, two limiting factors surfaced. Firstly, short time frames to formulate proposals poses serious limitations on the possibility of performing systematic and comprehensive needs assessments. This pertains to rapid response applications, where acute needs are to be addressed by quick decisions on allocations – for example, for the acute floods in the Horn of Africa. However, it also happens when allocations, usually from the under-funded window, are announced by the ERC and UN agencies are given very short time frames to prepare proposals – for example, in the DRC. Secondly, as reported by respondents, in some cases, accessibility to assess needs in disaster or crises affected areas is hindered by other factors – for example, in Somalia (due to security risks) or in the countries of the Horn of Africa during the floods (due to the weather conditions).

This does not mean that needs were not assessed, but rather that, given the nature of rapid onset, needs are established using rapid needs assessments. For example, UN respondents reported that this had been done in Somalia with the assistance of helicopters that had been funded by the CERF. In areas where access is difficult, such as Somalia, the UN agencies also gathered information available from INGOs, some of which had a presence on the ground. The review team notes that NGOs are also involved in needs assessments during the formulation of CAP projects and in the formulation humanitarian action plans.

However, the review team could not establish the quality of needs assessments, not only due to the large number of different projects but, more importantly, because the scope of CERF-funded interventions covered a wide range of different identified needs. This reveals, in the opinion of the review team, a methodological problem in the implementation of needs assessments. As mentioned above (Section 4.1.3) CERF funded a broad range of activities and the needs have to be assessed in different ways. For example, projects providing direct assistance materials to populations may be assessed by classical means (e.g. nutritional surveys). However, it is much harder to quantify the beneficiary needs for projects providing infrastructure support (e.g. road building). Similarly, it is difficult to assess beneficiary needs for (CERF-supported) activities to strengthen the humanitarian response system (e.g. cluster lead strengthening).

As reported by the CERF Secretariat, the issue of counting the number of beneficiaries of CERF funding has been problematic. Sometimes it was questionable how one could count the number of beneficiaries – for example, in the case of support to local ministries, where the agency identified the number of beneficiaries by counting the total population of the area. In some cases, reporting on the number of beneficiaries may lead to double-counting of beneficiaries when two different projects of two different UN agencies are operating in the same geographic area.

⁷⁹ Impartiality refers to the provision of aid proportional to established needs.

The review team notes that the appropriate methodology for needs assessment necessarily differs from case to case or by CERF window. For example, it is important to differentiate between nutritional surveys at the field level and rapid needs assessments in case of rapid onset (natural) disasters. The approach would obviously be different for proposals for the under-funded window since, as already noted, these are usually based on existing formulated CAPs or Action Plans. What remains to be done in the CAPs/Action Plans is to verify the needs, which may have been established, for example, six months before, are still real. OCHA respondents in the field indicated that, in countries with a CAP, such confirmation of the needs would take place in IASC or inter-cluster and/or sector working groups.

4.3 Contribution to humanitarian reform agenda

Humanitarian reform is the generic name for an initiative to improve humanitarian response.⁸⁰ Core elements include:

1. Sufficient humanitarian response capacity and enhanced leadership, accountability and predictability in "gap" sector/areas of response (ensuring trained staff, adequate commonly-accessible stockpiles, surge capacity, agreed standards and guidelines).
2. Adequate, timely and flexible humanitarian financing (including the CERF).
3. Improved humanitarian coordination and leadership (more effective Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) system, more strategic leadership and coordination at the inter-sectoral and sectoral levels).
4. More effective partnerships between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors.⁸¹

4.3.1 Role of Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators

In the opinion of the review team, the way in which CERF is supposed to support the other three elements through “sufficient humanitarian response capacity and effective partnerships between UN and non-UN actors” depends considerably on the third element. This is substantiated in the following description of the HC role:

The CERF empowers Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) by giving them the authority to prioritize the projects allocated to the crisis by the ERC. The HC needs to enforce the life-saving criterion for selected projects, as well as using judgment to identify the highest-priority. The ERC will review the recommendations and reject any that are not up to standard. In practice, an HC may delegate project selection to a sector/cluster lead, for example, but should always review the cluster/sector lead’s choices. CERF aims to be the fastest donor in rapid-response situations, and the donor of last resort in chronic under-funded situations.⁸²

⁸⁰ See: <http://www.humanitarianreform.org/>

⁸¹ See <http://ochaonline3.un.org/cerf/UsefulLinks/CERFandHumanitarianReform/tabid/1828/Default.aspx>

⁸² See: <http://www.humanitarianreform.org/humanitarianreform/Default.aspx?tabid=204>

The review team received inconsistent views from UN agency respondents on the extent to which the CERF supported the other elements of humanitarian reform. Overall, in the countries visited, UN agency respondents respected and appreciated the role of HCs (as separate from RCs), in prioritizing funding proposals and leading the CERF process. This also applied somewhat to countries with a combined RC/HC, although in this respect some respondents commented on the duality of the RC/HC function and the possible ensuing conflict of interest. As a result, many respondents stated that it would perhaps be a good idea to assign a separate HC, in particular in the context of UN integrated missions.

While the CERF can be seen as a positive tool to be used by the RC/HC to encourage greater coordination among UN agencies, it can also be seen as a hazard to the RC/HC who has to use his/her decision-making authority to allow or reject funding requests from UN agencies. Given the lack of comprehensive needs assessment information and the flexible application of the CERF criteria, it is a challenge for the RC/HC to find objective ways to make these decisions.

However, the review team also notes that initiatives are being undertaken to make the decision-making less subjective, as in the DRC, where the OCHA office, at the request of the HC, is tracking progress on implementation of CERF funding, in order to be able to use this as a criterion for the next allocation of CERF funds.

4.3.2 Cluster approach, IASC and coordination

In general, in interviews with the review team, UN respondents expressed that they were not convinced that the CERF processes, as such, had strengthened inter-agency coordination or contributed to humanitarian reform, since they did not observe demonstrable changes in coordination systems after the introduction of the CERF.

Where (IASC) coordination systems operated well before the CERF, they continued to do so after the introduction of the CERF. At the same time, respondents in all six countries generally agreed that CERF processes at least ‘brought all UN agencies around one table’ which was seen as a step in the right direction. However, at the same time, the review team notices that in none of the countries visited by the review team were UN agencies involved in reviewing the proposals from other UN agencies – as allocation decisions were made based on summary information provided by the agencies during discussions.

Only one country of the six visited by the review team had a fully implemented formal cluster (DRC), whereas Ivory Coast has one formal cluster for protection and Ethiopia is in the process of setting up the cluster approach. In general, in the opinion of the review team, it is too early to assess the overall impact of the CERF on the cluster approach and strengthening the HCs role, as both processes are relatively new and still evolving.

However, there are positive signs, as the online survey demonstrates that the majority of the 37 UN agency respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the CERF strengthens:

- Coordination among humanitarian actors (UN agencies and NGOs) (73%); and
- A coherent approach for UN agencies' humanitarian response (84%).

In most case study countries, interview respondents from UN agencies and OCHA reported that the early decision-making processes involved only the UN agencies. This occurred primarily because the only inter-sectoral decision-making platforms that existed in the countries at the time, involved primarily UN agencies.

The impression of the review team, based on field-level interviews, is that the requirement to establish a more inclusive process (i.e. involving NGOs) was not clear. New and more inclusive, processes were not set up as a result of the introduction of the CERF.

This lack of clarity and the approach taken for the initial allocation of funds, undertaken in the first month of the CERF, contributed to confusion at field level in some countries. For example, in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia, UN agency respondents indicated that, in an effort to kick-start the CERF allocation process, the initial rapid response allocation for the drought in the Horn of Africa was announced by the ERC during a visit to the region, rather than emanating from stakeholder requests at the country level, as indicated in the CERF design. Consequently the distribution of this regional allocation was done by the UNCTs from the various countries in the Horn of Africa. Allocations in each country (per sector) were divided among the various UN agencies by the respective UNCTs.

The interviews also revealed that in countries that had inclusive mechanisms in place (i.e. formal IASC coordination structures, sector working groups or formal clusters), or were in the process of developing these mechanisms for the management of humanitarian funds (notably the CHF in DRC and the HRF in Ethiopia), the first allocations still included only UN agencies. However, in both the DRC and Ethiopia, the allocation processes have now built on the existing platforms and included the NGOs.

In terms of participation of NGOs in formulation and prioritization of CERF proposals, the review team observes a significant variation amongst the six countries visited. In some cases the CERF proposals were presented to the IASC coordination platform or (inter-) clusters (for example, in the most recent processes in the DRC).⁸³ However, even in those cases, as reported to the review team, the final decision on proposals was still taken by the UNCT and the HC.

As time progressed, it is observed that, CERF allocation processes became somewhat more inclusive and involved more NGOs, albeit to a limited extent. Stakeholders from the NGO and UN communities indicated that:

⁸³ The term "IASC platform" is used here as a generic terms since countries have different names for these e.g. IAHCC in Ivory Coast; IASC-CT in Sri Lanka; and the Inter-cluster (IC) meeting at the national level and the Comité provincial inter-agence (CPIA) at the provincial level in DRC.

- The engagement of the NGOs took place primarily at sector or cluster, rather than inter-cluster/sector, level;
- Even when inter-sector/inter-cluster platforms included NGOs, these tended to be rather large meetings with a relative small representation from the NGO community.⁸⁴ As these meetings reportedly focus more on information sharing rather than on decision-making, in the respondent's opinion, they therefore do not (yet) provide for a meaningful engagement of all stakeholders; and
- The NGO engagement is reported to be limited to a small number of NGO representatives, selected by OCHA, to represent the broad range of vastly varying NGOs. The review team also notes however, that selection of 'representative' NGOs (for the community of NGOs) is complicated by the absence of inter-NGO coordination and consultation platforms in the case study countries.⁸⁵

It was significant to the review team that, in some countries where NGOs are officially engaged in the processes, NGO interview respondents were unaware of the CERF or the funded projects.

Although allocations are posted on the CERF website by the Secretariat, this does not constitute a user-friendly way for various stakeholders at the field level to access information about CERF allocations. The review team observes that the approval of allocations was not communicated by UN agencies in timely or user-friendly manner to the humanitarian community. As a result, information on CERF allocations is not available to NGOs that may wish to put forward proposals to CERF recipient UN agencies as potential implementing partners. Most NGOs indicated that, even if they have received forward disbursements of CERF funds, they would be unlikely to know that they were benefiting from the CERF because they are not aware of the source of UN agency funding for humanitarian activities. This, in the opinion of the review team, can be seen as a missed opportunity to promote the CERF as an element of humanitarian reform, specifically aiming at building (effective) partnerships between UN and non-UN actors.

The review team also observes that there is some evidence to suggest that the CERF has increased competition between NGOs and UN agencies. In interviews with UN agencies and NGOs, some respondents expressed the view that they are competing for the same funds. This has more than just financial implications, since it also may cause potential tensions. For example, some NGOs indicated that, in their opinion, some UN agencies were building up a profile as 'implementing agencies', whereas – in the opinion of the NGOs – in reality they have limited delivery capacity and presence in the field.

Several critiques of the CERF, produced by international NGOs, have expressed concern about the fact that NGOs do not have direct access to CERF funding and the lack of systematic information with respect to the forward disbursement of CERF funds to

⁸⁴ For example the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Coordination Committee (IAHCC) in Ivory Coast and the HAG in the DRC

⁸⁵ However, in the DRC, the OCHA has attempted to stimulate the creation of NGO coordination and DFID recently has expressed interest in funding an inter-NGO liaison officer.

NGOs.⁸⁶ The review team has not addressed the issue of direct access to CERF funds by NGOs, as it is too early in the life of the CERF to determine the impact of this. However, the team has looked at the relationship between the UN and NGOs in the implementation of the CERF.

Generally, NGOs are recognized as the primary and most effective deliverers of humanitarian aid, with half or more of humanitarian assistance flowing through NGOs.⁸⁷ As discussed above, strengthening UN-NGO partnerships is one pillar of humanitarian reform, to which the CERF is expected to contribute as a financing mechanism. As a result of the CERF's link to the humanitarian reform agenda, the review team suggests that it is an *implicit* assumption in the CERF design that UN agencies would work closely with NGOs as implementing partners. However, various UN agencies noted a lack of clarity on the expectations of the role that the CERF would play in terms of building UN-NGO partnerships. The team suggests that the missing link is how the CERF is expected to contribute to changing the relationship among UN agencies and NGOs. In other words, what is expected from UN agencies, applying for CERF funds, with respect to working with NGOs, in light of the humanitarian reform agenda?

The involvement of national governments in the CERF processes is diverse. In most countries visited by the review team, national governments did not play a direct role in CERF allocation processes. In Kenya, the planning process for the flood and drought interventions (funded amongst others through CERF) has been done in collaboration with the Kenya Food Security Meeting (KFSM), chaired by the Office of the President. In Sri Lanka and the DRC, OCHA maintains contacts with the government through the respective ministries responsible for humanitarian assistance.

However, in Ethiopia, since early 2007, the government is included in the CERF allocation processes, as it is represented on the board responsible for the allocation of the HRF funds and thus, by extension, in the allocation of CERF funds. Some respondents from the NGO community expressed their concern about this engagement, (particularly in case of conflict situations). This concern reflects the principle of independence of humanitarian assistance as stated in the GHD, as funding should be allocated on the basis of needs, rather than political direction. Other, earlier, studies have raised similar concerns.⁸⁸

4.4 Complementarity with other humanitarian financing mechanisms

This review did not do an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the CERF and other humanitarian financing mechanisms. For obvious reasons the potential interaction

⁸⁶ *Exclusion of NGOs: The fundamental flaw of the CERF*: Save the Children, January 29, 2007.

The UN Central Emergency Response Fund one year on: Briefing Paper. Oxfam. March 2007. Save the Children's experience with CERF in 2007, Save the Children Fund. June 2007

⁸⁷ According to a report by the Feinstein International Center, "Follow the Money: A Review and Analysis of Humanitarian Funding" (June 2007), between 48% and 58% of all known humanitarian funding in 2005 flowed through NGOs. <http://fic.tufts.edu/downloads/GHD-IASCFINALPAPER.pdf>

⁸⁸ *The future of humanitarian assistance: The role of the United Nations*, Study four of the Good Humanitarian Donorship, Kent, Randolph et al; UN OCHA 2004 New York

of the CERF with other mechanisms is limited due to the short time CERF has been in place. Yet, there is some information from the case studies on this interaction and the review can draw on information from key documents.⁸⁹

There were other financing mechanisms in three of the case study countries – Somalia, Ethiopia and the DRC (see text box). Somalia and Ethiopia have Emergency Response Funds (ERF) (called Humanitarian Response Funds (HRFs) in these two countries) and the DRC has a common fund (also called a Pooled Fund - PF). These funds are governed by joint UN agency/NGO committees and fund allocations are disbursed under the authority of the HC. Ethiopia and the DRC are gradually moving to joint governance structures of these funds and the CERF. Information from the case studies suggests also that the focus of these funds has been mainly on the NGOs, as opposed to the UN agencies – in contrast to the CERF, to which NGOs do not have direct access.

Other Humanitarian Financing Mechanisms in Case Study Countries

Somalia – has an HRF established in 2004 to provide rapid response funding (up to \$250K) to UN agencies and NGOs. It is governed by an advisory board that includes UN agencies and NGOs and proposals are approved by the HC. The HRF received CERF funding for the flood emergency. Although all projects include an M&E plan and project proponents have to provide mid-term and final project reports, the HRF Board members are only involved in project approval.

Ethiopia – has an HRF established in 2006 to provide small-scale emergency assistance. It serves as a rapid and flexible funding mechanism for UN agencies and NGOs and, to date, appears to have exceeded the expectations of both the UN agencies and the NGOs, having received \$11M in funding from the UK, the Netherlands and Norway. An evaluation of the HRF conducted in 2006 indicated that, of the funding disbursed up to October 2006, 43% had gone to UN agencies and 57% to INGOs. National NGOs had not had direct access to the HRF. Interview respondents noted that there is no clarity on substantive differences between HRF and CERF but that intuitively, if agencies want a lot of money, they approach the CERF; if the requests are smaller and they want the money faster, they approach the HRF.⁹⁰ Reportedly agencies see the HRF money as their own – unlike the CERF, where there is not the same level of ownership of the Fund. The fund is governed by a Review Board that includes UN agencies, INGOs and, recently, the Government of Ethiopia. Board members noted that the proposal review process is time-consuming. All projects are required to have an M&E plan.

DRC – has a common fund established in 2005 that has US\$ 88 million (April 2006) from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Canada and Belgium. It is designed to strengthen the role of the HC and better respond to humanitarian needs.⁹¹ The PF is managed by the PF Board consisting of UN agencies and NGOs and is chaired by the HC. There have been three allocations, with progressively more focus on funding for NGOs. The second allocation coincided with a CERF allocation and, as a result, it was decided to use the CERF allocations mainly for UN agencies in order to free up resources for NGOs. The third common fund allocation was almost entirely dedicated to NGOs. The fund was included in an evaluation of the two common funds (the DRC and Sudan) in 2006. In addition, in the DRC, the common fund and the CERF provide resources for a Rapid Response Mechanism managed by UNICEF and OCHA), which aims to provide a rapid response to natural disaster, acute crises and epidemics. In 2007, UNICEF also launched, in collaboration with all key UN agencies and partner NGOs, a new rapid response mechanism, called Programme of expanded assistance to returns (PEAR). The UN military mission in the DRC (MONUC) launches various small assistance and reconstruction projects at the sub-provincial level through QUIPs.

⁸⁹ “Humanitarian Financing Workshop Report” Addis Ababa, January 9 – 10, 2007 and *Review of OCHA Emergency Response Funds (ERFs)*, OCHA, January 2007

⁹⁰ The HRF evaluation noted that the first proposals took, on average, 48.5 days to approve. Subsequently, it has taken, on average, 10.4 days. The funding from Geneva then takes, on average, 26 days.

⁹¹ DRC Action Plan 2006, p. 12

These case studies reflect that there has been progress in meeting some recommendations of the humanitarian financing workshop held in January 2007, including:

- Establishing joint management/governance structures;
- Broadening the advisory group to make it more inclusive of NGOs; and
- Considering using CERF or pooled funds to replenish ERF funding.⁹²

Workshop participants noted a couple of other issues that arose in the case studies. The first is that there needs to be “sufficient dedicated capacity for managing the ERFs and that this should be funded by donors that are already contributing to present funding.”⁹³ The issue of capacity at the field level for the management of the CERF is also noted in this report (see Section 5.1.1). There may be economies of scale in building on the joint management to develop greater capacity.

The second recommendation was that, “if ERFs fund UN agencies as well as NGOs there is a potential for overlap with the CERF. OCHA should work very closely with the Advisory Board to avoid duplicative funding.”⁹⁴ There was no evidence from the case studies of duplicative funding; however, given the timeframes for the case studies, the team likely would not have been able to detect any duplication.

An OCHA-managed review of the ERFs also addressed the issue of potential duplication. While the review noted that it had not been able to review the relationship between the ERFs and the CERF in-depth, it did recommend that “OCHA and advisory boards should look at the potential for overlap if an ERF funds UN agencies as well. This did not appear to be a problem in the DRC because most UN grants [from the common fund] were relatively small and served mainly for transport and logistics needs, but it has been raised as a concern in Ethiopia. OCHA may want to consider restricting ERFs to NGOs to avoid duplicating CERF funding.”⁹⁵ The lack of systematic evidence on the issue of potential duplication suggests that this remains a concern to be addressed in the General Assembly-mandated review of the CERF in 2008. The review could usefully also address the issue of focusing the ERFs on NGOs, while the CERF remains exclusively a fund for UN agencies, since it would have implications for the role that CERF can or should play in the humanitarian reform agenda and strengthening the relations with NGOs.

An additional issue that was raised in one case study (Ethiopia) was the possibility that, given continued financing for its ERF and predictable CERF funding, a country might choose not to launch humanitarian appeals and count on these two financing mechanisms to address all humanitarian needs. This option is being considered by the OCHA Office

⁹² “Humanitarian Financing Workshop Report” Addis Ababa, January 9 – 10, 2007. This is only a partial list of the recommendations, including only those that appear to have been addressed, to some extent, in the three case study countries.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 5

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 7

⁹⁵ *Review of OCHA Emergency Response Funds (ERFs)*, OCHA, January 2007, p.31

in Ethiopia. The review team notes, however, that such an option would seem to run counter to the principle of the CERF as a “donor of last resort.”

5.0 CERF Structures, Processes and Underlying Assumptions

This chapter analyzes the structures and processes in place for effective management of the CERF. This includes not only the CERF Secretariat that is part of OCHA NY but, as the CERF is a shared mechanism, also the structures and processes in place at the field level, as well as the coordination mechanisms at the global and field level. It is structured around four key components of effective management:

- Organizational structures;
- Policies and procedures;
- Project proposals and approval and disbursement processes; and
- Accountability.

The chapter also identifies two key assumptions underlying the design of the CERF, which may impact on its implementation.

5.1 CERF Organizational structures

5.1.1 Field structures

The key stakeholders in the field with responsibility for supporting the implementation of the Fund are the RC/HC and the OCHA office.⁹⁶ The review team noted that, in the case study countries, the OCHA offices were the primary source of information for the CERF. Both respondents from UN agencies and NGOs indicated that they learned about the CERF through these offices. Information from the online survey supports this finding. Forty-one percent (41%) of the respondents indicated that the most useful source of information on the CERF was the OCHA field office – this source was identified by more respondents than any other source.

Some OCHA staff observed difficulties with meeting the expectations of UN agencies that were requesting information on CERF procedures and criteria during the first year, while processes and criteria were still being formulated and consequently subject to change.⁹⁷ Interview respondents indicated that there was considerable confusion, in the early months, about basic eligibility requirements and criteria.⁹⁸ Stakeholder interviews

⁹⁶ If there is no OCHA office in the country, the RC, with the support of his/her office is responsible for the CERF. The case studies did not include any countries that did not have OCHA offices, so the review cannot comment on the effectiveness of the structures to support the CERF in these countries.

⁹⁷ Changes to the CERF processes, guidelines and criteria were posted on the CERF website. However, they were often not available early in the allocation process and OCHA offices were not systematically notified when changed occurred. OCHA office found it difficult to keep abreast of these changing processes.

⁹⁸ Interviews with UN agencies indicated that, in the first months, there were errors in proposal applications resulting potentially from inadequate information. For example, applications were received directly from NGOs and some grant applications had to be written several times because they did not conform to the CERF guidelines.

indicated that, even during the case study field visits, there was still misinformation about the CERF circulating within the UN agencies and, even more so, within the NGO community. However, the Secretariat has taken some steps to address this information gap by developing and delivering workshops, training on the CERF for UN agencies in the field.⁹⁹

The review team observed that, in general, strong OCHA capacity was required to support inclusive consultations and the decision-making processes for the CERF, particularly when countries had a large portfolio of CERF projects. In all of the case study countries OCHA had offices in the capital and, in some cases, also field offices at the provincial level.¹⁰⁰ Information collected by the review team through interviews with UN Agencies about the coordination structures and the profile and size of the OCHA offices in the case study countries, indicates considerable variety in these capacities. Some OCHA offices have a substantial number of staff (e.g. DRC), yet others are very small (e.g. Kenya).¹⁰¹ The review team also noted that the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the CERF in OCHA offices is often given to relatively junior staff (often nationals), albeit under the direction of a more senior staff member. Although these junior, national staff appeared to the review team to be extremely motivated and dedicated to their tasks, some respondents in the field acknowledged that given their level, they inevitably also face bigger challenges in working with senior UN staff, when it was necessary.

Interview respondents noted that the available OCHA resources had to be spread across OCHA's mandated responsibility for coordination, as well as accommodate the new responsibilities for the CERF mechanism. Interviews with UN agencies and OCHA respondents indicated a range of potential impacts of the addition of the CERF to OCHA's coordination activities in case study countries – including impacts on the level of coordination and on OCHA:

- In Ethiopia, the existence of the CERF mechanism does not appear to have had any impact on the already strong and well-respected coordination role played by OCHA.
- In other countries, while having responsibility for the CERF mechanisms provided a reason to bring at least the UN agencies together, there is no evidence that this has, as yet, had an impact on the coordination among humanitarian actors (see Section 4.3.1).
- In the first few months of operation in the DRC, where the processes were among the most inclusive, the CERF mechanism (particularly given the large CERF allocations for the country) and the advent of the cluster approach appear to have overwhelmed OCHA's coordination activities. This has since been addressed with the creation of a separate unit responsible for coordination of the various humanitarian funding mechanisms in the DRC.

⁹⁹ The training was first delivered in New York for HQ staff in January 2007 and subsequently in Geneva and then for field staff in Dakar and Nairobi in May/June 2007.

¹⁰⁰ Sri Lanka, DRC and Ethiopia

¹⁰¹ In fact, the Kenya Country Office was being rebuilt, having been closed for a number of years. However, Kenya, as well as other countries in the region, had benefited from the OCHA Regional Support Office that is located in Nairobi.

The case studies included countries with an RC, a combined RC/HC and a dedicated HC (with a separate RC). The review team observes that the strength of the CERF-funding process depends very much on the capacities of the RC/HC and the OCHA offices to support inclusive and needs-based allocation processes. As noted in Section 4.3, some UN agency and NGO interview respondents indicated the possible challenges associated with the dual role of the RC/HC. The need to strengthen HC capacity has been recognized, as the CERF Secretariat, in collaboration with OCHA's Humanitarian Reform Support Unit, has integrated a half-day of training on the CERF into the regular training for HCs.

5.1.2 HQ structures

CERF structures at global level

The Secretary-General's bulletin that established the CERF operations stipulated that the ERC would consult regularly with the IASC on matters relating to the utilization of the funds in order to obtain guidance and support when determining priorities.¹⁰² Interview respondents indicated that, in fact, global level UN agency staff have been actively engaged in the CERF processes through an *ad hoc* group of working level representatives of IASC organizations (in New York and Europe). From the agency interviews, the review team noted that frequently the agencies have identified two key focal people for the CERF – one from the agency's donor relations group and one from the agency's humanitarian operations.

The CERF Secretariat collaborated actively with this *ad hoc* group to address common operational issues such as CERF guidelines and criteria, the formats for project submissions, Letters of Understanding (LoUs) and narrative reporting templates and the standard programme costs.¹⁰³

As gathered through interviews, while international NGOs (INGOs) cannot participate in CERF funding, they have taken considerable interest in the evolution of the Fund through their participation in the IASC at the global level. Their interest in the CERF is reflected in several reviews and articles written about their experience with the Fund, albeit with some critical remarks.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Secretary-General's bulletin Establishment and operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund, ST/SGB/2006/10, 10 October 2006, p. 2

¹⁰³ Although there was considerable negotiation, agreement on many issues was reached in the first months of the CERF. Two remaining issues to be resolved are the nature of the financial reporting and the development of an umbrella LoU. The Office of the Controller is engaged in discussions with OCHA and the UN agencies to resolve these issues.

¹⁰⁴ *Exclusion of NGOs: The fundamental flaw of the CERF*: Save the Children, January 29, 2007. *The UN Central Emergency Response Fund one year on: Briefing Paper*. Oxfam. March 2007. *Save the Children's experience with CERF in 2007*, June 2007

OCHA and CERF structures

The CERF Secretariat has played a support role within OCHA. The role of the CERF Secretariat is set out in the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2006/10, which states "The Coordinator shall be supported by a small secretariat as well as by other branches of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs."¹⁰⁵

The initial assumption, as indicated in a UN report outlining the operations of the expanded CERF was that management of the Fund would not be "heavy" in terms of the requirement for extensive guidelines/criteria or staff to manage it. The report indicates that the Fund:

...will rely, first and foremost, on existing staff for the substantive analysis needed to support the allocation of funds. However, the Office's capacity will need to be strengthened concomitant with the functions of the Fund. The Under-Secretary-General will require five additional staff funded by extra budgetary sources to fulfill the following functions: processing of requests, reporting and information management. ... Existing [OCHA] staff, however, will provide the bulk of the support for Fund operations. The Office will reorient its activities to provide a dedicated analytical capacity for the Emergency Relief Coordinator to support his role of allocating funds in accordance with the Fund's objectives.¹⁰⁶

Interviews with OCHA staff at the global level indicated that other OCHA units do, in fact, provide support to the CERF implementation – including the Donor and External Relations Section (for funding and advocacy), Coordination and Response Division (CRD) (allocation of under-funded window and project review for both windows), Advocacy and Information Management Branch (AIMB) (set up of information systems)¹⁰⁷ and Policy Development and Studies Branch (policy/procedure development, evaluations). This includes also the Geneva-based OCHA units, including the CAP Section, as well as the Donor and External Relations Section. The Secretariat is currently developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to define more formally the roles of various OCHA global level actors.

Yet information gathered through interviews suggests that, in spite of the engagement of the other OCHA units, the CERF Secretariat has the majority of the workload for the implementation of the Fund. Interviews in both headquarters and the field, with OCHA, other UN agencies and NGOs, indicated that they associate the CERF primarily with the Secretariat, more so than OCHA, as a whole. However, the interviews also indicated

¹⁰⁵ "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations", A/60/432, 20 October 2005, p. 10

¹⁰⁶ *Improvement of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund – report of the Secretary General*, 20 October, 2005, UN Resolution A/60/432, para 29 – 30

¹⁰⁷ During the first six months of the Fund

some confusion about the role of the various headquarters' actors in CERF decision-making processes.

As foreseen in the aforementioned UN document, the CERF Secretariat was initially expected to be very small. Secretariat staff indicated to the review team that, during the most critical phase of the CERF, i.e. the initial four months of operations, there were five authorized posts (including one in Geneva), but only four positions filled, one of which was an Administrative Assistant. The five posts initially authorized by the Office of the Controller included: one Chief, two Humanitarian/programme officers (one in Geneva), one Finance Officer and one Administrative Assistant. All five posts were temporarily filled during the course of the first year and a Junior Professional Officer also joined the team.

Since other OCHA units were expected to provide the bulk of the support for the Fund (consistent with their existing functions within OCHA), only a small Secretariat was needed.¹⁰⁸ This was based on the expectation that there would be limited need for OCHA to provide detailed guidance on CERF mechanisms. Yet, the review team notes that this assumption appears, in the end, to have not been realistic. OCHA and UN agency interview respondents indicated that during the first year, there were increasing demands for more clarity on the guidelines, processes and criteria and for project and reporting templates.

The review team suggests that the estimates of the management support requirements for the CERF may have been too conservative. It appears to the review team that the Secretariat has been responsible for the bulk of the work on both the development of the CERF infrastructures – identifying processes, guidelines and criteria, setting up the CERF website and developing CERF training – while, at the same time, managing the processes for the disbursement of \$US 259M in CERF funds during the first ten months of the Fund's operations. As a result, the Secretariat reports that it did not have sufficient resources to address a number of outstanding operational issues, such improvements to the website and developing an accountability framework for the CERF.

OCHA recently reviewed the management and structure of the CERF Secretariat, as well as the processes for the approval of projects, and, as a result, has reportedly changed the processes to increase efficiency. OCHA in June 2007 approved an increase in human resources of seven posts (four professional and three supports) and non-post resources (for surge capacity in the field and improvements to the CERF database) for an additional \$1.1 million. The staffing changes include the identification of the following units within the Secretariat:

- *Program Unit*, which will include a Program Officer, who has overall management responsibility of the unit, a Humanitarian Affairs Officer and an Administrative Assistant. The Unit is responsible for processing all CERF projects from receipt to approval, preparing CERF discussion and policy papers, coordinating narrative reporting, representing the CERF in task and working groups, supporting the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

Advisory Group, liaising with other stakeholders in HQ and the field, creating and delivering CERF training globally.

- *Reporting and Information Unit*, which will be headed by a Reporting and Information Officer, supported by an Information Officer and an Administrative Assistant. It is responsible for all public information, including the website, informational brochures etc., supporting narrative reporting and the supporting the Advisory Group; and
- *Finance Unit*, which will include a Finance Officer, a Budget Officer and a Finance Assistant. The Unit is responsible for proposal financial reviews and clarifications, managing and reviewing all Letters of Understanding, resolving all financial issues, managing the Fund contributions and advances, monitoring financial reporting, liaising with agency finance officers, developing financial operational policy and procedures, developing and participating in CERF training, developing the CERF Secretariat budget and performance reports, liaising with the CAP Section, overseeing the contracts and ordering for staff, participating on finance and administrative task forces and working groups, and preparing for and responding to audits.

Although these plans are in place and Terms of Reference for the posts are being developed, not all the planned positions are currently staffed. It is expected that the additional seven posts will be filled after the classification process is complete.

5.2 CERF policies and procedures

As noted in Section 5.1, over the course of the first year of the CERF, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the IASC *ad hoc* working group has been developing guidelines and criteria for CERF funding. They continue to work with the working group on refining the interpretation of the life saving criterion.

A review of the material available on the CERF website – the major source of CERF guidelines and criteria – reflects the fact that there are:

- Overall CERF guidelines (e.g. *Guidelines: Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF): Grant Component*, 31 July 2006);
- Guidelines of specific CERF components (e.g. *Criteria and Procedures for Underfunded Emergencies*, February/March 2007);
- PowerPoint presentations for CERF training (some updated as recently as April 2007); and
- Related CERF documents (e.g. UN Resolutions, Secretary General Bulletins).

The review team's analysis of the material suggests that most materials on the website are updated regularly – except the overall guidelines for the CERF, which date from July 2006. The more recent policies are now reflected in the specific backgrounders, guidelines, application and training materials.

The CERF, as a humanitarian financing mechanism falls within the ‘regime’ of GHD and humanitarian principles, by definition. However, the team’s review of CERF documents, and based on the evidence collected at field level, indicates that these principles are not explicitly reflected in the documents (in particular in the way they are expected to be used in the CERF selection criteria). Yet the review team observes that the UN, has committed itself to humanitarian principles, as stipulated in the GHD principles, as well as defined in the in the original CERF Resolution of 1991.¹⁰⁹ The Resolution establishing the current grant component of the CERF states that the conditions of the original CERF remain in place.¹¹⁰

However, the review team observes that although the CERF is referred to as a funding mechanism for humanitarian response, there is no clear statement that outlines explicitly how the Fund is operationalized and linked to humanitarian principles and the specific criteria referred to in the UN Resolutions.¹¹¹ In the review team’s opinion, this may have implications on the application of the life saving criteria, in particular, since these are the logical connectors between the CERF-funded activities and the overall purpose of the Fund (see Chapter 4.0). In other words, the review team suggests that the CERF’s humanitarian character is not sufficiently defined to ensure a clearly limited focus.

This was supported by interviews conducted with UN agency respondents in the field. They suggested that stakeholders base their understanding of the key principles of the Fund mainly, if not solely, on the definitions and criteria in the Fund procedures and guidelines. However, when asked specifically how, or where, humanitarian principles apply in the identification and prioritization of CERF proposals, most, if not all, respondents remained unclear. Most respondents supported the idea that humanitarian principles are relevant, but only as a general statement of the humanitarian imperative to save lives. They did not reflect that these principles would impose specific conditions on how lives are saved or the context for life saving activities.

5.3 CERF project proposals and approval and disbursement processes

Proposals and decision-making

The template for CERF project proposals is provided on the CERF website.¹¹² It is a short template requiring the following key information:

¹⁰⁹ A/res/46/182 – *Strengthening of the coordination of the emergency assistance of the United Nations*, 19 December, 1991

¹¹⁰ A/RES/60/124 – *Resolution - Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations*, 8 March, 2006

¹¹¹ UN Resolutions: A/res/46/182 – *Strengthening of the coordination of the emergency assistance of the United Nations*, 19 December, 1991 and A/RES/60/124 – *Resolution - Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations*, 8 March, 2006

¹¹² Project and Budget Template, 31 July 2006 <http://ochaonline2.un.org/Default.aspx?tabid=8522>

- Core descriptive information about the requesting agency, country, project title, sector, number and type of beneficiaries, implementing partners, geographic areas of implementation, window from which funding is being requested and project duration and budget;
- Background information including a statement of the problem and the findings of the needs assessment;
- A description of the CERF component of the project including project justification (links to life saving), objective(s), indicators (with specific targets), proposed activities and the implementation plan; and
- Project budget.

For projects that come from an existing CAP, a project budget is still required even though the project application template is not required.¹¹³

Interviews with UN agencies in the field indicated that, generally speaking, the proposal preparation requirements for the CERF are less onerous than those of some bilateral donors (respondents noted particularly the comprehensive proposal mechanisms of ECHO). They see this as a potential strength of the CERF. However, the review team notes that these simplified templates may also be a weakness, in that they do not include a monitoring and evaluation plan, which is often required for other project funding proposals.¹¹⁴

Once proposals have been approved by the RC/HC, they are submitted to OCHA NY, where they are reviewed by both Secretariat and CRD staff. Interviews with OCHA staff indicate that this review includes:

- A technical review, by a Secretariat programme officer, to ensure that the project is consistent with the CERF guidelines and criteria;
- A financial review, by the Secretariat finance officer, to check the budget, the overhead calculations and the match between the narrative and budget; and
- A substantive review: by staff of the CRD Section, to ensure that the project fits within the context of the specific country.

Based on these reviews, a recommendation is prepared for the ERC.

The review team identified only a limited number of proposals that were rejected at the country level by the RC/HC, prior to submission of proposals to OCHA NY. UN agency respondents, interviewed by the review team, indicated that it was more common for proposals to be rejected by OCHA NY than the RC/HC. This view was also reflected in the online survey. In the survey, eight of the ten UN agency respondents, who had a proposal rejected, pointed out that it had been rejected by OCHA NY and not the RC/HC.

¹¹³ The project budget requirements are based on a recommendation from auditors who audited the former Central Emergency Revolving Fund.

¹¹⁴ UN agency interview respondents in the field noted that these plans are usually required for bilateral and ECHO funding.

Yet, an often-heard comment, expressed to the review team by UN respondents, was that OCHA (not referring specifically to the Secretariat) does not have the necessary technical expertise (e.g. health, agriculture, etc.) to be able to judge proposals. Respondents also expressed to the review team that they would like to receive substantive feedback on projects that were rejected.

Timeliness

There are two aspects to the timeliness issue – whether the funds are currently being disbursed to the field faster than they were at the beginning of the CERF and whether the funds are available faster through the CERF than they would have been if disbursed directly by donors to UN agencies through bilateral channels.¹¹⁵

While there is no systematic information on the time frames for decision-making and/or disbursement of CERF funds in the first year, there is considerable anecdotal evidence from interviews with UN agencies that there were delays in the disbursement of CERF funds to UN agencies in the field, in the first months of the CERF.¹¹⁶ For example, interview respondents indicated that the first allocations for the drought in the Horn of Africa countries included in the case studies (Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia) took frequently up to one month to reach the field.¹¹⁷ The reported causes of the delays, particularly in the first months, included difficulties in reaching agreement on the CERF proposal, delays in the review and approval process at OCHA NY, delays in agreeing on the Letters of Understanding (LoUs) between OCHA and the UN agencies, delays in disbursing the funds from the Office the Controller and delays in transferring the funds from the headquarters of the UN agencies to the field.¹¹⁸

In case study interviews, some respondents indicated that the timeframes had improved. In fact, the online survey indicates that UN agency respondents were positive about the CERF timeframes. Seventy percent (70%) of the 37 respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the timeframe for:

¹¹⁵ There are methodological challenges to the measurement of both the timeliness of the disbursements of the field and the comparison with funding through bilateral channels. There is limited information on the timeframes for disbursement of CERF funds to the UN agencies (timeframes which the CERF Secretariat is now tracking) and no information on the timeframes for disbursement beyond the agencies (which is beyond the scope of the Secretariat to track). The only methodology included in this review for addressing the issue of the comparison with funding through bilateral channels was to collect perceptions of stakeholders through interviews and the ESS online survey.

¹¹⁶ The anecdotal information does not make a distinction between funding from the rapid response and under-funded windows. Yet it is really only the rapid response window funding for early action and time critical responses that is particularly time sensitive. The CERF Secretariat is beginning the process of collecting information on the timeframes to the disbursement of funds on a systematic basis.

¹¹⁷ In one case, a UN agency reported that funding for the drought arrived after the drought and, in another, funding arrived so late that the activities had to be changed (proposed destocking of cattle had to be changed to the redistribution of stock).

¹¹⁸ It is not possible now to determine which, or to what extent, each of these may have contributed to the delays. It will be important when tracking the timeframes to make distinctions among the various components of the timeframe – at least from proposal submission to approval, from approval to LoU, from LoU to disbursement to the agency and from the disbursement to the agency to the arrival in the field.

- Receipt of written approval of the CERF funding following the submission of the final proposal;
- Disbursement of CERF from OCHA to the agency's headquarters; and
- Disbursement from their agency's headquarters to the country office.

These more positive views, compared to those provided to the review team by UN agency respondents in the case studies, may be explained by the fact that survey respondents were referring to current timeframes; whereas the case studies covered the period since the launch of the CERF. This suggests to the review team that the timeframes may be improving. In fact, there is anecdotal information about approvals of CERF funding made within less than two weeks and, at times, within a few days (e.g. flood response in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia). In addition, information provided to the review team by the CERF Secretariat suggests that the timeframes for at least the decision-making steps for CERF allocations might be improving.¹¹⁹ However, there is no information on the timeframes for the disbursement of funds through to the UN agencies or forward disbursements to implementing partners.¹²⁰

From interview respondents in the field, the review team notes that there was confusion about the timeframe for CERF rapid response funding. Some respondents indicated that they had to implement the funds within three months when, in fact, these grants have only to be *committed* within three months of being disbursed to the UN agencies by OCHA. As a result, some agencies felt that the timeframes were not appropriate, without realizing that there was, in reality, no timeframe for the *implementation* of CERF funds.¹²¹

As there do not appear to be clear guidelines to delineate which projects are appropriate for the rapid response and under-funded windows, the question whether UN agencies have three months or six months or more to commit the funds appears to be more dependent on the window under which they are funded, rather than the nature of the activities.

There are factors that reportedly improve the timeliness of the implementation of humanitarian activities. Interview respondents indicated that the timeframe for beginning activities in the field was faster for those UN agencies that have internal emergency funds or stockpiles that can be used to initiate humanitarian activities, once the CERF grants have been approved and pending disbursement of the funds – for example:

¹¹⁹ Information is available from the Secretariat for some rapid response grants during the first year; however, the information is not systematic and does not cover all rapid response grants. However, the Secretariat cannot track, without information from the UN agencies, the timeframes beyond the disbursement of the funds to the UN agencies.

¹²⁰ Interviews indicated that, in spite of requests from the Secretariat to provide this information, agencies are not able to provide systematic information about the timeframes for forward disbursements to implementing partners.

¹²¹ Information from the Secretariat indicated that although there is a suggested implementation time of six months, this is not, at this time, being enforced (see Exhibit 1). This may, in part, account for the confusion in the field about the timeframes for the rapid response window.

- WFP is regularly able to borrow money from its Immediate Response Account (IRA) for projects, except those that are managed through the UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) for air transport. The funds have to be reimbursed when the CERF funding is available;
- UNICEF is also able to use its Emergency Programme Fund (EPF); however, reportedly CERF funds are not used to reimburse the EPF, but may be used to scale up activities; and
- Some UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF, WFP) can also borrow from existing stocks of supplies in country but these usually have to be replaced using CERF funding.

The issue of whether the CERF funding is timelier than direct bilateral donor funding to UN agencies is more difficult to judge. However, some agency respondents indicated that, in their view, the CERF did provide “faster” money. Eighty-one percent (81%) of UN agency respondents participating in the online survey agreed or strongly agreed that the CERF allows their agency to respond more quickly than funding from bilateral donors. This view was not shared by NGO respondents interviewed for the case studies, who reported that, since the funding has to be transferred through a UN agency, the timeframes are longer.

Information on CERF grants

Even though the CERF is a shared mechanism, the review team notes that information about CERF grants is not readily available for all stakeholders. CERF funding decisions are posted on the CERF website and the information includes the agency, amount, sector and disbursement date. While this information about CERF grants is theoretically available to all interested stakeholders through the public website, interviews with UN agencies and NGOs reflected that stakeholders at the field level are not using the site to access this information and were, in fact, often unaware of the website. As a result, key stakeholders (including the NGOs and the national governments) report that they do not have information about the allocations that have been made to the UN agencies.

5.4 Accountability

The review team observes that accountability – effective monitoring and evaluation to ensure adequate transparency and results measurement for the CERF – is key to effective management of the CERF. The UN document that established the expanded CERF outlines the key expectations for CERF accountability:

The Office [OCHA] will monitor developments in the field, collect data and support the humanitarian/resident coordinators given their role of identifying priorities for funding. ... The Policy Development and Studies Branch will

provide capacity for evaluation and lead efforts to improve the assessment framework.¹²²

The review team's observations suggest that OCHA does not have the capacity (or, perhaps, even a clear mandate) for monitoring developments either at the global or field level. OCHA relies primarily on the UN agencies to provide results based information. Interviews with OCHA NY staff indicated that the narrative reporting was designed in such a way as to limit the burden on the UN agencies and to be consistent with GHD and the move to common, standardized donor reporting. However, interviews with UN agencies in the field suggested that the UN agencies do not see the necessity of the RC/HC semi-annual and annual narrative reports. They reported, in the interviews, that the narrative reporting at the field level (through the RC/HC) appears to duplicate reporting within UN agencies and raises the issue of a dual accountability of the UN agencies to the RC/HC and their own headquarters.

The Secretariat reported to the review team that a considerable number of project proposals include an allocation of between 3% and 10% of the CERF funding for monitoring and evaluation activities. It was not clear to the review team during the field visits how these funds were being used for monitoring and evaluation in the field. Some OCHA and UN agency respondents at the global and field levels suggested that some UN agencies did not have the capacity at the field level for monitoring and evaluation. In addition, some donors stated in interviews with the review team that the UN system, (generally speaking), is not good at measuring and reporting on results. However, at the same time, these interviews indicated that donors do not necessarily agree on the CERF results on which they expect the UN agencies and OCHA to report.

The key source of public information on the CERF is the CERF website, which is also the primary tool for donor reporting on the CERF.¹²³ However, looking at the website, the review team notes that it provides, as yet, limited information on CERF results. It appears to be geared more to providing public information for promoting the Fund than providing systematic and comprehensive information on results for donors. While the website provides both narrative and financial information on CERF funding, it is not possible to link the narrative information to the financial information and the quality and detail of narrative information varies from country to country. As the agency and country-level narrative reports become available, the Secretariat has indicated that it plans to post these on the site, making available whatever results information is provided by the UN agencies and the RC/HCs. The narrative reports from the first year of operations were only becoming available as this review was being conducted and, as yet, no annual narrative reports have been posted on the website.

¹²² "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations", A/60/432, 20 October 2005, p. 10

¹²³ "Secretary-General's bulletin: Establishment and operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund". 10 October 2006

The Secretariat reported that it has received, to date, annual reports from fifteen of the over 28 countries that received CERF funding in 2006.¹²⁴ Interviews in the field suggest that these reports have been prepared primarily by the OCHA offices, with input from the UN agencies, and submitted to OCHA NY by the RC/HC, with little engagement of the UN agencies, as a group, in the reporting. Looking at a few annual reports available at the time of the review suggests that they tend not to focus on CERF results.

The responses to the online survey did not reflect support for the current reporting requirements. Only a slight majority of the UN agency respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- CERF guidance was sufficient for them to contribute adequately to the RC/HC report on CERF funding (60%); and
- The current RC/HC report on CERF funding in their country allows them to reflect adequately the success of their CERF funding (54%).

They did, however, express the view that their agency's own evaluation systems would be very or somewhat effective at evaluating CERF funding (92%); compared to 73% who felt that joint UN country team evaluations would be very or somewhat effective and 63% who felt that CERF-funded evaluations humanitarian response would be very or somewhat effective.

The review team notes that the ability to report on CERF results is affected by accountability challenges – some of which are not specific to the CERF:

- Interview respondents indicated that there is a lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity at the field level in many UN agencies. OCHA also does not have this capacity, nor does it have a mandate for monitoring and evaluation with respect to CERF funding, instead relying solely on the UN agencies to provide the necessary information for CERF accountability.¹²⁵ This may be exacerbated in some countries by country-specific contexts – for example, the distances and locations of the projects (e.g. DRC) or the security situation (e.g. Somalia).
- In order to facilitate the speed of decision-making and disbursements and reduce the proposal preparation burden on UN agencies, the proposals for CERF funding generally do not have sufficient information (e.g. log frames, indicators) to allow for a systematic assessment of the results of the funding.
- In some cases, the CERF funding only contributed a portion of the costs of a much larger project and it would be difficult to attribute the project results to the CERF.
- There are significant challenges to measuring the impact of humanitarian assistance. For example, CERF reporting mechanisms require accounting for the number of beneficiaries (of CERF funding), but this is problematic. For those grants that support

¹²⁴ An additional five countries would not be expected to report yet, as they only received their funding in December 2006.

¹²⁵ This issue is discussed also in *Study Four: Changes in Humanitarian Financing: Implications for the United Nations* by Mark Dalton, Karin von Hippel, Randolph Kent, Ralf Maurer, 11 October 2003

activities expected to have a direct impact on beneficiaries (e.g. food distribution, vaccination), it may be possible to identify an estimate of the number of beneficiaries. However, it will be more difficult, if not impossible, to aggregate this information across projects and avoid duplication in the counting of beneficiaries. For grants that do not have a direct impact on beneficiaries (e.g. communication equipment, common transportation supports), it is difficult to provide any meaningful estimation of the number of beneficiaries.

- Finally, there are a number of other dimensions of humanitarian activities that pose methodological challenges – for example, additionality and connectedness.

In spite of having a number of mechanisms in place for financial and narrative reporting (including narrative and financial reporting templates and timeframes for the UN agencies and the RC/HC and a CERF website), the review team notes that there is, as yet, no overall framework for measurement of CERF performance – a framework that would help to address some of these challenges and reflect how the various reporting requirements fit together to provide comprehensive information on the CERF and improve the transparency of the Fund.

5.5 Underlying assumptions

This section presents the review team’s identification of two underlying and implicit assumptions about existing structures and processes that, in the view of the review team, appear to have been made in the design of the CERF. These are:

- The delivery capacity of the humanitarian response system; and
- The willingness and ability of humanitarian actors to engage in CERF processes.

To the extent that they are or are not validated, they may affect the success of the CERF.

In the view of the review team, the CERF can only be expected to achieve its objective of providing a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies if the humanitarian system, as a whole (including UN agencies, NGOs and, in some cases, national governments and donors) is able to deliver an effective humanitarian response. CERF provides funding and was intended to be a mechanism to strengthen coordination within the system, but cannot substitute for other components of the system.

The review of CERF funding indicates that funding has been provided to a range of UN agencies, including the long-standing humanitarian-focused UN agencies (e.g. WFP, UNHCR), UN agencies with mandates for both development and humanitarian response (e.g. UNICEF), those that are primarily seen as development UN agencies (e.g. UNFPA, UNDP) and those that are technical UN agencies (e.g. WHO, FAO). In the view of the review team, these UN agencies have different capacities to implement humanitarian activities. As noted in Section 4.1.3, CERF funding has been used to strengthen agency capacity to respond to emergencies and to strengthen the cluster approach – when done in combination with other humanitarian activities. The CERF is only able to achieve its

objectives, if the capacity of the implementing partners – either UN agencies or the NGOs – is strong.

As discussed in Section 4.3.1, the engagement of NGOs is key to effective humanitarian response. The design of the CERF – both in terms of its decision-making processes and the implementation of humanitarian activities – was based on the assumption that the various stakeholders (UN agencies, NGOs and, potentially, the national government) would be willing and able to participate in inclusive processes for the allocation of CERF funds and in the implementation of humanitarian activities.

Yet, in the view of the review team, based on interviews conducted for the case studies, there are limitations to the extent that the other stakeholders (particularly the NGOs) are either willing or able to participate in shared mechanisms. NGO interviews at the field level suggest that NGOs did not see the advantage of their participation in these processes – their organizations do not stand to gain and they did not see (or had not been convinced of) the advantages of their involvement in the funding discussions. The review team’s impression is that they may not have considered the role they could play in providing essential inputs on humanitarian needs and specific insights for the identification and prioritization of humanitarian needs. Even if they were convinced of the role they could play, NGOs identified a number of barriers to the involvement of at least some NGOs:

- The first is a resource issue. If the allocation process for the CERF was implemented as designed, it would take considerable resources from organizations (that are not able to receive funding themselves) to review and comment on funding proposals. Involvement in the CERF processes would draw on these already limited resources.¹²⁶ In addition, in some countries, like the DRC, the NGOs have limited resources in the capital, where most of the coordination/allocation meetings take place (since their operations are based outside the capital).
- Secondly, there is the issue of determining which NGOs should participate in the processes in countries where there are many international and national NGOs. The CERF allocation processes that have more recently engaged NGOs (e.g. in Ethiopia, DRC) tend to involve only a limited number (two or three) NGOs that may have been selected by OCHA. Without a platform for consultation and coordination among NGOs, there is no collective mechanism for identifying how many and which NGOs will participate in the CERF processes (including the balance between international and national NGOs).
- Thirdly, it is difficult to integrate INGOs in countries where there are UN integrated missions – notably, in Ivory Coast and also, to some extent, in the DRC.¹²⁷ The

¹²⁶ It should be noted that this resource constraint affects the UN agencies also. Since the CERF, as a mechanism, has transferred the responsibilities for decision-making about humanitarian funding from the donors to the ERC/OCHA and stakeholders at the country-level, it has also resulted in the transfer of the transaction costs from donors to these stakeholders. The success and sustainability of the engagement of other stakeholders will depend, to some extent, on the extent to which the UN agencies and NGOs can accommodate the additional resources required at the field level to participate in consultative processes for CERF funding.

¹²⁷ Although it is not an integrated mission, the same phenomenon has been observed, to some extent, in Somalia.

principle of neutrality of the UN is difficult to defend, as the UN fulfils both a political and humanitarian role.¹²⁸ This causes INGOs to distance themselves from the UN and, therefore, not be willing to collaborate with UN agencies or accept UN funding. This makes it difficult to engage the NGOs in CERF processes.

In the review team's view, some of these assumptions have not been held up and, as a result, they have made it more difficult for the CERF to achieve its objectives.

¹²⁸ See a discussion of this see *Study Four: Changes in Humanitarian Financing: Implications for the United Nations* by Mark Dalton, Karin von Hippel, Randolph Kent, Ralf Maurer, 11 October 2003

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the review team. The focus of this review was to:

- Assess the performance of the Fund in the first year of operations; and
- Look forward to the GA-mandated CERF review in 2008.

As a result, the recommendations focus on improvements that can be made to the CERF to both strengthen its performance as a humanitarian financing mechanism and its impact on strengthening the humanitarian response system and prepare for the 2008 review. However, it was not the role of this review, undertaken after only one year of operations, to make recommendations on the overall design of the CERF.¹²⁹

Impact of the CERF

There were significant achievements of the CERF at the global level. As of July 2007, the Fund had been able to attract \$US 582M in paid contributions since its launch in March 2006 – some of them from non-traditional humanitarian donors – and, over the same period, OCHA was able to disburse US\$ 446M while setting up the initial necessary support infrastructure and developing CERF procedures and guidelines for the CERF process.

The CERF, as funding source, has been very much appreciated by the UN agencies and, to the extent that they have benefited from funding, the NGOs. It is highly valued by the UN agencies because it provides additional funding for humanitarian response and is particularly valued by those UN agencies that are developing their humanitarian response operational capacity, as it facilitated them undertaking humanitarian activities.

It is too early, and there is limited documentation, to assess the actual impact of CERF projects on the humanitarian needs of beneficiaries. However, an analysis of the projects funded by the CERF allows for an assessment of the potential impacts of the Fund.

Appropriateness of CERF funding

The CERF has funded a wide range of projects. The life saving criterion has been defined very broadly to include immediate response activities in acute disasters, prevention activities and rehabilitation and early recovery activities. CERF projects have funded activities to strengthen the capacity of the UN system to provide humanitarian response and to support locally-managed projects (often accessed by NGOs). While a rationale can be made that links all the funded activities to life saving, some projects are likely to have

¹²⁹ Given the limited scope of this review, with a focus on the countries receiving large amounts of CERF funding, caution should be used in extrapolating these conclusions and recommendations to all CERF-funded countries.

a more direct or immediate impact on beneficiaries (such as nutritional, food and feeding, vaccination and health activities) than others, such as system strengthening or rehabilitation/reconstruction.

However, it brings into question the intended scope of the CERF or the interpretation of the life saving criterion. Criteria are used for two purposes: defining the range of projects that are eligible for funding and deciding on the priority of specific projects. While a broad definition allows the UN agencies to adapt the life saving criterion to the country specific context, as well as to their specific mandate, it also makes it more difficult to identify priorities within the portfolio of proposed projects.

It was not the mandate of this review to conclude on the “most” appropriate scope for the CERF, but more clarity would likely be helpful for both the UN agencies, as they prepare proposals, for OCHA NY staff as they review proposals and for the RC/HCs and ERC as they make decisions on CERF funding.

It is recommended:

1. That OCHA, in consultation with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group, clarify the scope of the life-saving criterion for the CERF, including how it applies to the two funding windows and how it is used for the approval and prioritization of projects.
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Whatever decisions are made on the scope would have other implications for the CERF, including different implications for the two funding windows. Taking a narrow definition would mean identifying how the CERF could implement activities that would be focused on immediate life saving. This would likely mean greater engagement of the NGOs, which would most likely bring the importance of humanitarian principles (in particular, the independence of humanitarian aid) to the forefront, as a result of the profile and mission statements of international humanitarian NGOs. It would likely also necessitate maintaining a strong role for the global level stakeholders in decision-making on CERF funding.

In contrast, confirming a broad interpretation of CERF’s scope would require more explicit criteria to assist with the identification of the priorities within the broad scope of possible projects. This might also mean shifting more authority for decision-making to the country level, where the decisions about humanitarian needs are made.

While criteria – beyond the life saving criterion – are already being used, making them explicit would increase the transparency of CERF funding. Possible additional criteria might include:

- Expected timeframes for the impact on saving lives (e.g. giving priority to immediate life saving);
- Number of lives that will be saved;
- Requirement to involve NGOs;
- Effectiveness of the delivery agents;

- Percentage of project that can be funded by the CERF;
- Likelihood of identifying other sources of funding; and
- Contribution to strengthening the humanitarian system, including strengthening sector/cluster coordination and greater engagement of NGOs.

Whichever scope is adopted for the CERF, ensuring the appropriateness of CERF is directly related to the assessment of humanitarian needs. Although CERF projects are expected to be needs-based, the review findings suggest that there is no systematic approach to determining levels of humanitarian need. Since this appears to be a challenge for both the rapid response and under-funded windows, and yet is critical to the effective use of CERF funds, needs assessment (methodology development) might be something that could be considered to be funded by the CERF. It would be similar to other support that CERF currently provides for strengthening the humanitarian response system, including support for cluster leads.

It is recommended:

2. That, given the critical importance of needs assessment information in the allocation of CERF funds, OCHA, in collaboration with IASC members [this includes UN agencies and INGOs], continues to strengthen the development and use of high quality needs assessment information in the allocation of CERF funding.
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Contribution of the CERF to the humanitarian reform agenda

The CERF, as a humanitarian financing mechanism, is one of four pillars of humanitarian reform, which includes strengthening partnerships among humanitarian actors. There are two ways in which the CERF can strengthen partnerships with NGOs through:

- Engagement of the non-UN stakeholders in the decision-making processes for the CERF; and
- Implementation of CERF-funded humanitarian activities by non-UN stakeholders.

Evidence from the case studies suggests that the CERF processes at the field level are only beginning to engage the NGO community in consultations for the allocation of CERF funds. The engagement of NGOs is increasing as country-level stakeholders become more aware of the expectations for inclusive processes and are able to develop the tools and platforms for this to happen. The development of inclusive processes will continue to require support at the country level.

It is recommended:

3. That OCHA continues initiatives to strengthen the RC/HCs by:
 - Extending the HC training on the CERF also to RCs;
 - Identifying techniques to assist RC/HCs with their roles; and
 - Including specific references to the CERF in the RC/HC Terms of Reference.
 4. That OCHA continue initiatives to strengthen the OCHA country offices, UNRCO and the UN agencies at the country level, by encouraging the CERF Secretariat and OCHA Regional Support Office to provide in-country training of OCHA, UNRCO and UN agency staff.
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There is no systematic information available from the UN agencies or OCHA on the extent to which NGOs have had access, through the UN agencies, to CERF funding. While the case studies provide examples of UN agencies working with NGOs as implementing partners, overall, it does not appear that the CERF, to date, has changed the way that UN agencies work with NGOs. It is also not clear, from CERF documentation, how the CERF was expected to contribute to the humanitarian reform pillar of increasing partnerships.

It is recommended:

5. That OCHA, in consultation with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group, clarify the relationship between the CERF and the humanitarian reform agenda, specifically with respect to increasing partnerships, particularly with NGOs.
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If it is decided that the CERF does, indeed, have a proactive role to play in strengthening partnerships with NGOs, then specific mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that this happens. Mechanisms might include, for example:

- Including CERF's role in building partnerships with NGOs in CERF policy and guideline documents;
- Including the extent of the engagement of NGO implementing partners as a factor in decision on CERF funding; and
- Developing mechanisms for communicating the links between the CERF and humanitarian reform and provide tools to assist with this at the country level.

CERF structures and processes

Global and field level actors appear to play different roles in the allocation of CERF funds. OCHA global-level actors ensure that the proposed projects are consistent with the CERF objectives, are appropriate in the country context and provided adequate financial information. Field-level actors, on the other hand, are responsible for identifying the humanitarian needs, developing appropriate responses, identifying the most appropriate stakeholders to implement the activities and setting the CERF-funded projects in the context of the overall humanitarian response. Responsibility for CERF accountability is not clearly assigned to either group, even though various accountability mechanisms have been put in place by the CERF Secretariat.

However, some field level stakeholders did not have a clear sense of the responsibilities of the various actors in OCHA NY and were unclear on the added value provided by the project review role of OCHA NY staff. Confirmation of the added value of the two groups in the allocation process could be achieved through clarification of the responsibilities of the various actors.

It is recommended:

6. That OCHA, in consultation with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group, clarify the responsibilities and accountabilities of the field and global levels for the preparation of recommendations to the ERC for CERF funding, the disbursement of funds and the monitoring, evaluation and reporting on CERF grants.
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Once the responsibilities of global and field level staff are clearer, then there is a need to clarify the roles and resources requirements for actors at both the global and field levels. This is a continuation of the work already begun in the Secretariat to develop Standard Operating Procedures for OCHA NY.

The initial expectation was that management requires that the CERF not be heavy. However, over the first year, this expectation proved to be unrealistic. The small Secretariat was called up to develop and refine guidelines and criteria for the CERF while, at the same time, reviewing projects and disbursing CERF funds. While other units within OCHA have also provided supports for the CERF processes, it would appear that the bulk of CERF management support is provided by the Secretariat. As a result of having limited resources in the Secretariat in its first year of operations, there are a number of outstanding operational issues, such improvements to the website and developing a CERF accountability framework, that have not been addressed. The Secretariat has recently received an additional seven posts for the management of the CERF. The staff profiles for these posts need to be defined based the expected roles of the Secretariat in relation to other OCHA NY units.

It is recommended:

7. That OCHA clarify the roles and accountabilities of the CERF Secretariat and identifies the appropriate resources for the Secretariat to meet its tasks.
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In addition, there is a need for clarification of the role that other divisions within OCHA are to play in supporting the CERF.

It is recommended:

8. That OCHA clarify the roles of the Coordination Response Division and other OCHA units in support of the CERF.
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Similarly, at the field level, there needs to be clarification of the roles and accountabilities of the actors for CERF management at the field level. This would need to take into account the different country contexts, in terms of humanitarian context and UN coordination.

It is recommended:

9. That OCHA, in consultation with IASC members and donors, clarify the roles and accountabilities for field level actors and identify the appropriate resources, including for the RC/HC offices and OCHA field offices, where necessary.
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CERF accountability

While some mechanisms have been put in place for sharing information and being accountable for CERF funding, there is no overall agreed-upon framework that ties these mechanisms into a package to reflect the performance expectations of the CERF.

It is recommended:

10. That OCHA, in consultation with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group, develop a performance framework for the CERF.
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A performance framework would identify:

- Key results expected from the CERF;
- Information that needs to be collected on an ongoing basis (such as timeframe data);
- Baseline data for key variables (such a timeliness, concept of under-funded emergencies);
- Methodologies for addressing some of the challenging issues (such as additionality and how to assess the impact on beneficiaries);
- Roles and responsibilities for CERF implementation as well as CERF monitoring, evaluation and reporting, including the roles of OCHA and the UN agencies; and
- External reporting mechanisms, particularly for the CERF donors and defines the role of the CERF website in reporting.

The framework should also adequately reflect the assumptions behind the design of the CERF, in order to set the context for the implementation of the CERF.

One implication of the limited resources in the Secretariat over the first year has been the limited capacity to improve the CERF website. The site needs to be improved in order to be effective as the primary tool for donor reporting on the CERF and provide more user-friendly access to CERF information.

It is recommended:

11. That OCHA improves the CERF website to make it more accessible and transparent, enabling stakeholders to link financial and narrative project information.
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Challenges in the underlying assumptions

The review team noted that some challenges potentially faced by CERF in achieving its objectives are linked to two key assumptions that underlie the CERF design.

The first assumption is that the humanitarian system, which the CERF funding supports, has the capacity to achieve the CERF objective of providing a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies.

The second assumption is that the various humanitarian stakeholders are willing and able to participate in inclusive processes for the allocation of CERF funds. While the case studies suggest that the UN agencies, for the most part, have been willing and able to participate, there are limitations to the extent that these other stakeholders (particularly the NGO community) are either willing or able to participate in shared mechanisms.

However, with respect to the engagement of the NGOs, it is possible that OCHA, in collaboration with other humanitarian stakeholders, can influence their engagement in CERF processes.

It is recommended:

12. That OCHA, in collaboration with donors, IASC members and the CERF Advisory Group work proactively with INGOs at the global level to encourage them to stimulate their country offices to engage in the CERF processes at the country level.
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Recommendations for the GA-mandated review

A second main objective of this review was to identify the issues that need to be taken into account in planning for the GA-mandated review to take place in 2008. The review team highlights some lessons learned from the limitations faced in the implementation of the current review. If the GA-mandated review is going to be more successful in reflecting the overall picture of the CERF and assessing the extent to which it has achieved its objectives, planning for this review needs to begin immediately and OCHA needs to ensure both adequate documentation and resources for the review.

It is recommended:

13. That OCHA put in place measures to ensure that complete documentation on CERF processes and grants is maintained and readily available, at the field and global levels, for the GA-mandated review.
 14. That OCHA include in the review Terms of Reference a systematic analysis of CERF grants at the global level in order to profile adequately the full range of CERF funding.
 15. That OCHA initiate the review process early and include sufficient resources to allow for an in-depth evaluation at both the country and project level.
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A profile of the full range of CERF funding should include an analysis of such things as:

- Nature of all projects funded by CERF (using a defined typology);
- Percentage of CERF funding for each agency;
- Percentage of total project budgets funded by the CERF, by agency;
- Percentage of CERF funds disbursed to NGOs, by agency and country;
- Time frames for CERF decision-making and disbursements, including disbursements to implementing partners; and
- Additionality of the funding of key donors.

An in-depth evaluation would require the identification of a sample of at least 10 – 15 CERF projects, for which the review would cover all aspects of the projects from the allocation processes to implementation and measurement of results, including an assessment of, among other things:

- Activities, as proposed and implemented;
- Project outputs;
- Implementation processes, including involvement of NGOs;
- Beneficiary and other impacts;
- Other factors affecting project implementation (including project assumptions); and project reporting.