



Application of the CERF Life-Saving Criteria An Update

CERF Secretariat
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A. Introduction

At the last Advisory Group meeting held in April 2011 in Nairobi, members of the group received a note on the application of the CERF Life-Saving Criteria. This note provided a short history of the criteria and overview of their application at field level and by the CERF Secretariat. The Advisory Group requested that this item remains on the agenda and tasked the CERF Secretariat to identify issues faced in the application and the interpretation of the criteria.

As part of the work undertaken towards further formalising and systematising the project review process, the CERF Secretariat has identified several issues that prompt discussion at the field and headquarters levels when interpreting and applying the criteria. Some of these “gray” areas include activities or sectors that were not addressed in the CERF Life-Saving Criteria as they are not eligible for support as per the CERF mandate while others areas are regularly funded by CERF grants.

This paper will explore these issues.

B. Discussion on the application and interpretation of the criteria

Themes specifically excluded from the January 2010 Life-Saving Criteria

Preparedness

While the CERF does not fund preparedness, the Secretariat is closely following the debate, which is currently on-going within the humanitarian financing sphere aimed at enhancing sources of funding for the preparedness activities. Regardless of the direction of the discussion, and notwithstanding the usefulness of preparedness activities in the management of humanitarian crisis, the Secretariat remains convinced that preparedness should not be considered, at this stage, within the CERF Life-Saving Criteria, as it is not part of CERF mandate and alternative sources of funding should be pursued. This has also been the consistent view of the Advisory Group. As a recent example, the rapid response request from the humanitarian country team in the Republic of Sudan in August 2011 has been put on hold, as the lack of access to the affected area (South Kordofan) has transformed the projects in preparedness rather than emergency response (a separate document referring specifically on preparedness is included in the briefing file)

Early Recovery

In the original Life-Saving Criteria finalized in August 2007 Early Recovery was included as not eligible for support. During the 2010 revision process, substantial discussion were held with UNDP who argued that Early Recovery is now a well accepted component of humanitarian response and, as such, is an integral part of the response from the beginning of a crisis and is embedded in many proposals. The agency felt that, as a concept, Early Recovery is not the same as full-fledged recovery or transition. Consequently, Early Recovery was not specifically excluded from January 2010 Life-Saving Criteria. A certain degree of flexibility has been applied. The following constitute concrete examples when, under the rapid response window, the CERF provided funds to early recovery projects:

- In the initial response to the Haiti earthquake in January 2010, cash for work programmes were supported for the removal of waste to clear the roads;
- In Mongolia, cash for work programmes were supported for the removal of animal carcasses during the Dzud in 2010 in order to avoid the spread of disease as animals are a principle source of livelihood.

For the underfunded emergency window, it is becoming more challenging to define early recovery as opposed to full recovery or transition to development. A review of the submissions in the recent UFE round indicated that, in almost each sector, activities vary from traditional humanitarian to early recovery or medium-term transition to development. This finding is particularly relevant in the nine-month project duration of the underfunded emergency window and in countries in a protracted humanitarian crisis or in the early stage of post-conflict transition.

As an example, it was challenging to distinguish between early recovery and longer-term transition activities in the projects submitted by UNDP and FAO in the Philippines for the 2011 underfunded emergency (Round II). The CERF Secretariat decided not to provide funds to UNDP as the type of activities—micro capital grants for income generation initiatives—did not adhere to the Life-Saving Criteria.

The view, within the Secretariat, is that the time criticality is a key criterion to determine the decision to provide funding. In this regard, recent returnee communities are benefiting from CERF grants in light of this criterion, in particular, where there is extremely limited infrastructure to sustain the return (Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Philippines). Nevertheless, it is felt that the CERF support for these activities should be limited in time and contingent on the phase of the continuum from humanitarian emergency to recovery. The challenge remains to determine at what stage of the continuum is CERF support no longer appropriate.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The CERF Secretariat has received rapid response requests from a limited number of countries on a nearly annual basis for the same period during the year, to address diseases outbreaks or to alleviate the consequence of seasonal flooding. Chad and Zimbabwe received CERF funds to address cholera and/or meningitis outbreaks, while Bolivia is receiving funds for the response to seasonal floods. It is clear that these emergencies fit within the Life-Saving Criteria and CERF therefore must consider the submissions favourably. However, in light of the amount allocated every year and the predictability of such seasonal disasters, significant savings could be made if additional resources, from alternative sources, were allocated to disaster risk reduction in order to minimize the vulnerability and disaster consequence. The CERF could play an advocacy role in this regard.

Sector and/or Cluster Activities included in the Life-Saving Criteria and regularly funded through CERF Grants:

Agriculture

The discussion during the 2010 review of the Life-Saving Criteria led to the conclusion that agricultural activities are to be considered as life-saving and included in the CERF criteria under specific conditions, indicating that agricultural activities have a direct and immediate impact on restoring and protecting food availability and the livelihood of those affected by an emergency. The time-criticality is also a key criterion, which affects the decision to fund. In spite of these clarifications and as a result of the conditions, there is often debate at the field level on whether these types of activities are to be considered as priorities particularly in the very early phase of a rapid onset emergency.

Education

As per the Life-Saving Criteria, the CERF is supporting the provision of school tents and education and recreational materials to establish safe learning spaces/learning environments for children in an emergency setting. It also includes repair of education facilities that have been damaged or destroyed as the result of a crisis. This typically leads to discussion dependent on the context. As an example, tents for IDP camps in Somalia are being funded as are school repairs in Zimbabwe in response to floods. This flexibility according to the context results in beneficiaries receiving a different level/type of response. In rapid response requests it is usually very clear why and what the CERF should fund. In the underfunded emergency context, a clear decision can be more challenging as it is sometimes difficult to determine if school repairs are required due to an emergency or as a result of lack of funds for the regular programme/project of an agency or lack of maintenance by government structures.

Shelter

Under the Life-Saving Criteria, the CERF supports the provision and distribution of shelter materials, and the construction/repair of temporary emergency shelters (recently CERF provided funds to humanitarian country team in The Republic of Sudan to allow returnees in Abyei to remain for a few days in transit shelter). In some cases substantial shelter support is requested which is a much higher beneficiary costs than others. This may be due to the weather (in Pakistan for example) or in cases when it is acknowledged that the shelters may be required for a much longer term. Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and Kenya (Dadaab refugee camps) are examples. This variety and the need to take into account specific context can be challenging as there is a fine line between emergency response and longer term/semi-permanent accommodation. The CERF Secretariat carefully measures per beneficiaries cost to better evaluate these requests.

Food

As food assistance fits within the Life-saving Criteria, the CERF decision to fund food requirement in emergency is usually straightforward. The challenge at the field level is, while preparing a CERF request, to adequately balance food requirements with other sector needs in order to ensure that food sector will not use all the funds available.

Health

The challenge, at the field level, is, for the health practitioners, to distinguish between what is urgently needed to respond to new needs and therefore eligible for CERF funding versus what is required due to a lack of resources to support a health system. In the recent past, CERF Secretariat faced some difficulties in reviewing submissions, which were not clearly identifying the difference between emergency response and regular health programme in a country. These difficulties are more acute in the context of underfunded emergencies.

Protection

Protection activities are included within the Life-Saving Criteria. It is interesting to note that some of the PAF reports (and Five-Year Evaluation) indicate that on occasion the perception at the field level is that the CERF does not support protection. However, protection is included in the Life-Saving Criteria and the CERF has approved protection projects. A separate note is attached to provide more concrete examples of recent protection activities funded by the CERF.

Gender-based Violence

It can be challenging to distinguish between responses to Gender-based Violence in an emergency context and the need to address the lack of funding in a chronic emergency (recent submissions in Ethiopia, Niger and Zimbabwe).

Support Services

CERF provides funds for common security measures and telecommunications support. It does not fund individual agency security support. However, in the case of Kenya this year IOM would have been unable to distribute non-food items without a security escort and had no funds to provide this service. In this instance, funds were granted on an exceptional basis as IOM was the only organization working in the specific area at the time of the submission.

Specific guidance for the use of CERF funds to provide support to common telecommunications has been finalised and complementing the existing guidance on common air service. Similar guidance is expected to be finalised shortly for security services.

C. Immediate way forward

In an effort to improve consistency in the interpretation of the criteria, the CERF proposes to develop “cluster/sector specific key questions and reference” which can be used to secure more detailed information from proposals. These questions and reference could be considered as a supplement to the current Life-Saving Criteria and facilitate the discussion at the field, during the prioritisation exercise, and the review process by addressing ambiguities. Such a reference would allow for a more consistent approach.

The proposed document would be developed through a desk review of reference documents such as SPHERE, USAID/OFDA “Additional Programme Description Requirements” model and through a consultation process with the clusters/sectors. The CERF plans to complete this process by the end of the first quarter 2012.

CERF Secretariat
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