

Objective: To ensure common understanding of the Emergency Relief Coordinator's (ERC's) four priority areas for the CERF as communicated to Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) on 29 January 2019. The four priority areas are: (a) support for women and girls, including tackling gender-based violence, reproductive health and empowerment; (b) programmes targeting disabled people; (c) education in protracted crises; and (d) other aspects of protection.

1. What is the background for the ERC's communication around the four priority areas and why has the ERC decided to use CERF to help increase focus and funding to these areas?

The ERC identified the four priority areas as often underfunded and lacking appropriate consideration and visibility when funding is allocated to humanitarian action. The ERC therefore recommended an increased focus on these four areas to ensure that they be given due consideration by RC/HCs and UNCTs/HCTs when prioritizing life-saving needs for inclusion in CERF requests in support of a strong and effective response. The aim is to ensure additional consideration of the four areas in CERF allocation strategies and projects. Using CERF to increase focus on the four priority areas will also leverage attention to these underfunded areas at the global level, which in turn will hopefully help to mobilize additional resources through bilateral donor contributions and other channels.

2. What does the ERC expect to see in future CERF submissions and how is successful implementation defined?

In line with the communication, the ERC would like to see an increased focus on and visibility of the four priority areas. This means that UNCTs/HCTs give due consideration to the focus areas when prioritizing activities for CERF submissions and agencies incorporate these aspects into their programming, as relevant. The ERC expects activities and results within the four priority areas to be reflected throughout the entire CERF programme cycle.

3. Does CERF expect/accept stand-alone agency submissions dedicated to address the four areas?

No, CERF does not accept or fund stand-alone agency CERF requests. Only joint submissions prioritized under the leadership of the RC/HC are eligible for CERF funding. The ERC's communication should be understood as guidance to ensure that the four priority areas are appropriately integrated and considered in agencies' proposals as part of regular CERF submissions, either mainstreamed in agency programming or as a targeted stand-alone action.

4. Does the ERC's communication mean that all future CERF submissions need to include activities within all four areas, and is funding for these areas guaranteed?

No. Consistent with existing CERF guidelines and the life-saving criteria, any CERF Rapid Response (RR) and Underfunded Emergencies (UFE) request should continue to be based on context-specific humanitarian needs as discussed and prioritized in the UNCT/HCT under the leadership and coordination of the RC/HC. However, the ERC will expect that due consideration is given to the four priority areas when CERF submissions are prepared and therefore that UNCTs/HCTs

during the prioritization process discuss and reflect the four areas in the formulation of the CERF request as relevant.

5. Has CERF funded targeted action within the four priority areas in the past?

Yes. CERF has consistently invested in all the four areas in the past, when these have been part of the jointly prioritized needs under the leadership and coordination of the RC/HC and have been deemed eligible for CERF funding in line with CERF's criteria. But the ERC has deemed that investment in and focus on these four areas up until now has not been to the desirable degree.

6. The ERC's message mentions the possibility to expand CERF activities in some important underfunded areas. Could other underfunded sectors be considered under these areas?

Increased focus on these four areas does not detract importance or relevance of other aspects of humanitarian response. Underfunded, critical life-saving activities within any sectors should be considered by country teams in their proposed CERF responses.

7. How will the ERC or CERF secretariat assess the inclusion of the four priority areas in CERF submissions?

As part of the review process, the CERF secretariat will pay particular attention to how the four priority areas have been considered and reflected in the overall strategic response and in individual agency proposals. That means how the overall CERF application considers the four areas either through specific targeted action (e.g. an education project) or an explanation of the mainstreaming of the four areas in agencies' programming. This information will be sought at the concept note/initial request phase for Rapid Response (RR) and in the Underfunded Emergencies (UFE) prioritization strategy for the ERC's clearance, as well as integrated into the application templates.

8. What is the role of RC/HCs and UNCTs/HCTs?

The role of RC/HCs and UNCTs/HCTs remains unchanged. The leadership and coordination role of RC/HCs in consultation with partners in UNCTs/HCTs engaging in CERF processes is critical to ensure a successful, well-prioritized CERF request and implementation of CERF-funded projects. However, following the ERC's communication, RC/HCs are now asked to ensure that they consider the four priority areas in the identification and prioritization of needs in the CERF strategy as well as in the various project proposals. If they are not directly addressed in proposed CERF activities, the ERC expects that RC/HCs will explain this in the submission.

9. What is the role of agencies and cluster-leads?

The role of agencies and cluster-leads engaging in CERF processes remains unchanged. Partners will, however, be expected to explain how the four priority areas have been considered in cluster prioritization and project development.

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Annex – ERC message to RC/HCs

From: Mark Lowcock <lowcock@un.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 29, 2019 11:58 AM
To: RC/HCs
Subject: Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Priorities

Dear colleagues

I writing to seek your help with an important initiative I am keen to progress this year.

Last year, we raised record resources for the CERF: \$550 million.

Much of the increase, those providing it have told me, was based on our plans to further improve the CERF. One aspect of this is to enhance CERF's role in early action. We will be in touch later on that.

Another is to expand CERF activities in some important underfunded areas. These include (a) support for women and girls, including tackling gender-based violence, reproductive health and empowerment, (b) programmes targeting disabled people, (c) education in protracted crises and (d) other aspects of protection.

The CERF has invested in all these areas in the past: but not to the desirable degree.

I would be grateful if, in considering CERF applications for both the rapid response window and the underfunded crises window, you would bear this in mind. CERF will of course remain needs-based, but I expect an increased focus on these key priorities.

My office will be reviewing all proposals as they come to me so we can track progress.

Other activities will of course continue to be assessed on their merits, and will, I expect, continue to absorb most CERF resources.

We cannot promise to fund everything you propose in the new focus areas, but we will consider them all carefully.

For any help or questions on this, please contact Lisa Carty, the Director for Humanitarian Finance in OCHA.

With many thanks for your help.

Best wishes

Mark

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