

**Independent Review of the value added of the
Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)
In Sri Lanka**

21st – 27th November 2010

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Executive Summary

At the request of the CERF Advisory Group (AG), the CERF Secretariat developed a draft Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF) in 2009 through close consultation with UN agencies, IOM and other stakeholders. In July 2010 the CERF AG endorsed the draft PAF which includes, amongst other things, a mechanism for independent reviews to be conducted annually of a sample of three to five countries each year. Following a pilot review of the added value of CERF to humanitarian actions in Kenya using the PAF, three further countries were selected to give further feedback on the systems and procedures used to access the CERF. This report using the PAF covers interviews and document reviews in Sri Lanka specifically for the period of 2009. Any additional points on the 2010 CERF applications have also been taken into account. It is worth noting that since the establishment of the CERF in March 2006, 107 projects in Sri Lanka have benefited from CERF funding totalling \$72,580,929. During this time the loan facility has not been used.

The inputs from the UN country team under the leadership of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) have been a focused prioritisation of strategic programming intended to stabilise and assist with resolving humanitarian problems arising from the war in Sri Lanka. These actions have been carried out at all times in partnership with the Government of Sri Lanka. As this review did not include time in the CERF Secretariat it is more difficult to review the input of that structure but the support given is clearly appreciated and viewed by the UN country team to have been constructive.

The output from the CERF has allowed seven UN Agencies and IOM to respond with faster and therefore more effective humanitarian response systems. For most of the Agencies it has been enough to know

- ✓ That funding has been agreed and
- ✓ The level of that funding,

which allows some Agencies to use their own internal funding immediately knowing that these funds can be replaced with CERF funding once it arrives. However, this is not true for all UN Agencies;

- ✓ Of the five grants and donations that UNOPS received during 2009 four were from CERF, two in February and two in April which represented 59.5 per cent of annual funding. The one donation not from the CERF was given during May so only CERF funding was available for the first four months of the year.
- ✓ Of the four grants and donations that UNFPA received during 2009 two were from CERF, one in February and one in April which represented 40 per cent of the annual funding. The other two donations not from CERF were given during June and December, so only CERF funding was available for the first five months of the year.

The timeliness is therefore reduced for this second group while the Letter of Understanding (LoU) is signed and finance codes allocated.

The operational effect is undoubtedly a strengthening of humanitarian response mechanisms within the UN system. Coordination between Agencies depends very much on the people involved and it is difficult to measure any levels of improvement that could be attributed to

the systems supported by the CERF. The UN country team did meet, discuss, decide on priorities and took actions to implement those priorities. It is therefore enough to say that coordination between the UN country team has been effective and in 2010 continues to be so.

Each Agency monitors the use of its funds as a part of their overall funding. There are no separate systems for monitoring the use of CERF funding and neither does there need to be as the present system ensures quality of implementation. Each of the UN Agencies;

- ✓ Monitors the situation they are responding to,
- ✓ Monitors the effectiveness and efficiency of the programmes they are running to achieve their objectives,
- ✓ Changes their programmes in line with any change of need on the basis of this on-going monitoring, and
- ✓ Compiles their reports on the basis of this system.

In this way the support given by the CERF is monitored and reported on as a matter of course.

The operational impact has allowed life-saving programming to start quickly and be more effective. In dollar terms it represents over 8.5 per cent of humanitarian funding for Sri Lanka during 2009 with CERF being the third largest donor after the USA and Australia. All of the 31 CERF funded projects for Sri Lanka in 2009 were from the rapid response window and these funds have been critical in saving lives.

The cluster approach has been used in Sri Lanka for supporting a coordinated response among all the organisations involved. The Government of Sri Lanka has been and still is involved with these clusters and actively participates in setting priorities. The clusters use field-based knowledge from initial assessments and on-going monitoring of situations to set their priorities. Information was analysed by the clusters during regular meetings which changed based on the need to meet.

The proposals for the first round of rapid response window grants in 2009 were generally ready for final submission on 20 February and all but two were approved the same day. The fastest of the Agencies had gone through the process of having the LoU signed, financial codes allocated and had the funds transfer started by 2 March, a period of 10 days. The slowest Agency achieved this in 20 days. The time taken for the LoU to be signed varied by UN Agency but was generally within five days. Apparently the holding point for this within the UN system is the allocation of financial codes for the use of funding. The disbursement of funds to the recipient Agencies took three days. The signing of agreements with implementing partners varied widely. If an Agency already had an agreement with an NGO then it was possible to expand that agreement to cope with the new situation. Where it was a new relationship the process could take up to six weeks.

Month	Final submission	ERC approval	LOU signed	Request PPDB	Disbursement
February	20	20/27	24 Feb /4March	25 Feb /6 March	2 – 12 March
May	8/13	12/13	15/27	19 / 29	22 May/2 June
October	19	27	29 Oct/ 4 Nov	2 – 5 Nov	6 – 11 Nov

All of the UN Agencies and IOM have their own internal monitoring systems and accountability mechanisms and are aware of the global guidelines on the standards for CERF reporting. There is no separate system for monitoring of CERF-funded activities and this is not required. The OCHA country office has a good support system in place for the UN Agencies in ensuring support with all elements of CERF, including reporting.

Not all UN Agencies in receipt of CERF funding have been able to demonstrate that they are able to acquire additional donor funding for their humanitarian programming. According to the Financial Tracking Service (FTS)¹, over 95 per cent of WHO's programme funding was from the CERF and over 62 per cent of programme funding for the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS). However, the amounts are relatively low. UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP have much more solid funding bases and are also the largest recipients of support from CERF. These Agencies don't specifically use the CERF as a fundraising tool with their donors and it's not clear that this would be effective with all donors. For example, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) made it clear that with the CERF and each individual Agency's internal disaster response funding able to give immediate life-saving support to any situation they are able to wait and decide with better information available to what level they will also give support. WFP exhibited the lowest reliance on the CERF with just over 6 per cent of their total funding coming from the CERF. All UN Agencies are fully aware that the CERF is fundamental to being able to respond to life-saving needs and any programme gaps.

It is difficult to say that response capacity is strengthened due to the CERF as no preparedness or training is carried out with CERF funding. It would be more accurate to say that the response capability is assured due to the reliability and flexibility of the CERF which gives agencies the confidence to be able to start activities earlier.

The indicators for the quality of the response are difficult to lay at the door of the CERF even though CERF supports them. Many of the actions outlined in the Humanitarian Accountability Project since 2007 are carried out as a matter of course by the majority of organisations involved in humanitarian response whether signed up to this system or not. Examples of these include:

- ✓ Commitment to humanitarian standards and rights

¹ <http://fts.unocha.org>

- ✓ Setting standards and building capacity
- ✓ Communication with all stakeholders
- ✓ Participation of beneficiaries in programmes
- ✓ Monitoring and reporting on compliance
- ✓ Addressing complaints
- ✓ Standards of Implementing Partners

Additionally the Sphere minimum standards although documented since 1996 and not new at that stage were a compilation of what Organisations have been trying to achieve for a long period of time.

It is considered by the majority of people interviewed that the role of the RC/HC is strengthened as a result of the CERF as is the coordination aspect of the clusters. Coordination and the cluster system are also supported by the way that priorities for CERF submissions are agreed.

Sri Lanka situation from the 2009 CHAP

Following years of war in Sri Lanka, Government forces took control of key areas formerly held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in early 2009. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced and priorities were agreed with the government after consultations between sector leads, their partners, donors as well as other stakeholders and outlined in the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP)². The funding requirement for 103 projects proposed by 42 organisations, which included 28 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), 12 UN agencies and IOM totalled US\$ 155.54 million³. The mid-year review introduced new projects and revisions to existing ones. The total revised funding requirements amounted to approximately \$270 million for 185 projects⁴.

A total of \$267,509,832 was given in grants during 2009 of which the CERF contributed \$23,506,382 in support of 31 projects for seven UN Agencies and IOM. The CERF, hence, provided 8.78 per cent of the total funding. All of these allocations were under the rapid response window. This was done through three submissions,

- ✓ February, \$9,998,337 for 14 projects between the 20th and 25th,
- ✓ May, \$11,251,940 for 15 projects between the 11th and 14th.
- ✓ October, \$2,256,105 for two projects on the 20th.

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http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/sriLanka_hpsl/Files/Appeals%20and%20Funding/Appeals%20and%20Funding/AF00022_CHAP%202009.pdf

3 <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/webpage.asp?Page=1743 - ftn1>

4

http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/sriLanka_hpsl/Files/Appeals%20and%20Funding/Appeals%20and%20Funding/AF00023_MYR_2009_Sri_Lanka_CHAP_SCREEN.pdf

Recipient Agency or Organisation	Number of projects funded by CERF	Total CERF funding in 2009
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	5	\$6,207,411
United Nations Children's Fund	10	\$6,132,742
World Food Programme	2	\$5,100,000
IOM	4	\$1,927,348
United Nations Office for Project Services	4	\$1,375,632
World Health Organization	3	\$1,306,380
United Nations Development Programme	1	\$1,005,800
United Nations Population Fund	2	\$469,801

Value added of the CERF

Information from UN Agencies and IOM indicates that, due to the speed and levels of funding in grant form, humanitarian response work was

- able to start more quickly and,
- Allowed to Agencies have a high impact more quickly than they otherwise could.

The term, "improved life-saving" has been used by all UN Agencies interviewed who confirmed that they were able to redirect funding of their own as soon as the CERF allocation and the size of the allocation was confirmed. The majority of organisations do not need to wait for the funding to arrive in the bank to start their activities for a rapid response. It is this confirmation of funding that is needed and the CERF allocation is then able to replace redirected funding when it does arrive. It is still important that the funding arrives quickly as not all Agencies are in the position to redirect a large amount of funding over a long period of time. Additionally any redirected funding needs to be replaced as quickly as possible to avoid other programmes collapsing due to the loss of funds.

Recipient Agency or Organisation	CERF funding in 2009	Total funding in 2009	Percentage made up by CERF
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	\$6,207,411	\$42,638,329	14.56%
United Nations Children's Fund	\$6,132,742	\$25,236,043	24.30%
World Food Programme	\$5,100,000	\$84,566,575	6.03%
IOM	\$1,927,348	\$11,322,372	17.02%
United Nations Office for Project Services	\$1,375,632	\$2,194,359	62.69%
World Health Organization	\$1,306,380	\$1,366,509	95.59%
United Nations Development Programme	\$1,005,000	\$3,791,315	26.50%
United Nations Population Fund	\$469,801	\$1,199,433	36.17%

Criteria for the allocation of CERF funding

In 2009 all of the CERF grants to Sri Lanka were from the rapid response window during February, May or October. All conformed to the criteria:

- ✓ sudden onset emergencies or crises,
- ✓ rapid deteriorations of existing complex emergencies.

The criteria for the selection of projects all fall within those defined by CERF for the rapid response window:

- ✓ based on needs assessments,
- ✓ chosen from the core humanitarian programmes ,
- ✓ essential for the humanitarian response (prioritized by the HC/RC and Country Team),
- ✓ life-saving, as defined by the mandate of the CERF.

To ensure adherence to its mandated role the CERF defines “life-saving” by using the basic humanitarian principle of placing the people and communities affected in the focus and applying a rights-based approach traced back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular the right to life with dignity. In Sri Lanka, it was felt that the criteria for eligibility of CERF funding were about right. However, there have been some comments that the criterion for life-saving is too loose since life with dignity is not necessarily life-saving. On that basis not all grants were as “life-saving” as would be desirable. In addition, funds allocated for some less important programme elements dilute the level of life-saving for those Agencies who are heavily involved with these activities. For example,

- When a government has fleets of buses, people able to drive those buses and the fuel to run them why is CERF paying for IDP transport from a camp for people to be able to go home? This was prioritised by the UN country team at the time however despite this the CERF secretariat has a role to play to ensure that the focus of grants comes within the scale shown in the guidance notes and is not something which the Government of the country could take responsibility for.
- Even though education may be viewed as psychological support and a tool to be able to get children back into their comfort zones is this really “life-saving?”

Life with dignity as a concept created a wide range of discussions as clearly it is a moving target not just from country to country but within countries as well. Using the UNDP development index the bottom 30 or 40 countries would be able to bring programmes for large percentages of their populations based on this broad criterion. It is clearly debatable if such programmes would come within the CERF life-saving criterion given in the guidance notes and so life with dignity needs to be related to the context of the country to ensure that life-saving is really life-saving and not just life with dignity. For example, “*The life-saving criteria have been developed with a range of crises in mind but must be interpreted in relation to the specific situation,*” but who’s interpretation? The interpretation of situations will change from UN Agency to Agency which leads to the following recommendation.

Recommendation:

The life-saving criteria for CERF applications should be reconsidered to include something on the context of the way people are living within any particular country or region. This may mean a slight tightening of the criteria to ensure that the term “dignity” is not exploited for

funding which is not in reality “life-saving.” It is interesting to note that the CERF Two-Year evaluation recommended that the specific context should be considered when applying the life-saving criteria. But this is not clearly understood in all countries as the context of each country, unless clearly defined, will mean different things to different people.

Timeliness of CERF funding

The timeliness of CERF funding is one of the main advantages of the system and in Sri Lanka from the time of compiling the proposal being to the funding being approved has been at times under two weeks for rapid response. Although the UFE window was not used during 2009, the process for this window does take longer than RR. This is quite normal. But even this funding - once agreed - was available within a month during 2010. However, for the main Agencies in receipt of CERF it is the speed of the agreement for funding that is important as they have their own funds which can be accessed and used immediately and replaced with the CERF funds when they arrive.

The main problem with timeliness is the timespan in which the funds have to be used. The period of three months is sufficient if the funding is for the purchase of equipment and the equipment is reasonably available. However, when the funding is used to support a life-saving system such as mobile clinics, using the funds within three months does become a problem for some Agencies.

Recommendations:

Every indicator and comment made in Sri Lanka complimented the attitude and support of the people in the CERF Secretariat and the way it is run. Every effort should be made to ensure that this approach does not change over time. The important part of the system is that funding from CERF remains fast and flexible and that the approach does not become bureaucratic.

The period of three months to use rapid response funding should be expanded to six months to allow more time for the use of funding where systems are being supported as opposed to straight purchasing. It is understood that this is the intension in the near future and that the decision has already been taken. There is no need for a two tier system as some had suggested and was discussed at the country debriefing as this would unnecessarily complicate the system.

Inclusiveness and Transparency of the allocation process

The process of deciding the priorities within technical sectors comes from discussions in the clusters. Although the government is included in clusters and has to agree the programmes to be run, it is the UN lead who takes forward the programmes and the priorities within the UN system. The UN cluster lead is also the lead technical person for his or her UN Agency and therefore has the conflictual role of representing both the cluster and the Agency. Cluster leads were described as anything between democratic where the members of a cluster felt that they had a voice that was heard and taken note of and dictatorial where the cluster lead person decided much more on an individual basis. The level of sharing of information within clusters varies very much depending on the way the cluster is run and the attitude of the NGOs involved which may be influenced by a number of factors. If donors and Government

representatives are involved in each cluster then there will clearly be some positioning being done by all clusters members. Apart from the obvious objective of sharing information there will also be the objective of being seen to do a good job, have the best standards, be the most reliable to be able to attract better funding and programmes in the future. Therefore the level of transparency and inclusiveness for CERF grant proposal information will always be tinged by other factors.

Compiling the CERF application and what goes into it is carried out in a democratic way at a meeting of heads of UN Agencies whose organisation leads a cluster. The RC holds a Heads of Agency meeting to develop the framework for the CERF application. It is at this time that priorities are set for the response needs for the crisis and the responsibilities of the Agencies to supply the response plan. Based on this response plan the funding needs are discussed for each part of the plan and a decision taken on the level of funding support to be applied for to ensure each priorities sector is able to start immediate activities. However, among some UN Agencies who do not lead a cluster, such as UNFPA or UNOPS, there is a feeling of a two-tier UN system where they are not included in deciding priorities and the levels of funds to be applied for.

The process of the allocations from the CERF Secretariat was considered by some Agencies to be more difficult than it need have been as the level of funding available was not known by the UN country office. It was felt that with a very large crisis situation that would require very large scale support that funding application to CERF could be more focussed⁵. If the level of funding was known up front then it could reduce the amount of back and forth communication on the CERF application where the onus at the moment is on the UN country team to convince the CERF secretariat of the funding need.

The CERF focal point within the OCHA office in Sri Lanka and the Head of Office (HoO) are able to talk with and discuss technicalities with a counterpart within the CERF Secretariat. This is a relationship that allows the process of agreeing CERF applications to be much smoother and helps the allocation process considerably.

Reporting and accountability

Reporting by the UN Agencies was considered to be fairly straightforward and not problematic. The OCHA office has a focal point for CERF activities who showed during the course of the week in Colombo that she is both knowledgeable and well known in each of the UN Agencies. It is this focal point who helps to prompt and co-ordinate inputs for the annual report of the Resident Coordinator on the use of CERF funds.

During the week in Colombo there were no interactions for this review with anybody from the National Authorities. As the authorities have to agree each programme to be implemented there is a high level of accountability to Sri Lanka for the actions being taken. This review also did not include any field trips or any interaction with any of the beneficiary groups so this level of accountability was not able to be evaluated.

⁵ For example the IFRC system of Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) functions in this way. Depending on the size of a crisis funding is applied for by the country team who are then given a sum which is immediately transferred and able to be used often within a day or two.

Speaking with NGOs who have been implementing partners⁶ with various UN Agencies they tend to find the time available for the implementation to be too short but the reporting needs not difficult to comply with, fewer hoops to jump through to be able to get on with their work. One of the more efficient reporting systems which does not require some of the extra analysis that some of the other donors seem to focus on. However, some NGOs also point out that they do the full range of the work, such as:

- ✓ Identifying the problems,
- ✓ Compiling the programmes and prioritising beneficiaries,
- ✓ Providing the support,
- ✓ Monitoring and reporting on the results of their work and of any changes to the situation in the field.

They argue that they should therefore be able to have access to the CERF themselves which would improve the timeliness of the activities and maximise the funding as UN Agencies would not be taking 7 per cent of the funding for what is seen as administration costs.

Support to humanitarian reform and response

This review found that the use of CERF funding increases the level of coordination and helps to empower the position of the RC/HC. The role played by the RC/HC as chairing the UN country team that decides the activities in CERF applications and is the final decision maker considerably reinforces this position. In Sri Lanka a UN country team meeting is called by the RC who with the country team sets the framework for the CERF application. By managing this framework and having the final decision on what sectors make up the framework the RC is able to take a more important role strengthen this position.

As the humanitarian response needs and the priorities come from the clusters this system is also reinforced. The way that clusters are run is something which has developed over the past few years and the style can vary greatly. As this has a significant effect on how CERF allocations are focussed a review of the way clusters are run and stronger guidelines could be advocated for. Clearly the discussion of priorities in the clusters by all participants should in principle strengthen the cluster system. Certainly this helps to ensure that better information is available to all Agencies and Organisations for their own internal decision making process on programme planning. However, as the cluster lead is also the technical lead for his or her Agency there is the possibility of a conflict of interest between the needs of an Agency and the needs of a cluster. In such a situation it is always likely to be the needs of the lead Agency which will prevail.

Additional issues

Other donors

The CERF with the support and funding of 120 member states and a significant number of private donors globally has become well known in the humanitarian arena during its five years in existence and has become critical in life-saving situations. As many of the other donors for humanitarian action also support the CERF they, the other donors, can be

⁶ It was not possible to find the amount of CERF funding that was used by NGO's as partners to UN Agencies

influenced by the level of involvement that the CERF takes in support to any programme. The CERF was felt by some people to be able to create a “snow-ball effect.” The better the level of funding from the CERF, the more likely it was that other donors would come in with better levels of support. UNDP felt that the CERF was able to stimulate other donors’ interest. UNHCR felt that the CERF helped bring in other donors and that the ERC signing off on the CERF application was important to those potential donors.

ECHO, which is not a donor to the CERF, feels that it has the same role as the CERF and prefers to give funds directly to the implementing organisations. In Sri Lanka, they felt that CERF funding only UN Agencies and IOM was not always fair and transparent and on occasions could be used as a political tool. ECHO felt that CERF applications should be in line with the policy of the cluster and not the policy of the cluster lead. ECHO is slower than CERF and requires more information. Knowing that the CERF is supporting an emergency situation relieves the pressure on them to act too quickly and allows them to get better and more accurate information for the funding allocations.

Disaster Preparedness

The CERF cannot be used for disaster preparedness and this also created considerable debate. When it is known that a disaster is imminent then it was felt that there should be the possibility for pre-funding to ensure that response capabilities were strengthened. There was no specific example given from Sri Lanka but when there are repeated disasters that effect a specific location then even though the extent of the impending disaster will now be known then it would be an improvement in the system to have the possibility of funding to prepare. Bangladesh is a good example, flooding that occurs often in August and/or September can be monitored from Nepal through the “Seven Sisters” States of India before it reaches Bangladesh often given six to seven days warning. Mauritania, one of the countries included in this review, has a similar problem with food security, which due to flooding, drought or both hits food production for that country around August of each year.

Additionally mitigation and risk reduction activities are not funded by the CERF even though such actions can be life-saving. Other funding sources do provide support for risk reduction activities. ECHO, for example, changed to give 10 per cent of their funding for disaster preparedness accepting that life-saving carried out prior to a crisis can be more effective than waiting for the crisis to occur. It is worth noting that when ECHO started they also gave funding to be used in a three month period and didn’t support disaster preparedness. Now 10 per cent of ECHO funding is used in DIPECHO programming to reduce levels of risk and allow organisations to be better prepared.

Recommendation:

It is accepted that CERF does not work in isolation and that many of the other key donors already cover risk reduction and mitigation activities. However, as ECHO changed from solely disaster response so could CERF and a disaster preparedness element or window to reduce the impact of an impending disaster could be considered.

- a. This would still be life-saving and could also be seen as saving livelihoods and therefore reduce the overall costs of humanitarian response.

- b. This is where CERF could really be able to say that they are reinforcing capacity but this should not take the place of present capacity-building activities and only used at the time of an impending disaster.

The Loan Facility

The “Loan Facility” of fifty million dollars has not been used by the CERF’s partners since 2008, although loans have since been made to OCHA. Talking with operations managers they indicated that they would never use funds that they didn’t have due to the possibility that donors could change their minds and not donate. This would then create funding problems that could last well into the next year. Therefore, in principle, operations managers do not start work without the assurance of having the funding in the bank. On this basis, the loan facility would appear to be of little use and could be considered for alternative use.

Training on the CERF systems

It was felt that the training on CERF systems carried out by the CERF Secretariat in four or five regional centres each year was very effective but not enough of the front line UN Agencies had been included. With the rotation of staff from location to location it was felt that this training could be better focussed.

When discussing this point not all Agencies were aware of the training being carried out by the CERF Secretariat. Training should be planned for the year and the programme circulated from all OCHA country and regional offices to all UN front line Agencies who are likely to be active in disaster response. Priority should be given to UN Agencies in countries likely to use the system and their implementing partners if appropriate. Those trained from each country should give a presentation to CERF focal points in other Agencies to broaden the understanding of CERF systems on returning to the work station.

Recommendation:

The training carried out by the CERF Secretariat on the ways of working for accessing CERF funding could be more widely advertised and focussed much more on UN and NGO personnel who are likely to use the system. Ideally this would be training of trainers and focal points that could pass this information on to those not able to attend the training but are also likely to need this knowledge.

CERF Country Level Reviews

The review of CERF funding should be carried out as early as possible during the following year to ensure that the people involved during the year being reviewed are still available. Carrying out a review for 2009 during November and December of 2010 has undoubtedly missed the benefits of this institutional memory. The period of time for the review in any specific country is too short at six days with no field trips to interview cluster leads in the field or to meet any beneficiaries. Ideally, a period of eight days spread either side of a weekend would help to ensure that people with travel plans are more likely to be available for interview.

Recommendations

1. The loan facility should be stopped and the funding made available for other purposes. This could be further support to either or both of the other two windows of rapid response or underfunded emergencies.
2. A disaster preparedness element or window to reduce the impact of an impending disaster could be considered.
 - a. This would still be life-saving and could also be seen as saving livelihoods and therefore reduce the overall costs of humanitarian response.
 - b. This is where CERF could really be able to say that they are reinforcing capacity but this should not take the place of present capacity-building activities and only used at the time of an impending disaster.
3. When ECHO started they were fast and flexible with humanitarian funding but have become much more difficult and bureaucratic over time. Every indicator and comment made in Sri Lanka complimented the attitude and support of the people in the CERF Secretariat and the way it is run. Every effort should be made to ensure that this approach does not change in the way that ECHO has.
4. The life-saving criteria for CERF applications should be reconsidered to include something on the context of the way people are living within any particular country or region. This may mean a slight tightening of the criteria to ensure that the term “dignity” is not exploited for funding which is in reality “life-saving.
5. It is impossible to take the personality issue out of the cluster lead situation unless this role is taken on by an independent person, but even this is likely to be tainted by bias based on our own personal preferences and experience. Therefore, to improve transparency all UN Agencies who are a part of the country team should be invited to give their input at the time of agreeing the CERF application and not just those agencies who have cluster lead positions. (UNFPA and UNOPS for example).
6. The period of three months to use rapid response funding should be expanded to six months to allow more time for the use of funding where systems are being supported as opposed to straight purchasing.
7. The training carried out by the CERF Secretariat on the ways of working for accessing CERF funding could be more widely advertised and focussed much more on UN and NGO personnel who are likely to use the system. Ideally this would be training of trainers and focal points that could pass this information on to those not able to attend the training and need to understand the system.
8. CERF allocations are supposed to;
 - a. Promote early action and response to reduce the loss of life
 - b. Enhance the response to time critical requirements, and
 - c. Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crisis.

CERF is not supposed to be 100per cent or even the largest donation that an Agency obtains for their programme. In some of the countries for this review, not specific just for Sri Lanka, it was expressed that going after other funding is too difficult and too time consuming. The CERF needs to encourage UN Agencies to actively pursue additional funding even if it is time consuming and difficult.

People met

Name	Organisation	Position
Barbara Manzi	OCHA	Head of Office
Neil Buhne	UNDP	RC/HC
Tamara	OCHA	
Carrie Howard	OCHA	Deputy Head of Office
Rainer Frauenfeld	UNOPS	Country Director
Patrick T. Evans	FAO	Representative in Sri Lanka and Maldives
Calvin R. Piggott	FAO	Northern Programme Coordinator
Douglas Keh	UNDP	Country Director
Floor Beuming	UNDP	Programme Analyst, Mine action and recovery
Lene K. Christiansen	UNFPA	Sri Lanka Representative and Maldives Director
Jayan Abeywickrama	UNFPA	Humanitarian coordinator
Lorena Lando	IOM	Deputy Chief of Mission
Michael J. Zwack	UNHCR	Representative
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