Independent Review of the Value Added of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in Sudan

Final Report
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Acronyms

AAR  After Action Review
CBPF  Country-based Pooled Fund
CERF  Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF  Common Humanitarian Fund
CRD  Coordination and Response Division (OCHA)
ERC  Emergency Relief Coordinator
FAO  Food and Agriculture Organisation
FSL  Food Security and Livelihoods
FTS  Financial Tracking System
GBV  Gender Based Violence
HAC  Humanitarian Aid Commission
HCT  Humanitarian Country Team
HWP  Humanitarian Work Plan
IDP  Internally Displaced Person
IOM  International Organisation for Migration
ISCG  Inter-Sector Coordination Group
LoU  Letter of Understanding
M&R  Monitoring and Reporting
INGO  International Non-Governmental Organisation
NCE  No-Cost Extension
NFI  Non-Food Item
NNGO  National Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA  Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPPBA  Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts
PAF  Performance and Accountability Framework
PRG  Peer Review Group
PSC  Programme Support Costs
RC/HC  Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator
RR  Rapid Response
SRP  Strategic Response Plan
STAIT  Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team
ToR  Terms of Reference
UFE  Under-Funded Emergency
UK  United Kingdom
UN  United Nations
UNHCR  Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
USA  United States of America
WASH  Water, sanitation and hygiene
WES  Water, Environment and Sanitation
WFP  World Food Programme
Executive Summary

This review of CERF funding to Sudan assesses the added value of the CERF and its performance against the indicators of the CERF’s Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF). This report is based mainly on interviews with the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), CERF-recipient agencies, and international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Khartoum and El Fasher. Consultations took place from 15 to 26 June 2014 with further requests for information by email. The report also draws on a document review and funding information from the CERF secretariat and participating agencies. The review focuses on four Rapid Response (RR) allocations in 2013 as well as one in 2014 and the Under-Funded Emergency (UFE) allocations in 2013 and 2014.

CERF Funding to Sudan

Sudan is the largest recipient of CERF funding, receiving over $239 million from 2006-June 2014. In 2013, Sudan received $47.5 million from the CERF through one UFE allocation and four RR grants, making it the largest CERF recipient country in 2013. For Sudan, the CERF was the fourth largest donor in 2013 and in 2014 (as of June). In 2014, it had received approximately $26.5 million, with an UFE allocation of $20 million and a RR grant of $6.5 million. Humanitarian funding to Sudan has declined since 2009, including through the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF). As a result, the review found that the CERF has become an important funder. Although the amount of CERF funding has been less than 20% of that provided by the United States of America (USA), the top donor to Sudan since 2006, it is a valuable donor because of the speed of RR grants, which enable agencies to respond to new emergencies, and the flexibility of the UFE allocations, which has enabled agencies to fill gaps.

Value-Added of the CERF

The CERF has added value to the humanitarian response in Sudan by: supporting a timely response to acute emergencies, enabling agencies to leverage other funding, complementing other donor funding (including the CHF), being faster and more flexible than other donors, strengthening humanitarian response capacity, and filling critical gaps and funding activities that other donors are unwilling to support. CERF funding was also attractive to agencies in Sudan because it was relatively predictable and was an important resource when there was an acute emergency. Unlike bilateral funding, which tends to be negotiated with individual agencies, CERF funding processes can enable agencies to programme jointly to address specific problems and, in 2014, the HCT agreed to allocate $5 million from the UFE grant for a multi-sectoral response to the nutrition crisis in East Sudan. Agencies acknowledged the benefits from joint programming, such as the potential for increased impact and economies of scale, but also highlighted the many barriers, particularly competition for funding.

Complementarity of the CERF and Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF)

Established in 2006 as part of the same reform process as the CERF, the CHF is a country-based pooled fund (CBPF) that makes one or two standard allocations per year for projects in the Humanitarian Work Plan (HWP). It may also make grants from the Emergency Reserve for unforeseen humanitarian needs. OCHA in Sudan is already implementing some of the good practices described in CERF guidance on harmonisation between the CERF and CBPFs. These include having the same staff working on the CERF and CHF, incorporating CERF projects into CHF monitoring processes, and having joint After Action Reviews (AARs). The use of the same prioritisation process for the CHF and UFE grants in 2013 and 2014 increased the inclusivity and transparency of the CERF allocations. While the two funds are used in a complementary way to some extent, there is currently no joint strategy to maximise complementarity and complementarity was not a criterion for sectors when selecting and prioritising projects.

Strengthening Humanitarian Reform and Response

CERF funding to Sudan has had a limited impact on strengthening coordination, compared with the CHF, which engages a broader range of actors, including national Non-Governmental Organisations (NNGOs).
The inter-sector coordination group (ISCG) has played a limited role in allocating CERF funds. Interviewees also felt that the CERF had not had an influence on strengthening the role of the RC/HC because he had limited engagement with CERF processes.

Challenges with CERF funding

The key challenge with CERF funding highlighted by both UN and NGO interviewees is the limit of 7% on programme support costs (PSC). Since CERF-recipient agency headquarters keep the full amount, implementing partners are not able to charge for their indirect support costs. Until recently, some UN agencies were still allowing NGOs to claim their PSC but, with the CERF secretariat requiring agencies to include partner budgets in applications since 2012, some UN agencies have stopped this. A few NGOs mentioned that this is likely to lead to including these costs in other budget lines. In a context of reduced funding to Sudan, even international NGOs (INGOs) do not have the flexibility of covering these costs from other sources. This restriction on PSC, combined with agency delays in transferring CERF funds, has meant that a few INGOs are refusing to implement CERF projects, further reducing the options available to UN agencies.

The perception amongst agencies is that the PSC rule is due to donors to the CERF not wishing to pay multiple overheads although, in fact, it is the UN Controller’s decision. By contrast bilateral donors do not prevent agencies from charging PSC and paying additional indirect costs to implementers. Therefore, agencies find the CERF PSC rule restrictive. If implementing partners could claim PSC as well, this would only apply to a small proportion of total CERF funding. The CERF secretariat's analysis showed that sub-grants represented 18.6% of total CERF funding in 2012. A portion of this would be for government partners that do not require PSC so the amount to which additional PSC would apply is even smaller.

Agencies felt that the CERF had also become less flexible in other ways. There is a perception that the CERF has become stricter about granting no-cost extensions (NCEs), in accordance with its guidance from 2011. One agency also noted difficulties with changing sub-grants to implementing partners.

Inclusiveness and Transparency of the Allocation Process

The process of allocating the UFE grant in 2014 highlights the challenge of adopting a strategic approach to the use of CERF funds when agencies have a large amount of under-funded activities and when there is fierce competition for funding. According to sector coordinators, there is an informal system of 'dividing the cake' across agencies and sectors that will be difficult to change. In addition, currently, the CERF allocation processes do not take account of the delivery capacity of agencies, the timeliness of their procurement systems, and whether they have access. Finally, neither the HCT nor the ISCG have engaged in setting a strategy for CERF allocations. Despite these challenges, through the use of the same prioritisation process as the CHF, the UFE allocation process is more inclusive and transparent than the RR grant allocation process where sectors use different approaches, often restricting discussions to other CERF-recipient agencies and selected partners. The review found that funding decisions tend to be made at Khartoum level so there was limited information on CERF funding at El Fasher level, amongst agency staff, OCHA sub-office staff, and implementing partners.

Timeliness of CERF Disbursement and Implementation

CERF-recipient agencies had found CERF funding very timely because it had enabled them to respond to rapid onset crises by provided funding more quickly than bilateral donors. This is highlighted by the fact that agencies had applied for CERF RR grants four times in 2013 and once in the first half of 2014. The CERF’s timeliness in responding to applications is demonstrated by the fact that it took, on average, just under 16 working days for the UFE grants in 2014 from making a formal submission of a proposal to the disbursement of funding taking. The RR grants in 2014 took an average of 12 working days.

An analysis of reports from agencies on their onward funding to implementing partners in 2013 shows that the process can be lengthy. While agencies could transfer funds within 42-47 days on average, in
one case, FAO received a RR grant on 27 August 2013 but did not transfer funds to two NNGO partners till the beginning of January 2014 and to one NNGO partner till 17 February 2014, i.e., around five months later. This was even though the project had to be completed by 27 February 2014 under CERF rules. UNICEF was also slow at disbursing funds, taking six months or more to transfer funding from the UFE grant to at least six NGO partners. These delays meant that NGOs started project implementation late and often implemented activities after the CERF deadline for project completion.

Insecurity and lack of access were the two major challenges for CERF-recipient agencies and their partners, leading to implementation delays. In some cases, government policy regarding the displaced and refugees, such as relocating them repeatedly, had also hampered implementation because it takes time to move or re-build structures such as latrines or women’s spaces.

**Monitoring and Reporting**

Agencies find the CERF reporting requirements straightforward but the AAR highlighted the poor quality of agency reporting to the RC/HC. Since NGO implementing partners provide regular and detailed reporting to the agencies, the reason for the poor quality of the reports is not clear. The HCT provides input for finalising the RC/HC’s report on CERF funding. While sector coordinators provide input into the draft CHF annual report, they had not received CERF reports. NGO implementing partners felt that they should also receive a copy of the final report. The Government of Sudan is also increasingly interested to know where and how CERF funds have been used.

The CHF finances national Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) officers in five sectors and they have begun to include CERF projects into their work plans in 2014. Agencies welcomed this since they had found the information useful for verifying their own monitoring data. However, to date, sector lead agencies had not worked with the M&R officers to consolidate findings from the monitoring missions and to identify common problems or make broader recommendations. Interviewees argued that, as a result, they have not been shared at HCT level, fed into decision-making processes or helped to improve the performance of agencies.

**CERF Guidance and Compliance**

Despite the availability of CERF guidance, it was clear that agency staff were unclear about the implementation period for CERF grants and rules about requesting NCEs. Only two interviewees had participated in CERF training (one in 2009) and interviewees felt that it would be helpful if they had undergone training. The review identified five projects – of the 37 funded in 2013 - where activities exceeded the CERF implementation period but agencies did not report this to the secretariat or request NCEs, as they should have done. Although the review was not focused on 2012 projects, interviews and documents highlighted that one of these had experienced similar problems.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations listed at the end of each section of the report are grouped together below according to whether they apply to Sudan specifically or globally. For ease of reference, the numbering is the same as in the main report. Recommendations are not in order of priority.

**Sudan-specific:**

1. After Action Reviews for CERF funding should include NGO implementing partners since they are key actors in implementing CERF grants.
2. To ensure a more coordinated, inter-sectoral approach to prioritising CERF funds, the HCT should empower the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), chaired by OCHA, to develop a strategy for the allocation of CERF funds that focuses on maximising impact. The HCT, under the HC’s leadership, should respect the ISCG’s recommendations.
5. Sector Peer Review Groups (PRGs) should take a more strategic approach to ensuring complementarity of the two funds, taking into account their different timeframes for implementation and other criteria. This will be easier if there is a more strategic approach for the use of CERF funds developed by the ISCG and the HCT.

6. To help take account of the delivery capacity of agencies and the timeliness of implementation when allocating CERF funds, mid-way through the project implementation period, OCHA should circulate a table to agencies on behalf of the RC/HC. This should list the CERF project number and enable agencies to indicate the total amount of funding spent, activities delivered, and challenges encountered. This would only require one line per project in the table and would take a very short time for agencies to complete. This has been found to be useful in other CERF-recipient countries.

8. When monitoring CERF projects, M&R officers should cover the activities of CERF-recipient agencies as well as implementing partners, particularly the timeliness of the provision of inputs. To facilitate this, CERF-recipient agencies should make available their proposals and the project implementation dates to the M&R officers.

9. The M&R officers, coordinated by OCHA, should consolidate findings from their project reports to identify lessons that apply at agency, sector or inter-sectoral levels. For CERF projects, OCHA should share these consolidated findings with the CERF secretariat.

10. OCHA should distribute the RC/HC’s reports on CERF funding to sector coordinators and CERF recipient agencies should share the reports with their NGO implementing partners.

Global:

2. Donors to the CERF urgently need to reach an agreement with the Controller and UN agencies on ensuring adequate programme support costs for implementing NGOs.

4. It would be helpful if the CERF secretariat requested that prioritisation strategies submitted for UFE allocations outline how sectors/clusters will prioritise funds as well. This will help to ensure transparency around prioritisation processes and can be used to promote best practices and lead to consistent approaches across sectors.

7. In light of a growing number of examples from CERF country-level reviews that delays in onward funding to implementing partners seriously delays the implementation of CERF projects, the major donors to the CERF should work with UN agencies to improve their internal mechanisms for making sub-grants.

11. CERF recipient agencies must take responsibility for ensuring that staff members dealing with CERF grants are aware of the key requirements.

12. The CERF secretariat should consider making its training course available online. This would reach a much larger number of agency staff members dealing with CERF funds, particularly at country level, and would contribute to improving compliance with CERF requirements.
Section 1: Introduction

The CERF secretariat developed a Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF) in 2010\(^1\). The CERF Advisory Group supported the PAF’s proposal to conduct three to five independent country-level reviews per year, as determined by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), to examine the value-added of the CERF. This review of CERF funding to Sudan is one of the country-level reviews in 2014.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for this review (see Annex 3) outline the purpose and key issues that the review should cover. This review focuses mainly on 2013, when Sudan received a grant from the first allocation from the Under-Funded Emergency (UFE) window and four grants from the Rapid Response (RR) window totalling almost $47.5 million, the largest allocation to Sudan in one year and the largest allocation to a single country in 2013. Sudan received an allocation of $20 million from the UFE window at the beginning of 2014 as well as a RR grant to respond to the needs of South Sudanese refugees in April 2014 (see section 1.2 on funding to Sudan). This review includes the allocation processes for the 2014 grants.

This report is based on a visit to Sudan from 15 to 26 June 2014. As described in Annex 2, the sources of information for this report are:

- Interviews in Khartoum and El Fasher with the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), United Nations (UN) agency staff members, sector coordinators, international and local NGOs, a government representative who participated in a consultation meeting in El Fasher, and two participants in Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) Advisory Group meetings (including a donor representative).
- A document review, including RC/HC reports on the 2013 UFE allocation as well as the RR grants made in April and August 2013 and project documents.
- An analysis of funding data, based on information from the CERF secretariat as well as OCHA’s Financial Tracking System (FTS).

The evaluator is very grateful to all interviewees for their time and, in particular, to the humanitarian financing section in OCHA Sudan for organising meetings, and providing support with logistics and obtaining documents.

At the end of the field mission, on 26 June 2014, there was a presentation of preliminary findings to sector coordinators and programme staff members from agencies that receive direct CERF funding.

This report focuses on the key questions raised in the ToR and the PAF indicators (listed in Annex 2). Therefore, it does not go into the details of how the CERF operates at a global level. Information on the establishment of the CERF, guidelines, application and reporting formats etc. are all available from the CERF website: http://www.unocha.org/cerf/. In order to keep the main report short, Annex 1 contains supporting evidence (following the same section numbering as the main report).

1.1 Humanitarian context in Sudan

This review focuses mainly on CERF funding to Sudan in 2013 when the country faced high levels of humanitarian needs in a number of areas:\(^2\)

- At the beginning of 2013, 4.4 million people were in need of assistance, of which 3.4 million were in Darfur.\(^1\) The humanitarian operation in Darfur remained the largest in Sudan.

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\(^1\) 2013 Humanitarian Work Plan (HWP). Available from: https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CERF/1.%20PAF%20August%202010.pdf

• Fighting between Government forces and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement - North in South Kordofan and Blue Nile State resulted in humanitarian needs, though aid agencies had extremely limited access, particularly in non-government controlled areas.

• Between 200,000 and 350,000 people of South Sudanese origin remained in Sudan and the international community had concerns about them, particularly over 43,500 stranded in transit stations and at open-air departure in Khartoum.

• The three eastern states of Sudan (Red Sea, Kassala and Gedaref) have humanitarian needs in the form of the long-standing Ethiopian and Eritrean refugee population in Kassala, which continued to increase in 2012; chronically high food insecurity; and rates of malnutrition amongst children that exceed emergency thresholds, particularly in Red Sea state.

• The Government’s austerity measures to combat a high budget deficit combined with high inflation and a poor harvest in 2011 also led to hardship for the most vulnerable in Sudan.

The first five months of 2013 saw the forced displacement of over 300,000 people in Darfur due to an increase in inter- and intra-tribal fighting as well as fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and armed groups. This was more than the total number of people displaced in Darfur in 2011 and 2012 combined.\(^4\)

By the beginning of 2014, the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance in Sudan as a whole had increased to 6.1 million, representing a 37% increase, with humanitarian agencies planning to target 5.9 million. The main reasons for the increase were increased conflict in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and extensive flooding, particularly in Al Gezira, Khartoum and Nile states.\(^5\) Since the development of the Strategic Response Plan (SRP), the conflict that broke out in South Sudan in December 2013 led to around 50,000 South Sudanese refugees in Sudan. The refugees are concentrated in White Nile, and South and West Kordofan, with humanitarian access most sustained in White Nile.

According to the revised 2014 SRP, the total number of people in need of humanitarian aid had risen to 6.9 million by June 2014 (with the humanitarian community planning to assist 6.7 million). Part of this increase was due to the displacement of about 373,000 people since the beginning of 2014 due to conflict in Darfur. An additional 27,500 have been displaced in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, also due to fighting.\(^6\)

Despite the increase in humanitarian needs in Sudan and continued displacement in Darfur, donors are shifting their focus to development in Darfur. At the International Donor Conference for Darfur in Doha on 7 and 8 April 2013, donors endorsed the Darfur Development Strategy and pledged $3.6 billion, out of a targeted $7.2 billion for development-oriented interventions (this included $2.65 billion pledged by the government of Sudan).\(^7\) Funding for the Darfur Development Strategy has been slow to arrive, with the Qatar government providing $88 million in April 2014, a year after the conference, for Foundational and Short-term activities that should have been completed within 12 months. This was the first contribution to the UN Darfur Fund.\(^8\) According to one interviewee, the UK has reduced its funding to the CHF by 30% in 2014 and is using the money for resilience activities. Another noted that Japan is also becoming more

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\(^3\) See the map of Sudan in Annex 1 for the geographical locations listed in this section.


\(^7\) OCHA (2013) Original chapeau for the application of a Rapid Response grant request for Darfur.

\(^8\) http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/qatar-confirms-88-mn-sudan-darfur-development-un
Against the background of growing humanitarian needs, international NGOs (INGOs) have reduced their operations in Sudan substantially due to government restrictions. The government is also applying pressure on international organisations to partner with national NGOs (NNGOs) to implement their humanitarian programmes as part of its desire to “reduce the international footprint in Sudan”. As part of this, the Technical Agreements that every INGO has to sign with the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) requires them to have NNGO partners. In 2012, the HAC ordered INGOs to end direct implementation of seven out of their 17 projects in Red Sea and Kassala states and hand them over to national NGOs and institutions. While a few NNGOs have the required capacity, many need to build this up. This means that UN agencies, which implement through partners, often have a limited choice of partners, particularly as some areas are only accessible to a small number of NGOs.

1.2 CERF funding to Sudan

Sudan is the largest recipient of CERF funding, receiving a total of over $239 million between 2006 and June 2014. This is a small proportion (less than 2%) of the funding requested in the Strategic Response Plan/Humanitarian Work Plan (SRP/HWP), which totalled over $13 billion during this period. However, as described in section 2, the CERF has added value to the humanitarian response in a number of ways. Figure 1 shows CERF funding to Sudan from the RR and UFE windows. It highlights that the country has received most funding from the RR window. However, each year since 2012, as funding from other sources has declined, Sudan has received one allocation from the UFE window.

Figure 2 below shows the amounts of funding requested in the Sudan Strategic Response Plan/Humanitarian Work Plan (SRP/HWP) from 2006-2014 compared with funding against this. This shows that the amount of funding requested has decreased since a peak of $2.1 billion in 2009 to around $985 million in 2013 and 2014. However, the level of funding received against the appeals has decreased even more sharply, with the appeal going from being 80% funded in 2007 to being 56% funded in 2012 and 2013. In 2014, as of September, the appeal was only 47% funded. Table 1 in Annex 1 lists the amounts shown in figure 2 as well as the percentage of funding received against the amounts requested.

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Figure 3 below shows total funding to Sudan (both against and outside the appeals) from the CERF, CHF and other donors. This also highlights the decline in funding since 2009, with a particularly sharp reduction between 2010 and 2011. This drop included funding through the CHF, which decreased from $130 million in 2010 to $85 million in 2011 (see table 2 in Annex 1 for details of funding amounts). CHF funding has continued to decline each year since then and, in 2013, it provided $67.25 million compared with approximately $47.5 million from the CERF. As of June 2014, the CHF had allocated $41.2 million through its first standard allocation of the year while the CERF has allocated just under $26.5 million (approximately $20 million from the UFE window and a RR grant of $6.5 million).

In 2013, in addition to the allocation of $17 million from the first round of funding from the UFE window, Sudan received $30.5 million through the following four allocations from the RR window:

- Just over $15 million in April to respond to the crisis in Blue Nile State. This includes $10.5 million to WFP for food assistance, one of the largest CERF grants to WFP.
- Just under $2 million to WFP and UNICEF in August to respond to the needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in South Kordofan with food and emergency education
- Around $8 million, also in August, to respond to new displacements in Darfur
- Approximately $5.5 million in September to provide assistance to those affected by floods

With the decline in funding to Sudan, agencies noted that the CERF has become an increasingly important source of humanitarian funding. Table 3 in Annex 1 demonstrates this by listing the top 5 donors to Sudan from 2006-2014 and showing the CERF’s relative position over this period. This shows that the CERF was the fourth largest source of humanitarian funding in Sudan in 2013 and 2014 (as of June). The CHF has been one of the top five donors for Sudan since its inception and was the second largest donor in 2012 and 2013. However, in 2014, as of June, it was the ninth largest donor. One
interviewee believed that this signified that “the good days of the CHF are over” so the CERF is a very valuable source of funding, particularly because the process of securing RR grants is relatively quick. According to an OCHA interviewee, the CERF has grown in importance because it is based on needs rather than whether a specific crisis is a priority or not. Bilateral donors are justifying a lack of funding for Sudan by arguing that they are funding other crises, even though humanitarian needs in Sudan are growing. In addition, as noted in section 1.1, donors are shifting to a focus on development programming in Darfur, despite the new displacements and increase in humanitarian needs (although this has not been reflected in the SRP/HWP, which has reduced the amount of funding requested).

To avoid the CERF becoming the donor of ‘first resort’, OCHA tries to ensure that the agencies have attempted to obtain funding from other sources, before applying to the CERF, and triangulates information from the agencies and donors. However, one interviewee reported that some of the major donors respond to funding requests from agencies eligible for CERF funding by pointing out that they have contributed to the CERF, thereby encouraging the agencies to apply.

Table 4 in Annex 1 provides a breakdown of CERF funding to Sudan in 2013 and 2014 by recipient agency and sector. This shows that WFP was the largest recipient of CERF funding, getting $29.38 million in 2013 and 2014. UNICEF was the second largest recipient, with just over $21 million in 2013 and 2014. UNHCR and WHO were the third and fourth largest recipients, with $7.9 million and $7.3 million respectively. This matches the pattern of CERF funding at global level since WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR and WHO were the top four recipients of CERF funding between 2006-2014.\footnote{For a list of CERF funding by agency globally, see: http://www.unocha.org/cerf/cerf-worldwide/funding-agency/funding-agency-2006-2014}

Table 4 also shows that RR allocations are generally more concentrated across agencies and sectors. For example, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) allocated the $15 million for the Blue Nile State crisis in 2013 to five projects, with WFP receiving $10.5 million and the remaining $4.5 million divided across a multi-sector project by UNICEF and three projects in agriculture, shelter and NFIs, and health. Similarly, the HCT allocated the $5.5 million grant for response to floods in September 2013 to six projects, focusing on four sectors – WASH, shelter and NFIs, health, and education. However, the UFE allocations tend to be spread across a range of agencies and sectors. In particular, the UFE grant of $20 million in 2014 was divided across 24 projects in 10 sectors, implemented by eight agencies. 11 of the 24 projects received less than $500,000. This is despite the fact that the ERC’s notification to the RC/HC that the HCT in Sudan had been selected to receive the UFE allocation stated that, “The Sudan HCT submission should be prioritized based on assessed needs through a limited number of key activities to ensure an effective use of funds”. One reason for the large number of projects is that six agencies have two projects in the same sector. This is because the HCT decided to allocate $5 million to a multi-sectoral response to the nutrition crisis in East Sudan, with the remaining $15 million allocated across sectors without specifying a geographical location. Therefore, agencies involved in the multi-sectoral response have one project for the response to the nutrition crisis and another project in the same sector to respond to other needs (see section 3.1.1 below for a description of the 2014 UFE allocation process).

1.3 Complementarity between Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) and CERF

Established in 2006, the CHF is a country-level pooled fund managed by OCHA on behalf of the RC/HC. It is part of the humanitarian reform process that also led to the establishment of the CERF. The CHF makes
one or two standard allocations per year for projects included in the Sudan HWP. In addition, it can make Emergency Reserve allocations that respond to sudden-onset crises and unforeseen humanitarian needs.

In November 2013, the CERF secretariat issued a guidance note on best practices for harmonising processes for the CERF at country level and country-based pooled funds (CBPF). This lists seven good practices that should help to enhance complementarity between the CERF and CBPF. As detailed below, OCHA in Sudan is already following some of these practices. Findings from the review show that the use of the CHF prioritisation process for CERF UFE grants has increased the transparency and inclusivity of the CERF allocations. However, since the CHF has been a much more significant source of funds and there is a broader local ownership of it, even when OCHA has attempted to bring together CHF and CERF processes, humanitarian actors tend to focus more on the CHF.

In line with practice 1 of the guidance, staff in the humanitarian financing section deal with both the CERF and CHF. Also, the CERF allocations from the first round of the UFE window in 2013 and 2014 coincided with the first standard allocation from the CHF so OCHA has used the same prioritisation process and the CHF Advisory Group advised the HC on both CERF and CHF proposals (practice 2). Also in accordance with practice 2, the sector Peer Review Groups (PRGs), established for the CHF, have vetted proposals put forward for both CERF UFE and CHF funding (see section 3.1.1). However, an OCHA interviewee as well as an INGO representative on the CHF Advisory Group noted that the Advisory Group tends to focus on CHF projects and comments on CERF projects only to the extent that they relate to CHF-financed projects. The CHF finances Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) officers that are based within sector lead agencies to assess CHF-financed projects. OCHA coordinates the M&R officers and, since January 2014, has ensured that their work plans include plans to monitor CERF projects. This is in line with practice 5 of the guidelines (see section 5.2 for further details on monitoring of CERF projects).

Practice 6 relates to reporting processes for the CERF and CHF. In line with the guidance, OCHA facilitated a joint After Action Review (AAR) for completed CERF and CHF projects. This was held on 5th March with a discussion on 11th April 2014 with the HCT. Since the participants were mainly agency CERF focal points and heads of agencies with a few sector coordinators, only a few interviewees for this review had participated in the AAR. NGO interviewees stated that they had not been invited to the AAR because it was an internal UN process. According to two interviewees who had participated, the discussion had been dominated by concerns about the CHF.

The CERF guidance also suggests that both CERF and CBPF report on how the funds have been used in a complementary way in their annual reports. While the RC/HC’s report on results of projects financed from the UFE allocation in 2013 and the CHF 2013 annual report both mention the use of a common prioritisation process for the two funds to ensure complementarity, they do not mention how the implementation of CHF and CERF projects was complementary or whether the complementary use of the two funds delivered better results for affected populations. Practice 7 of the CERF guidance suggests that evaluations of the CERF or CBPF include issues of complementarity. Although the CHF in Sudan has a budget for evaluations, it has not commissioned any to date.

In 2014, at the CERF secretariat’s explicit request, the chapeau section of the application for financing from the UFE allocation included an overview of how CERF and CHF allocations would complement each other (practice 4). This focused on how the CHF and CERF funds were prioritised strategically, in terms of

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12 CERF Secretariat (2013) Pooled Funds Complementarity Guidance: Harmonization of Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) Processes
13 Since the CHF has been a far more important donor than the CERF until recently and is an important source of funding for NGOs, it is not surprising that humanitarian actors tend to focus on it more than on the CERF. A donor representative who attends sector meetings mentioned that discussions in these fora also tend to be dominated by the CHF.
target population, geographic and activity coverage. However, at present, the RC/HC in Sudan does not use a joint strategy to maximise the complementarity of the two funds (practice 3). This may be because the CHF strategy was prepared before the RC/HC knew that Sudan would be receiving CERF UFE allocations in 2013 and 2014. However, the CHF Advisory Group does take the complementarity of the two funds into consideration when reviewing projects. In 2013, OCHA suggested to the sectors which projects should be put forward for CERF funding and which for the CHF. However, this led to a lot of adjustments for UN agencies and some NGOs. For example, UNHCR prepared its proposals for the CHF but then had to change some of them to the CERF format because the CHF had less money available than expected. One INGO applied for CHF funding but, because it’s proposal was below the $200,000 minimum grant recommended by the CHF, UNICEF as the sector lead agency decided that it should be financed through the CERF after the proposal had already been submitted. The INGO was required to make several changes and, for a combination of reasons, only signed an agreement with UNICEF in September 2013 (for CERF funds that had been disbursed in April). As a result, in 2014, OCHA left it to the sectors to decide which projects fit the CERF criteria and which fit the CHF criteria best.

In some cases, agencies do use the criteria of the two funds in a complementary way and FAO gave the example of using CERF funding to purchase concentrated animal feed, which it was unable to do with CHF funding, to complement animal vaccines and drugs purchased with CHF financing. UNICEF had used a CERF RR grant for emergency education in North Kordofan to procure educational supplies. It then used CHF funding to construct temporary learning spaces that IDP children could use. Section 2 below provides further examples of agencies using the two funds in a complementary way.

However, in a number of cases, the sectors combined the general criteria circulated by OCHA with some sector-specific criteria to rank the concept notes that sector members submitted. In the Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) sector, the sector received 42 concept notes that were eligible for CHF or CERF funding. Since the sectors had an idea of the CHF envelope for each sector, the FSL group used this to cover the top 15 concept notes. CERF funding then covered the next six concept notes. Similarly, the nutrition sector Peer Review Group (PRG) allocated the CHF envelope available in 2014 to the highest priority projects. This covered 14-16 projects. It then re-prioritised the projects that still required funding for the CERF UFE grant. The next 6-7 highest priority projects received CERF funding. Thus, some sectors used the funding available to cover the top ranked concept notes without any explicit consideration of complementarity, despite recommendations from OCHA and the CERF Advisory Group that they use each fund according to their criteria. This included paying particular attention to the CERF’s focus on life-saving activities.

**Recommendation**

1. After Action Reviews for CERF funding should include NGO implementing partners since they are key actors in implementing CERF grants.

**Section 2: Value Added of the CERF**

This section focuses on the extent to which the CERF has added value to humanitarian response in Sudan. It addresses indicators 17, 18, 19 and 21 of the PAF. Table 3 in Annex 1 shows that the CERF has been an important donor since 2012. Agencies have noted the ways in which the CERF has added value in their reports to the RC/HC. In interviews for this review, they mentioned that it has added value to international humanitarian response by:
• **Supporting a timely response at times of acute emergency.** Although the CHF has an emergency reserve for new emergencies, the shortfall in donor contributions in 2013 meant that this mechanism could not provide additional funds.\(^ {14} \) Therefore, CERF recipient agencies highlighted the fact that RR grants had been very useful for responding to new and unforeseen humanitarian needs. UNICEF pointed out that it takes time to obtain bilateral funding so it approaches the CERF for the initial response to a new emergency while applying to other donors to continue the response.

• **Enabling agencies to leverage other funding.** Agencies provided a number of examples where CERF funding had enabled them to raise funds from other donors. CERF funding to WHO to respond to an outbreak of yellow fever in 2012 stimulated funding from ECHO, DFID and South Korea for the operational costs of the vaccination campaign. The CERF RR grant for the Darfur crisis in 2013 enabled UNICEF’s WASH partners to undertake assessments. The agency was then able to use this information for applications to other donors and received funding from OFDA. UNICEF has also been able to undertake nutrition assessments in White Nile state because of CERF funding and this is helping it to raise funds from other donors. UNICEF used CERF funding for a nutrition project in 2013 to provide mobile clinics and this prompted other donors to fund the service. FAO is participating in the multi-sectoral response to the nutrition crisis funded by the CERF UFE allocation in 2014 and has secured additional funding from the Italian government for this. The CERF was the first donor to support WFP’s response in Blue Nile State in April 2013 with $10.5 million, alongside Norway, which contributed $2.5 million. The UK and ECHO made contributions in June and July respectively.

• **Complementing other donor funding, including the CHF.** In 2013, UNICEF received a contribution from Japan for child protection in the Three Areas and this meant that it could focus its CERF UFE grant on Darfur so there was geographical complementarity between the two sources of funding. OFDA funding in 2013 helped UNICEF to replenish supplies that it had used for a CERF project. The large-scale displacement in Darfur at the beginning of 2014 and the South Sudan refugee crisis led to substantial unplanned needs. According to WHO, it was able to use CHF funding to respond to the needs of the IDPs in Darfur and the CERF RR window to address the needs of the South Sudan refugees. UNHCR is distributing plastic sheets together with other NFIs purchased with a CERF grant in North Darfur and is using CHF funding to supply poles and rope so that recipients can create a shelter from the plastic sheet. UNICEF gave the example of being able to use CHF funding for its core pipeline and CERF funding to distribute supplies through implementing partners. It also suggested that, since CERF UFE allocations in 2013 and 2014 had been made at the same time as the CHF standard allocation, UN agencies had allowed NGOs to apply for more CHF funding, knowing that CERF funding would help to cover their programmes. This was one form of complementarity between the CERF and CHF.\(^ {15} \)

• **Being faster and more flexible than other donors.** UNICEF noted that while some bilateral donors are willing to support WASH activities, it takes time to obtain funding and they also have a focus on very specific things. The speed and flexibility of the CERF, by contrast, makes it an important source of funding. UNICEF had been able to use the flexibility of CERF funding to bridge the gap for WASH

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\(^ {15} \) However, one agency pointed out that the two funds have different rules and criteria so they are not interchangeable. For example, the CHF has a 12-month implementation period whereas CERF UFE grants have an implementation period of around nine months by the time agencies receive their funding. Since the CHF is also more flexible about NCEs, it remains an attractive fund for UN agencies.
NGO partners that had experienced delays with receiving their CHF funds in 2014. WFP had also found the CERF’s speed and flexibility useful. For the crisis in Blue Nile State in 2013, CERF funding was critical in ‘bridging the gap’ between WFP’s initial response and additional funds from other donors who could not respond as quickly. WFP was also having difficulty convincing its traditional donors to finance its voucher programme in Darfur but was able to use CERF funding to launch and scale-up this programme, which then attracted other donors. In the health sector, UNICEF had found that CERF UFE grants at the beginning of the year helped to bridge the gap till other donor funding arrived.

- **Strengthening humanitarian response capacity.** FAO received three CERF grants in 2013 and two from the UFE allocation in 2014 (in addition to an UFE grant in 2012). This has enabled it to recruit staff and establish its own office in Darfur (in 2011, FAO in Sudan had downsized substantially and was based in the Ministry of Agriculture’s office in Darfur). UNICEF noted that CERF funding since 2013 had enabled it to work with NGO partners (rather than through the government alone), strengthening the response capacity of NGOs in particular.

- **Filling funding gaps in sectors such as emergency education.** UNICEF pointed out that bilateral donors tend not to prioritise education, even WASH in schools or supporting temporary learning spaces, and CERF funding enables it to provide assistance.

- **Supporting the role of sector lead agencies as provider of last resort.** UNICEF WASH staff felt that CERF funding enabled it to fill critical gaps highlighted in sector coordination meetings and thus fulfil its role as a provider of last resort.

In addition to the added value highlighted above, CERF funding is attractive for eligible agencies because it is a relatively predictable source of funding. With the UFE allocation, the ERC informs a country when it has been selected for funding so agencies felt that they could be confident of receiving funds, particularly since they participate in discussions about allocations across sectors. Table 4 in Annex 1 supports this view, showing that CERF UFE allocations to Sudan have tended to be spread across sectors and agencies. In the case of RR applications, there is usually some consultation between the RC/HC and the CERF secretariat prior to the submission of an application, which provides agencies with a degree of assurance that they will receive funding if their sector has already been prioritised.

Since the process for prioritising and allocating CERF funds is inter-agency and inter-sectoral, it has the potential to support joint programming (unlike bilateral funding, which tends to be negotiated with individual organisations). There have been some examples of agencies undertaking joint programmes with CERF funding but the HCT’s decision to use $5 million from the 2014 UFE allocation for a multi-sectoral response to the nutrition crisis in East Sudan is the largest. Agencies acknowledged the benefits of joint programming such as economies of scale from focusing together on a large-scale problem, the potential for increased impact from addressing complex humanitarian issues jointly, improving inter-sectoral coordination, building on the comparative advantage of different agencies, and contributing to the Delivering as One agenda. But they also highlighted challenges such as agency mandates, different organisational systems that make it more difficult to measure progress towards shared results, a lack of agreement on shared indicators, the sector lead agency facing difficulties in getting data for proposals

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16 Due to a lengthy technical review process as well as delays in disbursing funds, most CHF applicants had not received their funds as of June 2014.

17 For the UFE allocation rounds in 2014, the CERF secretariat provided the following guidance to HCTs for joint proposals: “A joint proposal may only be developed when there is a common objective or objectives and complimentary activities and outcomes among activities planned by each agency within the same cluster/sector. Details on agencies total project requirements and funding; and CERF requirements should be listed separately”.

and reports from other agencies, concerns about leadership of a joint programme, and competition for funding as there is less humanitarian funding for Sudan. One agency noted that limited implementation capacity is also a challenge for the multi-sectoral approach to nutrition in East Sudan since there is a lack of INGO and NNGO partners and the government lacks capacity as well. In addition, it raised concerns about being able to continue the joint work after CERF funding ends, particularly as CERF funding has such a short timeframe. These barriers hinder agencies from working together even though donors like the Qatar Development Fund are encouraging joint programmes.

2.1 Strengthening Humanitarian Reform and Response

PAF indicators 29, 30 and 31 focus on the extent to which the RC/HC and Cluster coordinators use CERF funding as an incentive for coordination and whether CERF funding has helped to strengthen the functioning of Clusters and the inter-Cluster forum as well as the leadership and role of the RC/HC.

The CHF in Sudan contributes to the financing of sector coordinators and has also supported coordination with NGOs through the process of identifying needs and funding gaps and allocating CHF funds to fill these.18 Sector coordinators felt that CHF funding incentivised participation in sector meetings as well as the sharing of information. By comparison, CERF funding has not had a major impact on sector-level coordination, particularly since implementing partners receive a relatively small share of the funding. It has also not had an effect in strengthening inter-sectoral coordination since the inter-sector coordination group (ISCG) has played a limited role in prioritising CERF funds. However, FAO noted that it has started participating in nutrition sector meetings since it is part of the multi-sectoral response to the nutrition crisis funded by the CERF in 2014.

Participants in this review did not feel that CERF funding had played a role in strengthening the role of the RC/HC, partly because he had limited engagement with CERF processes. The RC/HC pointed out that, in order to manage pooled funds, including the CERF, effectively, an RC/HC needs the support of a well-functioning OCHA office. In Sudan, this has been under-staffed and not had a head of office in post for 18 months. However, agencies and NGOs felt that the humanitarian financing section works very well.

2.2 Challenges with CERF funding

While CERF funding has clearly added value to the humanitarian response in Sudan, CERF recipient agencies and their implementing partners highlighted some major challenges.

Administrative costs

According to both UN agency and NGO interviewees, the key challenge with CERF funding is the limit of 7% on programme support costs (PSC). In September 2013, the International NGO (INGO) Steering Committee in Sudan collected feedback from its members on the CERF sub-granting process. Rather than timeliness, this focused on the concern that, since the CERF recipient agency headquarters keep the 7% PSC allowed by the CERF, implementing partners cannot charge their indirect costs for CERF projects. Until recently, some UN agencies were allowing NGO partners to claim their PSC. For example, one INGO reported that it had received its PSC from a CERF grant in 2013. However, there was a perception amongst agencies that the CERF secretariat had become stricter about enforcing the rule, requesting applicants to include a breakdown of sub-grants against three budget lines – staffing, direct operational

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costs and direct administration costs. Therefore, the INGO was told that it could not charge PSC in 2014 but argued that this will simply lead to hiding the costs in other budget lines. Other INGOs reported that CERF-recipient agencies were handling the PSC issue in different ways. One UN agency was allowing them to charge 3-4% while it took the remainder of the 7% while other agencies were claiming the full 7% themselves and asking the NGOs to include their overheads in other budget lines.

The limit on PSC or not being allowed to claim indirect costs at all has meant that NGO partners have had to implement additional project activities without being able to cover the additional indirect costs that this entails (including the cost of reporting required by the UN agencies, which is far more detailed than that required by the CERF). This is particularly challenging for them in the Sudan context, where funding is declining so INGOs cannot draw on resources from other more flexible donors. It is even more of a challenge for NGOs that have limited access to a diverse range of funding sources.

The CERF restriction on PSC is a particular challenge for agencies because they do not have the same restriction with bilateral funding from donors that are contributing to the CERF. The perception amongst agencies was that donors to the CERF had stipulated this rule because they did not want to pay multiple levels of administrative costs. However, it is the former UN Controller who set the PSC rate for the CERF at a total of 10% in 2006 (comprising 3% for the UN secretariat and 7% for recipient agencies). Bilateral donors allow agencies to claim their own PSC and then pay additional PSC to implementers. To enable CERF-recipient agencies to pay PSC to implementers, either the PSC rate for the CERF as a whole needs to increase to 13% (so that agencies can claim 7% and permit partners to claim a further 3%) or CERF donors need to negotiate with UN agencies to allow partners to receive a portion of the 7% that they currently retain. The PSC for implementers would apply to a small proportion of total CERF funding. The CERF secretariat’s analysis of the amounts sub-granted to partners in 2012 showed that agencies provided a total of $91 million in sub-grants. This represented 18.6% of total CERF funding. Some sub-grants are to government partners that would not require PSC (this is quite a large amount in Sudan but will vary by context). Therefore, the amount to which the additional PSC would apply is even smaller.

**Reduced flexibility**

Although the CERF has been a flexible donor, some agencies noted a reduction in its flexibility. In order to track onward funding and its timeliness, and perhaps also to avoid the inclusion of additional overheads for implementing partners, the CERF secretariat has been asking applicants to name implementing partners and specify the amount of funding that they will sub-grant to them since 2010. Since 2012, as noted above, it has also asked applicants to provide a breakdown of each sub-grant. The agencies believed that, if they needed to change a partner because an NGO had not been able to obtain its Technical Agreement in time or was unable to access the project location, they needed to inform the CERF secretariat of this. One agency also reported that, after having its application approved, it was able to negotiate a lower budget with an implementing partner. It wanted to give the money saved to another NGO partner in the same area to undertake additional activities but the CERF secretariat would not allow it to shift part of the budget allocated to the original NGO partner. It had to give the full amount to the original partner or move it to a different partner so it was unable to take advantage of cost savings.

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19 General Assembly Resolution 35/217 of 17 December 1980 set a standard PSC rate of 13%. The UN Controller has the authority to reduce this rate if the administrative burden of managing a trust fund warrants less than 13%.

20 This is a misunderstanding since agencies are only required to inform the CERF secretariat if the change of partner involves shifting 15% or more of direct project costs between budget lines (which requires a redeployment-of-funds request) or if it means a change in project scope (which requires a re-programming request) or if it results in a delay beyond the original grant period (in which case they should request a No-Cost Extension).
Since the CERF aims to finance immediate and critical needs, the guidance on No Cost Extensions (NCE) states that the CERF allows project extensions only “in exceptional circumstances, if the reasons for the inability to implement are clearly documented to be outside of the control of the recipient agency”. 21 One agency noted that the CHF is more flexible in granting NCEs because the RC/HC and OCHA are more conversant with implementation challenges in Sudan. Section 6.1 describes some cases where agencies have not applied for NCEs even though they should have done so according to CERF rules.

Finally, UNICEF education staff highlighted the CERF’s inflexibility in funding the rehabilitation of classrooms damaged by flooding in 2013. The CERF secretariat would only fund tents as temporary classrooms even though these were a more expensive and less appropriate solution. Eventually, UNICEF provided 40 tents through the Ministry of Education and obtained funding from the CHF Emergency Reserve to rehabilitate the school buildings but this meant a delay in repairing the schools.

**Other challenges for NGO implementing partners**

In addition to the PSC issue, NGO implementing partners raised a number of challenges with being the implementing partners of CERF-recipient agencies. Several NGOs were frustrated by the length of time that it took to sign agreements with the agencies and to receive their funds. In at least two cases, it had taken NGOs six months to sign an agreement with a UN agency for a CERF grant. Sections 4.2 and 6.1 address this issue in greater detail.

Three INGOs gave examples of UN agencies asking them to reduce their budgets for CERF-funded projects but to cover the same number of beneficiaries. In one case, FAO asked an INGO to reduce its budget from $250,000 to $75,000 without reducing the number of aid recipients. The INGO pointed out that it could not cover its operating costs with such a budget reduction. FAO also reduced the budget of another INGO from $115,000 to $33,000. A third INGO had an agreement with UNICEF for a nutrition project in 2014. Although UNICEF had originally approved a budget of $150,000, it then told the INGO that its unit cost was too high so it should cover the same number of beneficiaries at a lower cost. The INGO had no idea how much it was going to receive eventually. The INGOs had not been told the reasons for these budget reductions.

Some INGOs felt that the drawback of combining the CHF and CERF UFE allocation processes is that they submit very detailed concept notes for CHF funding. If the sector PRGs decide to include the proposal in the CERF proposal of a UN agency participating in the sector rather than allocate CHF funding to it, they have to re-do the proposal to fit the CERF format and this is very time-consuming.

One INGO pointed out that the agencies also use different rules and procedures when channelling CERF funding, which is confusing. By contrast, NGOs are familiar with the rules and regulations for CHF funding.

Due to the restriction on PSC and other challenges, INGOs are becoming reluctant to accept CERF funding. The INGO Steering Committee documented the case of an INGO that had withdrawn from negotiations for CERF funding because it was not able to charge PSC. During interviews, another INGO made it clear that if it had the opportunity to receive CERF funding again, it would refuse it because of the long delays with getting an agreement and other difficulties. This has made it harder for CERF-recipient agencies to secure suitable implementing partners in a context where reliable partners with sufficient access are already difficult to find.

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21 See https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CERF/CERFGuidance_No_Cost_Extension_and_Reprogramming_Nov2011.pdf
Recommendation

2. Donors to the CERF urgently need to reach an agreement with the Controller and UN agencies on ensuring adequate programme support costs for implementing NGOs.

Section 3: Inclusiveness and Transparency of Allocation Process

This section examines the extent to which CERF allocation processes in Sudan were transparent and included key stakeholders. It addresses indicators 1, 2, 3, 6 and 25 of the PAF. This section starts by describing the process for allocating the CERF UFE grant in 2014 and goes on to describe the process use for RR grants. The section concludes by drawing out lessons from the different allocation processes.

3.1 Allocation Processes

At a global level, allocations from the CERF’s RR and UFE windows work slightly differently, with the former being a field-driven process and the latter being led by the ERC and CERF Secretariat in the initial stages of deciding on allocations per country. However, CERF guidance on the two windows recommends similar prioritisation and allocation processes at country level. In particular, both sets of guidance emphasise that the allocation process should be transparent and include all humanitarian actors (including government partners when relevant). They also suggest that, under the RC/HC’s leadership, the HCT should review needs and assessment data and gaps as well as the funding status of agencies. Based on this, the HCT should set priorities. The RR guidance adds that the RC/HC may suggest preliminary funding amounts for each prioritised sector/cluster. In Sudan, as described below, the in-country processes for the RR and UFE allocations were also somewhat different.

3.1.1 Allocation of UFE Grant in 2014

Figure 5 in Annex 1 provides a timeline for the allocation of the CERF UFE grant in 2014 while section 3.1.1 in Annex 1 provides a narrative description of each step in the allocation process. The CERF secretariat allocated $20 million from the UFE window to Sudan in December 2013. Based on initial discussions with four sector lead agencies, OCHA proposed that $15 million of this grant be used for a multi-sectoral response to the nutrition crisis in East Sudan and the remaining $5 million be used for other under-funded needs. The aim was to maximise the impact of the CERF grant, in line with guidance from the ERC and the CERF secretariat. However, when the HCT came to discuss the allocation on 13 January 2014, some heads of agencies disagreed with the proposed allocation and cited insufficient consultation (although their agencies had previously stated that they were satisfied with the process). As a result, the HCT decided to allocate $15 million for a sector-based response across the whole of Sudan and $5 million for the multi-sectoral response to the nutrition crisis in East Sudan. OCHA helped the HCT with the calculations that it needed to allocate the $15 million envelope between sectors, on the basis of each sector’s relative size in the appeal (with a focus on projects contributing to the strategic priority of saving lives) and the level of underfunding. This approach was logical in the absence of any other allocation strategy. However, two agencies suggested that, if the HCT continued to use this approach, it would be an incentive to inflate budgets in the appeal in order to secure more funding.

One agency believed that the multi-sectoral approach for nutrition was a good way to use CERF funding strategically but that there was a failure of leadership in defending the strategic approach when agencies reverted to pushing for their own priorities. It also felt that agencies had argued for sector based funding because they did not understand that a multi-sectoral approach did not mean that all the funding was for the nutrition sector or for UNICEF as the sector lead agency. This is supported by the fact that OCHA had to clarify this point in an email to HCT and ISCG members on 20th January. An OCHA interviewee
underlined that the RC/HC’s office and OCHA proposed the idea of a multi-sectoral approach to nutrition so it was not an attempt by UNICEF to secure more CERF funding.

Once the HCT had agreed on an envelope per sector, the sectors undertook an internal process to allocate the funds to projects. Since the sectors were in the process of allocating CHF funds, they used the same process, involving a Peer Review Group (PRG) in each sector to prioritise projects for funding either by the CHF or the CERF. Interviewees reported some variations in PRG composition although the CHF allocation guidelines outline what this should be and how PRG members should be selected. The FSL sector PRG comprises FAO and five NGOs selected by NGO members of the sector while the protection and emergency shelter/NFI PRGs comprise two UN agencies and three NGOs, of which two are national NGOs. The nutrition PRG includes government representation. As described in section 1.3, the PRGs tended to select the highest priority projects for CHF funding and then allocate the CERF envelope for the sector to the remaining high priority projects. This was perhaps because the HCT decided on the CERF envelope per sector towards the end of the PRG discussions (see timeline in figure 5 in Annex 1).

The operation of the PRGs varies across the sectors so one agency suggested that the sector lead agencies should agree on what information is shared within the PRGs and what is shared with the sector group more widely. One UN agency noted that it could be a challenge to ensure that the PRGs operate effectively. An interviewee from another agency gave the example of the health sector. The PRG had initially decided to allocate certain percentages of the CERF UFE grant to each of the three UN agencies participating in the sector. However, when the HCT agreed on the envelope for each sector from the $15 million set aside for sector-based responses, the sector coordinator emailed the other UN agencies and the percentages had changed, with WHO receiving a larger percentage. This led to a major disagreement but the agencies finally agreed on a compromise. In the case of the $5 million for the multi-sectoral response for nutrition, the sector lead took the whole amount for health without discussion with the other agencies.

As noted in section 1.2, the UFE allocation in 2014 was eventually spread across 24 projects with 11 receiving less than $500,000 (see table 4 in Annex 1). Thus, although the allocation process started with the aim of maximising the impact of the CERF grant, due to a focus on agency funding needs, it ended in a ‘division of the cake’ approach. At a meeting with sector coordinators, participants felt that OCHA could provide more direction to discussions at ISCG level in order to focus them on achieving impact with CERF funds. They acknowledged, however, that it would take effort to change the informal system, which has become established, to divide funding across agencies and sectors. Despite the challenges, UNHCR felt that the multi-sectoral response for nutrition was an interesting pilot and could form the basis for a larger-scale multi-sectoral project if Sudan receives another UFE allocation in 2015.

3.1.2 Allocation of RR Grants in 2013 and 2014

The process for allocating RR grants is different to that used for the UFE grants. For the RR grant in 2014, to respond to the needs of South Sudanese refugees, UNHCR as the lead agency for refugee issues coordinated the application. It mentioned the RR grant in one of the regular refugee multi-sector coordination meetings so that NGOs participating in the meeting were aware of the availability of CERF funds. The ISCG discussed the allocation of the grant, focusing on the needs for each sector in relation to the CERF’s life-saving criteria. This led to some disagreement amongst the sector coordinators about which activities met the criteria. The ISCG does not discuss the process for prioritisation within each sector with the result that the sectors use different approaches.

In 2014, the WASH sector called a meeting of the government, UN agencies and NGOs working in the two affected states – White Nile and South Kordofan. The participants discussed the capacities and competencies of the different actors in light of the contingency plans already developed in order to decide who would undertake what activities and decide the amounts of funding. There was only one NGO able to work in the area so this limited the number of partners.

The nutrition sector group discussed the CERF allocation for the South Sudan refugees in a sector-wide meeting, focusing on the activities of the UN agencies that would receive the funds.\(^2\) Since the amount allocated for nutrition was around $900,000, the group decided to let UNICEF and WFP take the discussion forward. Once the two agencies had decided on the amount that each would receive, they then selected their partners and decided how much each would receive.

The child protection sub-sector group discussed the location of the South Sudanese refugees to identify who was working in the relevant areas. This highlighted that there was only one NGO in White Nile and one NNGO in South Kordofan. These two NGOs submitted proposals that fitted into the sub-sector’s framework, which had been discussed as part of the emergency preparedness planning process. These two proposals, together with input from UNICEF as the sub-sector lead agency, fed into UNHCR’s overall CERF proposal for the protection sector.

Although some of the sectors discussed the 2014 RR grant, some NGOs (mainly international) highlighted the challenge of obtaining information about how they could apply to be implementing partners. One INGO found that it was not clear where decisions were being made because, at Khartoum level, it was told to seek information at state level but could not get information at this level either.

For the RR grant for Darfur in 2013, the WASH sector invited potential partners and OCHA to a briefing in Khartoum in order to identify partners. At the sector coordination meeting, participants agreed to carry out needs assessments at state and locality levels. Following the assessments, UNICEF established task forces at state level to categorise needs and responses. UNICEF led the task forces that comprised the HAC, the department of Water, Environment and Sanitation (WES), OCHA, and NGOs that were nominated on the basis of who was working in the relevant areas. The assessments also helped to determine which actors were best suited to respond to particular needs. OCHA had provided UNICEF with an indication of the size of the RR allocation and how much each sector could expect to get, which helped to identify appropriate activities. Despite the inclusion of NGOs in the task forces, as described in section 3.2, INGOs found the information provided inadequate.

According to UNICEF staff, the level of discussion within the education sector depends on the amount of time available to apply for funding. If there is sufficient time, it discusses CERF funding in the sector group as a whole. Otherwise, it discusses it only in the PRG. In the case of the RR grant for South Sudanese refugees in 2014, it discussed CERF funding only with partners working in the project areas. UNICEF nutrition sector staff stated that the agency issues a call for proposals for RR grants.

Since the timing for the RR grants is different to CHF grant allocations, the HCT (rather than the CHF Advisory Group) gives the final approval to CERF submissions.

### 3.1.3 Lessons learned from the grant allocation processes

Discussions for this review highlighted the following lessons and conclusions from the CERF allocation processes:

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\(^2\) An INGO that is a sector member remembered the CERF RR grant being mentioned in a sector meeting because UN agencies were seeking partners.
• Agencies participating in this review felt that having one prioritisation process for the CHF and CERF saved time and supported the use of the two funds in a complementary way.
• The spreading of the 2014 UFE allocation across a large number of projects highlights how challenging it is to adopt a strategic approach when agencies have so many under-funded activities. As one agency pointed out, it is difficult to adopt a strategic approach if each agency is focused on “its piece of the pie”. To mitigate this, the RC/HC recommended that the ERC should emphasise to agencies at headquarters level that they are not automatically entitled to receive CERF funds and need to improve both the prioritisation process and the quality of their proposals. The agencies would then need to communicate this message to field level, including sector coordinators.
• Another agency felt that the failure to use CERF funding strategically was because the HCT in Sudan does not demand or even encourage prioritisation. An INGO member of the HCT agreed that it does not raise questions about whether CERF funds are being used strategically.
• A further challenge with avoiding a ‘division of the cake’ approach is that the CERF allocation processes at country level do not tend to take account of the delivery capacity of agencies, the timeliness of their procurement systems, and whether they have access. One agency pointed out that the CERF secretariat is not in a position to verify this information so there needs to be some form of verification at country level. A CHF Advisory Group member noted that OCHA does try to raise the question of performance but there has been resistance from agencies and a lack of agreement on how to define effectiveness. NGOs receiving CHF funds report quarterly, which makes it easier to identify challenges, whereas CERF-recipient agencies only provide a report three months after the end of a project. This also makes it more difficult to take account of performance issues when allocating CERF funds.
• For the 2014 UFE allocation, the ISCG did not discuss priorities or a strategy across the sectors but sector coordinators noted that it is difficult for both the ISCG and the HCT to be more objective because of the pressure on agencies to raise funds.

3.2 Inclusiveness of the allocation process

The descriptions of the allocation processes above show that the process for the UFE grants is more inclusive of non-UN partners than the process used for the RR grants because of the PRG mechanism. In 2014, INGOs felt that the UFE allocation process was very clear but, because the RR grant came later, it was unclear which agencies were receiving funds and how they planned to use them. As one INGO interviewee put it, there is some degree of transparency when a CERF UFE grant is allocated in conjunction with CHF funding but there is no transparency for RR grants and the decisions to fund some NGOs and not others seem to be arbitrary. The interviewee reported NGOs receiving an email stating that an agency had allocated CERF funding to X implementing partners but it was not clear how they were selected. The decisions were more contentious in Darfur, where there are several NGOs operating, than in states where there are a limited number of partners. This is highlighted by the concern expressed by INGO Steering Committee members in September 2013 that the information in the WASH sector on the RR grant for the Darfur crisis was inadequate even though, according to UNICEF, NGOs participated in the task forces that discussed priorities (see section 3.1.2 above). Steering Committee members reported that some NGOs were informed and asked to submit proposals but then never heard anything back; some NGOs heard about CERF funding at coordination meetings in Khartoum while others were

24 To help address this challenge, for the second UFE allocation in 2014, the CERF secretariat disseminated a new Prioritization Strategy template for country team submissions so that they could better present the strategy, impact of CERF funds and the profile of projects before they are submitted.
25 INGO Steering Committee - Summary of Key Issues Pertaining to Implementation of CERF Funding In Sudan, September 2013.
told it was being coordinated in Darfur; some partners did not receive invitations to the relevant meetings in Darfur and therefore missed out on the funding opportunity; and some NGOs did not hear about it at all.

According to an interviewee involved in the SRP process in 2014, the limited engagement of NGOs in CERF RR allocation processes reflects their minimal involvement in national level planning processes, such as the development of the SRP.

The group discussion with sector coordinators in El Fasher highlighted that funding decisions tend to take place at Khartoum level. The sector coordinators and agency field staff provide information on local humanitarian needs and assessment data to Khartoum, where agency staff then decide on funding applications and allocations. So, for example, although there had been extensive discussion about the amount of CERF funds that agencies should use for the multi-sectoral response to the nutrition crisis vs. other needs, staff in El Fasher had no information about the discussion. One participant suggested that this was because the HCT had to make the final decisions quickly in order to comply with the CERF's timeline for the UFE allocation so there was no time to share information with the field. A WFP participant in the meeting reported that field staff might contribute to proposal writing and staff at Khartoum level share the proposal with their field colleagues. However, allocation decisions are made in Khartoum.

Similarly, OCHA staff members in the El Fasher sub-office participating in sector meetings reported that they had very little information on CERF or CHF funding, such as how projects had been selected or when projects were due to start. However, they had started to receive more information on the CHF after a visit by the CHF-funded M&R officers to North Darfur. They argued that it would be helpful to have more information about CERF funding processes so that they could answer questions from NGOs, particularly national ones. An OCHA staff member participating in the health sector group was surprised to hear WHO briefing partners on CERF funding at a meeting in March and asking them to select priorities and submit proposals because he was unaware of the CERF allocation. An OCHA staff member participating in the NFI and nutrition sectors and the protection sub-sector group on gender-based violence (GBV) had not heard any mention of CERF funding.

There also appeared to be less information at El Fasher level about whether funding from UN agencies to NGOs was from CERF grants or other sources of funding. One NGO participant in the nutrition sector group in El Fasher mentioned that it had received CERF funds in 2013 but, although the sector group had discussed priorities, it was not aware of the availability of CERF funds in 2014. By contrast, a WASH sector participant noted that the, for the 2014 CERF grant, the sector group as a whole had selected partners for funding. Although UNICEF is the lead agency for both the WASH and nutrition sectors, there seemed to be some differences in the allocation processes followed at field level. While an FAO INGO partner was aware that its project was CERF-funded, an NNGO partner had no knowledge of whether its agreement was funded by the CERF or not. FAO’s field staff were also unclear about which projects were financed by the CERF and which by other donors.

At Khartoum level, INGOs tended to know whether they were implementing CERF projects, often because they had been involved in discussions of CHF and CERF UFE allocations in sector groups. However, they did not have information about how the sector envelopes had been decided since they do

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26 According to the OCHA office in Khartoum, however, the Darfur coordinator is included on all email lists pertaining to CHF and CERF funding. Darfur colleagues also participate in the weekly Heads of Section meeting where upcoming CERF requests are discussed.
not participate in the ISCG. Since UN agencies combine CERF funding with funds from other sources, it is understandable that they do not mention the source of funding to partners, particularly since the CERF does not require visibility. However, this does make it more difficult to track the implementation of CERF funding, even for the sector-based M&R officers.

In 2013 and at the time of the 2014 RR allocation, CHF donors participated in both the Advisory Group and the HCT and there were five NGO positions on the HCT. Since then, donors no longer participate in the HCT and there are only two NGO positions on the HCT. This is in line with the recommendations of the Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) mission that there was “A need to strengthen the effective functioning and decision-making process of the HCT. This necessitates an improvement in the way it operates, reduction in its size and adjustment of its composition, in line with IASC Guidance.” An INGO member of the HCT felt that, by the time CERF funding is discussed at HCT level, there is already some degree of agreement on which agencies will be receiving what amounts so there is not much room for a detailed discussion. Nevertheless, there is a risk that the changes to the composition of the HCT will reduce the level of independent oversight of CERF allocations, particularly since one of the challenges identified by the STAIT mission was a lack of a spirit of cooperation between humanitarian agencies and that the heads of UN agencies tended to represent their agencies rather than their sectors.

**Recommendations**

3. To ensure a more coordinated, inter-sectoral approach to prioritising CERF funds, the HCT should empower the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), chaired by OCHA, to develop a strategy for the allocation of CERF funds that focuses on maximising impact. The HCT, under the HC’s leadership, should respect the ISCG’s recommendations.

4. It would be helpful if the CERF secretariat requested that prioritisation strategies submitted for UFE allocations outline how sectors/clusters will prioritise funds as well. This will help to ensure transparency around prioritisation processes and can be used to promote best practices and lead to consistent approaches across sectors.

5. Sector Peer Review Groups (PRGs) should take a more strategic approach to ensuring complementarity of the two funds, taking into account their different timeframes for implementation and other criteria. This will be easier if there is a more strategic approach for the use of CERF funds developed by the ISCG and the HCT.

6. To help take account of the delivery capacity of agencies and the timeliness of implementation when allocating CERF funds, mid-way through the project implementation period, OCHA should circulate a table to agencies on behalf of the RC/HC. This should list the CERF project number and enable agencies to indicate the total amount of funding spent, activities delivered, and challenges encountered. This would only require one line per project in the table and would take a very short time for agencies to complete. This has been found to be useful in other CERF-recipient countries.

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27 Donors on the HCT comprised ECHO, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK and the USA.
28 Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team Mission Report, 10 May 2014, pg. 3.
Section 4: Timeliness of CERF Disbursement and Implementation

This section examines the timeliness of the CERF Secretariat in disbursing funds as well as the timeliness of onward funding to implementing partners. It addresses indicators 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 20 of the PAF.

As noted in section 2, CERF-recipient agencies had found the CERF very timely in responding to request for funding for acute or rapid onset emergencies. This section demonstrates that the CERF secretariat has also been timely in disbursing funds but that delays in onward funding from CERF-recipient agencies to implementing partners had caused delays with implementation.

4.1 Timeliness of the CERF Secretariat

The CERF’s focus on life-saving and time-critical emergency response has led the secretariat to emphasise the timeliness of CERF funding. Therefore, PAF indicators 8-10 seek to measure the following:

- Average number of working days between the final submission of a grant request package from RC/HC and ERC decision. (Benchmark: Three working days for RR and five working days for UFE)
- Average number of working days between receipt of countersigned approval letter from a grant recipient and request (memo for disbursement to the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts (OPPBA)) (Benchmark: Two working days)
- Average number of days between request (memo) for fund disbursement by OPPBA to grant recipient.

Based on the data provided by the CERF secretariat, table 5 in Annex 1 shows:

- The number of working days from the official submission of a project proposal to the date of the final submission;
- The number of working days from the final submission of a proposal to its approval by the ERC;
- The number of days from approval by the ERC to the agency counter-signing the approval letter;
- The number of days from the signing of the letter to the disbursement of funds to the agencies.

Since the CERF secretariat had disbursed funds for both the UFE and RR grants in 2014, table 5 covers all the projects financed in 2014. This shows that:

- Although the RC/HC submitted the initial project proposals for the CERF UFE allocation on 14 February 2014, the agencies made the official submission of their proposals between 5 and 31 March 2014. It then took between 0 to three working days to finalise the proposals, whereas this used to be the longest part of the funding process. The one exception was the UNICEF child protection project that took 13 working days to finalise.
- Once the agencies had finalised their proposals, it took the ERC 8.63 working days on average to approve the UFE projects. This is outside of the benchmark of five days for UFE grants. However, the average was increased slightly because it took 15 working days to approve the FAO project that is part of the multi-sectoral response to the nutrition crisis.
- Since the CERF secretariat has signed umbrella LoUs with eligible agencies, they are only required to counter-sign the ERC’s approval letter and return it to the CERF secretariat in order to secure disbursement of funds. While it generally took the agencies one to three working days to do this for the UFE projects, it took WFP seven days to sign the letter for one project, which may have been because it was approved just before Easter. It also took WHO six days to sign the letter for one of its projects.
• Once the agencies had counter-signed the approval letter, it took, on average, four working days to disburse the UFE grants. However, WHO received funds for one project on the day that it counter-signed the approval letter.

• For the RR grant, agencies submitted their proposals on 2 April 2014. While this was the final submission for one UNICEF and one UNHCR project, the agencies submitted their other final proposals from 9-11 April.

• It took the ERC an average of 1.6 working days to approve the RR proposals, which is well within the benchmark of three days for RR grants.

• The agencies took one to two working days to counter-sign the ERC’s approval letter for their RR projects, although WFP took five days to counter-sign the letters for two projects. Again, this may have been due to the Easter break.

• One the agencies had counter-signed the approval letters, they received their funding in 3.5 working days, on average.

This shows that the CERF remains one of the timeliest donors with the process from making an official submission to the disbursement of funds taking just under 16 working days, on average, for UFE grants and 12 working days for RR grants.

4.2 Timeliness of Onward Funding

OCHA Sudan currently tracks onward funding to implementing partners at country level one or two months after the disbursal of CERF funds. For example, it requested information on the disbursal of both the RR and UFE grants for 2014 in June. This showed that while the agencies had generally disbursed funding to government partners, funding to NGO partners was slower. FAO had disbursed funding to NGO implementing partners for its two UFE grants in May, which is line with what it did in 2013. However, almost all of UNICEF’s funding to its NGO implementing partners was in June, two months after the CERF secretariat had disbursed funds. This means that UNICEF’s NGO partners only have four months or less to implement the RR projects (since all activities must be completed six months from 15-21 April 2014, which is when the CERF secretariat disbursed funds for UNICEF’s RR projects). The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) received two grants from the UFE allocation in 2014 for WASH activities. In one case, it expected to pay implementing partners in July and, in the other, it had yet to select implementing partners as of June. UNFPA received funding for three projects in 2014. One was from the UFE grant for health, which it plans to use to procure reproductive health kits. The other two projects were for protection, one financed from the UFE grant and the other from the RR grant. However, it had not provided information on onward funding to OCHA Sudan and failed to respond to repeated requests for information for this review.

For a more detailed and broader analysis of the timeliness of onward funding, table 6 in Annex 1 examines the number of working days taken by CERF-recipient agencies to transfer funds to implementing partners, both government and NGOs, in 2013. This is based on data reported by the agencies to the CERF secretariat in the RC/HC reports and focuses on the UFE grant in 2013 as well as the Darfur RR grant for comparison.29 This shows that agencies can transfer funds on time if they have pre-existing agreements with partners for on-going activities. In fact, UNHCR and WFP reported transferring funds even before they had received grants from the CERF. In these cases, the agencies were clearly using CERF funds to cover the cost of on-going programmes. Agencies are able to start project activities

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29 In addition to disbursement dates, agencies report on activity start dates since implementing partners may start activities before they have received funds.
to be financed by the CERF up to six weeks before the date of disbursement but they must note this in the final proposal approved by the ERC. As table 6 demonstrates, both UNHCR and WFP exceeded this time limit, with UNHCR disbursing funds up to 11 weeks earlier and WFP disbursing grants 20-23 weeks earlier.\textsuperscript{30}

Agencies sometimes seemed to be able to transfer funds more quickly to government partners, with UNICEF making funds available in 20-44 working days in the case of the UFE grant. However, in other cases, UNICEF took 107-108 working days to transfer funds to government partners. For the Darfur RR grant, WHO was able to transfer funds to NGO partners more quickly (39-44 working days) than to government partners (52-60 days).

The amount of time taken to transfer funds to NGO partners varied considerably within some agencies. For example, FAO transferred funds to NGO partners for the UFE grant in 41-45 working days. However, for the Darfur RR grant, it received CERF funds on 27 August 2013 but did not transfer funds to two NNGO partners till the beginning of January 2014 and to one NNGO partner till 17 February 2014, i.e., around five months later. This was even though the project had to be completed by 27 February 2014 under CERF rules (see section 6.1 for further details). Similarly, while UNICEF was able to transfer funds to a couple of INGO partners for its Darfur RR grant by October 2013 (having received the funds on 27 August 2013), it took until the end of December 2013 or even 14 January 2014 to transfer funds to other partners. This would have left them 6-8 weeks for implementation. In the case of the UFE grant, UNICEF was able to disburse funds to some NGO partners within three months of having received its grant (on 11 April 2013) but it took around six months or more to transfer funding to at least six NGO partners (see section 6.1 for further details). UNICEF reporting on the start of implementation by NGO partners for the UFE grant in 2013 shows that the majority started implementing only when they had received the first disbursement. This highlights the fact that delays in funding to NGO partners can seriously delay project implementation.

As table 6 highlights, there can be tremendous variation in the time that agencies take to transfer funds to individual partners but averaging the number of days shows that FAO took at least 42 working days to disburse funds from its UFE grant in 2013. WFP took a similar average of 47 days to transfer funds to its partners for the UFE grant. FAO also took the longest average time to disburse funds – 98 days – for its Darfur RR grant. UNICEF was the second slowest at disbursing funds, taking an average of 82.5 working days for the UFE grant. This variation may be due to external factors leading to delays in some cases, rather than internal agency procedures. As described in section 4.3 below, it can take time for partners to sign Technical Agreements or to gain access to project locations.

The delays and challenges with onward funding are not new issues. The secretariat’s analysis (based on RC/HC reports) showed that the average number of working days from CERF disbursement to the forwarding of the first instalment to an implementing partner was 52.1 days in 2012. As a result, the RC/HC argued that the CERF Advisory Group should push for CERF-recipient agencies to put in place measures to improve the speed of onward funding and procurement procedures in order to be eligible for CERF funding.

\textsuperscript{30} WFP has pointed out that it does not contract implementing partners only upon receipt of specific funds but from 1 January to 30 June and in some cases from 1 January to 31 December. As soon as it receives CERF or other funds for the same activities, these are used to reimburse the general pot of funds from which it transfers grants to implementing partners. However, the CERF still requires WFP to show that the funds were used for transfers within the grant implementation period.
4.3 Implementation Challenges

Most agencies mentioned that insecurity and lack of access had hampered their work. WFP had found that even when access opens up, as in the case of Blue Nile State early in 2013, this does not guarantee continuous access and the situation is often volatile. In a few cases, UNHCR’s NGO partners had not been able to access areas to undertake assessments for the distribution of NFIs and emergency shelter materials and this had led to challenges with ensuring that the right people received assistance.

NGOs have to sign a Technical Agreement with the HAC, which specifies where the NGO can work. It can take a long time to negotiate the agreement and this reduces the number of implementing partners available to CERF-recipient agencies. One agency had selected an INGO partner because it was almost certain of getting its Technical Agreement but it did not get it and the agency had to select another partner, which caused a delay. In some locations, CERF recipient agencies have to work with NNGO partners because INGOs cannot get permission to operate there. This can lead to situations where a national NGO is overwhelmed by international aid agencies wanting to implement through it. One UN agency had to request the re-deployment of CERF funds because the NNGO that it had selected did not have the capacity to implement its project along with those of other agencies.

Reports from FAO partners distributing agricultural inputs in South Darfur in 2013 demonstrate the range of implementation challenges that NGOs face. These included the difficulty of transporting agricultural inputs because of insecurity in Nyala, the national intelligence service preventing NGO staff from accessing project villages, delays in getting permission to travel to project sites, tribal conflict causing people to flee from the village where they farm, and general insecurity such as car-jacking and tribal conflict delaying project activities. In addition, participants at meetings in El Fasher noted that inflation of the local currency poses a major challenge because prices, particularly for transport, tend to have increased sharply between the time of budgeting and implementation.

At one point in 2013, access in North Darfur was so challenging due to a combination of insecurity and government permission that some humanitarian agencies airlifted supplies in order to be able to respond (this was highlighted by UNICEF’s report on the nutrition project financed by the UFE grant in 2013 and by FAO at the sector coordinators meeting in El Fasher).

UNHCR highlighted the fact that, in addition to challenges with security, physical access to affected communities can be a challenge during the rainy season. An INGO working in Blue Nile State supported this. In 2013, it faced challenges with getting access to undertake an assessment. By the end of April, it was able to get access but the rainy season then delayed implementation.

Government policy regarding IDPs and refugees can also impede project implementation. One agency gave the example of being prevented from constructing latrines for South Sudanese refugees in one location but then being granted permission to construct them 200 metres away, without any explanation for the change. In Darfur, the government has relocated new IDPs repeatedly, making it difficult to provide adequate sanitation facilities because latrines cannot be moved every time the IDPs are relocated. Similarly, UNFPA was delayed in establishing women’s spaces and protection networks under its 2014 RR grant because the government relocated the South Sudanese refugees. The government can apply other restrictions on agencies as well and WFP noted that it had to adapt its post-distribution monitoring tools for its response in Blue Nile State because the government did not want it to undertake its normal monitoring.

UNICEF highlighted that negotiations with partners on implementation details and prioritising needs when there are a large number of critical gaps can also cause delays. For example, with the RR grant for flood-affected areas in 2013, it held lengthy negotiations with partners about the number of beneficiaries, the ability to undertake assessments on the ground when there was resistance from the authorities, and discussions with WHO about what activities could be included in the project given the
situation on the ground and the budget available. To resolve these challenges, UNICEF established a sector task force to agree what would be included in the CERF proposal.

UNFPA raised a challenge that was related to reporting on implementation. It uses the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, which means that its financial system does not record funds as disbursed when it pays to procure items but only when the agency receives the items. Since the international procurement of reproductive health kits and other supplies takes a few months and customs clearance in Sudan can sometimes take a long time, this can skew its financial reporting on CERF funds and make it difficult to demonstrate that UNFPA has spent the funds within the project implementation period. It is trying to address this by starting the procurement process as soon as its CERF grant is approved so that goods can be shipped when the agency receives CERF funds.

4.4 No-Cost Extensions (NCEs)

The CERF secretariat received no requests for NCEs in 2012 and 2013 from agencies in Sudan receiving CERF funds. However, UNFPA requested a redeployment of funds for its UFE project in 2013. This was because conflict as well as flooding caused by heavy rains in August and September 2013 had restricted access to some of the project areas. By redeploying funds, UNFPA intended to address the additional needs of those affected by conflict and the floods.

As described in section 6.1, the review identified six projects financed by CERF grants in 2012 and 2013 where, according to CERF regulations, agencies should have requested NCEs. In some cases, staff seemed to be unaware that the CERF requires agencies to complete implementation of activities within the grant period, not simply to liquidate funds.

Recommendation

7. In light of a growing number of examples from CERF country-level reviews that delays in onward funding to implementing partners seriously delays the implementation of CERF projects, the major donors to the CERF should work with UN agencies to improve their internal mechanisms for making sub-grants.

Section 5: Monitoring and Reporting

This section focuses on reporting on, and accountability for, CERF grants. It addresses indicators 13, 14, 15, 16, 27 and 28 of the PAF. It starts by discussing agency reporting on CERF funding to the RC/HC. It goes on to describe the inclusion of CERF projects in the CHF monitoring framework and concludes with a discussion of the monitoring procedures and mechanisms for accountability to affected populations that the CERF-recipient agencies have in place.

5.1 Reporting on CERF Funding

In general, CERF recipient agencies found the report template for providing input into the RC/HC’s report to the CERF secretariat straightforward and simpler than the reporting required by some donors. Nevertheless, one finding of the AAR was that the quality of the reporting from the agencies was of poor quality and required a lot of follow up by OCHA. High staff turnover has been a challenge for some agencies. So, for example, staff preparing the reports were sometimes unclear about the indicators and/or targets selected by those who had prepared the proposals but then left.

In a number of cases, CERF recipient agencies have not provided full details of challenges or delays with implementation. Section 6.1 below details the cases where agencies had failed to comply with CERF requirements. However, an INGO implementer gave the example of being unable to complete a water distribution system that it is implementing through a local NGO partner because the road to the project site has been blocked since mid-February 2014. The NGO should have completed the project by the
middle of March but had been unable to do so because of the lack of access. In June 2014, there had been a peace agreement and the road had re-opened so the INGO had a team on the ground assessing needs. It was then hoping to be able to complete the project. Since the cost of materials had doubled due to inflation, the INGO was going to use its own funds to increase funding for the NNGO partner to complete the work. Although this was a small component of the overall project, the CERF recipient agency made no mention of access challenges or the delay in completing the activity in its report.

The reasons for the poor quality of CERF recipient agency reporting are not clear. The agencies implement a large amount of CERF-funded programmes through NGO implementing partners who provide regular and detailed reports. WHO noted that while its NGO partners provide monthly progress reports as well as a report at the end of the project, these use WHO’s standard format that then has to be converted into the CERF format. Similarly, the financial report has to be aligned with CERF budget lines. FAO’s NGO partners provide narrative and financial progress reports in order to receive subsequent tranches of funding (with the first tranche paid upon the signing of an agreement). UNICEF’s WASH NGO partners provide monthly reports although one INGO partner suggested that this was unsuitable for CERF projects that have to be implemented in three to six months and that it would be better to have an interim and final report. An NNGO working in nutrition mentioned providing weekly situation reports to UNICEF because the agency wanted the latest data. However, the NNGO had no idea about how UNICEF used the information that it provided. UNHCR receives quarterly reporting from its NGO partners and releases funding tranches on the basis of these reports. In addition, it meets INGO partners monthly and NNGO partners weekly. UNFPA also expects its partners to provide financial status reports quarterly in order to release the next tranche of funding. The agency noted that partner reporting is not as systematic as it should be but programme officers approve funding tranches on the basis of their knowledge of progress with implementation. While NGOs provide regular reports on the implementation of CERF projects, one agency noted that it was very difficult to obtain reports from government implementing partners who implement a substantial amount of CERF funding in Sudan.

Some UNICEF staff members argued that the CERF reporting format was weak because it does not capture all the information that it should. This is because there is a very different level of detail in reporting from implementing partners compared to the reporting that CERF recipient agencies have to provide. They suggested that one way of strengthening the quality of reporting on CERF funding would be for the secretariat to push for measurable indicators since the lack of appropriate indicators in proposals makes reporting more difficult. However, UNHCR and UNFPA argued that it was difficult to identify easily measurable yet meaningful indicators for activities such as protection and addressing GBV.

Once OCHA has compiled the reports from the agencies, it shares the report with the HCT and incorporates the HCT’s comments into the final version. However, the agencies do not necessarily share the report with sector coordinators. Participants in the sector coordinators meeting in Khartoum stated that they did not receive a copy of the RC/HC’s report to the CERF secretariat but it would be helpful to be able to provide input in the same way as they did for the CHF annual report, which OCHA shared with them in draft form. Staff members at field level did not generally receive the final CERF report but two participants in the sector coordinators meetings in El Fasher mentioned that they had seen it. Agencies also do not share the CERF report with their NGO implementing partners but participants at a meeting in Khartoum said that it would be helpful to receive a copy of the report since they receive the CHF annual report. Given the growing significance of CERF funding and that it is meant to complement the CHF, they believed that they should also receive the CERF report.

A couple of interviewees noted that there was a demand from the Government of Sudan to demonstrate how CERF funds had been used. Since the Ministry of Health participates actively in sector coordination meetings and also implements CERF funding, it has raised questions about how the funds have been
used. The HAC had read a press release on the CERF contribution of $5.5 million for the flood response in 2013. It wrote to the RC/HC asking for information on where and how the money had been spent. The RC/HC highlighted the challenge with providing sufficiently detailed information to the government unless agencies can report adequately on results for affected populations.

5.2 CHF Monitoring Framework and CERF Projects

In accordance with global guidelines for CHFs, the CHF is supporting sectors to undertake monitoring and reporting. It finances dedicated national M&R officers in five sectors - WASH, health, nutrition, FSL and protection. An M&R officer in OCHA coordinates the team but they are hired by the sector lead agencies and based in these agencies. This increases the sector’s acceptance of monitoring by these officers but they are able to be neutral because they are financed independently. Nevertheless, one M&R officer noted that it can be sensitive for an officer based in the sector lead agency to identify challenges with the programmes of other UN agencies working in the same sector.

In line with the CERF secretariat’s guidance on complementarity of the CERF and CHF, the M&R officers have begun to include CERF projects systematically into their work plans in 2014, using CHF tools. The M&R officers had focused on NGO partners implementing CERF projects since they had been advised to use ‘light’ monitoring for CERF-recipient agencies. The M&R officers identified some challenges with monitoring CERF projects. One was that, in some cases, the field staff of CERF-recipient agencies and/or NGO implementing partners did not know the source of funding. This made it difficult to identify CERF and CHF funding vs. funding from other donors channelled through the agencies. Another was that NGOs are only implementing parts of an overall CERF project so it is difficult to match their activities and targets to the overall CERF proposal.

The CERF-recipient agencies consulted for this review welcomed the inclusion of CERF projects in the work of the M&R officers. FAO provided an example whereby the monitoring had highlighted a problem with beneficiary targeting and it had then worked with partners to improving targeting. FAO, UNHCR and UNICEF have used CHF monitoring information to crosscheck or supplement their own monitoring data. Although there is no M&R officer for the education sector, the sector coordinator or the education officer and information manager have joined monitoring missions. As a result, UNICEF found that partner activities on the ground did not match the reports that it had received in the case of two CHF-funded projects so it was keeping them under closer scrutiny. WHO had also found the monitoring information from the M&R officers’ visit to West Darfur helpful for validating reporting by NGO implementers and taking corrective action where necessary. A couple of the M&R officers had reported to their sector lead agencies that the monitoring capacity of NNGOs was weak and the agencies were considering how to strengthen this capacity so that the NNGOs could provide better monitoring data.

UNICEF uses the information from visits by the M&R officers to provide feedback to field colleagues and partners. At Khartoum level, the information is discussed at meetings of the heads of sections in order to identify bottlenecks with humanitarian response. UNICEF has also shared the information with interested donors such as OFDA and ECHO. However, one UNICEF interviewee felt that the M&R officers needed to have a more detailed discussion with agencies about the objectives of the monitoring visits and what was covered to deliver more strategic information.

While UNICEF WASH staff members agreed that having a CHF-funded M&R officer was very useful and that it was logical for them to monitor CERF projects as well, they raised concerns that adhering to the CHF monitoring framework would reduce the CERF’s flexibility. They felt that the CHF was more rigid about requiring adherence to the project plan whereas the CERF could offer more flexibility in responding to new needs, for example, with changes to IDP camps.

UNFPA, which does not have an M&R officer based in the agency, had not received any monitoring reports in 2013. It believed that this might be because the team had not monitored any UNFPA projects.

A couple of INGOs noted that information from monitoring visits feeds into sector discussions.

While the monitoring reports for individual projects have been useful for agencies, sector lead agencies had not worked together with the M&R officers to consolidate findings across a number of projects to identify common problems or to develop general recommendations even though the officers undertake joint monitoring missions, produce a joint report and have a debriefing after each mission. According to interviewees, as a result, the findings from monitoring missions had not been shared at HCT level, fed into decision-making processes or had an impact on improving the performance of humanitarian agencies.

### 5.3 Agency Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

In addition to the monitoring undertaken by the CHF-funded M&R officers, agencies have their own monitoring mechanisms. UNICEF has a monitoring officer for health, in addition to the M&R officer financed by the CHF, in order to support field staff. WHO’s monitoring goes beyond the projects that it is implementing to cover public health risks. However, the agency believed that it could improve its monitoring by consulting with aid recipients. It reports on its supervision visits during sector meetings.

FAO staff members try to monitor agricultural interventions at three points – following the distribution of inputs, mid-way through the project and at the end. FAO also monitors the selection of aid recipients by its NGO implementing partners to ensure accurate targeting. WFP monitors the distribution of food to ensure that the right people receive it and then monitors 2-3 weeks after a distribution to track how recipients have used the food.

UNFPA’s reproductive health and GBV officers at field level manage projects and undertake monitoring. They provide weekly updates through a programme and financial management matrix to staff members in Khartoum. The reproductive health and GBV sub-sector groups meet monthly and this is also an opportunity to discuss implementation challenges with partners. UNFPA field officers share meeting minutes with colleagues in Khartoum.

Following the CHF monitoring process, UNICEF’s education staff rank sector projects as high, medium or low priority for monitoring. If a partner performed well in the previous year, its project in the current year is a low priority for a monitoring visit. However, if a partner did not perform well or is a new partner, it is a high priority. The education section shares its monitoring plan with the CHF unit and works with the M&R officers on joint missions. UNICEF relies on its field staff to visit project sites and submit weekly reports on the humanitarian situation. The engineer in the education section also visits every project site. He then submits a field report that UNICEF shares with the relevant sections within UNICEF as well as external stakeholders as appropriate.

For nutrition projects, UNICEF’s field project officers undertake routine monitoring at state level while staff from Khartoum supplement this with one or two monitoring missions per month. Staff suggested that the agency could do more to incorporate accountability to affected populations and value for money considerations into its monitoring. The nutrition sector has developed perhaps the most detailed monitoring system. It has two databases. One records monthly reports from UNICEF partners against seven topics – emergency updates and coordination, challenges with implementing nutrition responses,
programme performance (e.g., number of nutrition centres operating and numbers of new admissions), screening and referral data, capacity building activities, surveys or studies planned or completed, and other comments or concerns. The other database focuses on CHF and CERF projects. UNICEF records the indicators listed in project proposals and then tracks progress against these on a monthly basis (based on implementing agency reports), particularly against mid-cycle and end-cycle targets. If a project is not making the expected progress, UNICEF prioritises it for a monitoring visit.

UNICEF’s child protection team has developed a monitoring matrix with indicators based on the agency’s eight commitments to children in emergencies. The agency has a child protection officer in each state and they collect monthly monitoring information that UNICEF uses as the basis for its reporting on CERF funding. Staff from Khartoum make field visits to supplement this monitoring. UNICEF is also encouraging the Ministry of Social Welfare, which is well staffed, to monitor projects in areas where the agency does not have access. This has yielded positive results in North Darfur. In South Darfur, UNICEF is working with universities on monitoring.

A staff member from UNHCR accompanies partners undertaking the distribution of NFIs in order to verify recipient lists and the agency also conducts post-distribution monitoring. However, it acknowledged that there is a great reliance on local leaders (sheikhs) to distribute the NFIs and they have their own criteria. UNHCR has piloted the introduction of smartphones so that recipients can take geographically tagged photographs that can be used to update a monitoring database. It is working with OCHA on this.

Although CERF-recipient agencies do have their own monitoring mechanisms, M&R officers participating in this review argued that the agencies should improve the monitoring of implementing partners, particularly NGOs and government agencies. One of the challenges for agencies has been with obtaining permits for international staff to travel to project sites (e.g., international staff have not been able to travel to White Nile state even though UN agencies are providing assistance to South Sudanese refugees there). Even when aid workers have travel permits, the national intelligence service can prevent them from travelling to camps or particular sites. In some cases, international agencies require military escorts to travel to a camp and the timing of the escort may leave very little time for consultations.

The agencies do not evaluate projects to which CERF funding contributes in general although WFP evaluated its voucher distribution programme in 2013 and UNHCR evaluated its NFI pipeline in 2011, examining the alternative of using vouchers rather than in-kind distribution at ECHO’s request. UNHCR is also planning to evaluate a transitional shelter project in West Darfur financed by the CHF. FAO had evaluated one of its CHF projects in 2012. UNICEF had not evaluated any WASH project since 2012 so it was planning to evaluate one in 2015 or 2016, as part of its country programme cycle. It had undertaken a review of community management of acute malnutrition in four states, including two that had an emergency response, in 2013. This helped to reveal bottlenecks so it should contribute to the improvement of CERF-funded interventions.

To encourage learning, the nutrition sector group includes a knowledge sharing session in each sector meeting. Topics can vary from coverage surveys to flexible humanitarian funding. It is up to sector group members to volunteer to make a presentation and UNICEF invites senior government representatives to join the discussion.

5.4 Accountability to Affected Populations

A few CERF recipient agencies described mechanisms for accountability to affected populations. For its voucher programme, WFP has a food committee for each IDP camp, which includes women. Project participants can take their complaint to the local leaders (sheikhs), who relay the message to the camp food committee. The camp food committee then raises the problem with WFP’s implementing partner.
WFP communicates the voucher amount that beneficiaries can expect to receive in advance of a distribution but a staff member felt that the agency could do more to communicate with affected populations. It also has a secondee examining how to integrate protection into its programming and has taken steps such as distributing the vouchers in the morning to reduce the risk to women. During a visit to the voucher distribution at Abu Shouk camp, recipients were generally happy with WFP’s voucher programme because it gives them much greater choice than in-kind food distribution. The one problem that some people highlighted was with registering additional family members, for example, new born children.

Based on a review of its community-based protection networks in 2012, UNICEF has developed a training package for its partners. The topics covered include community dialogue and establishing a code of conduct with community members. Therefore, UNICEF’s partners do provide feedback to communities although they have to take account of sensitive issues and confidentiality. However, the agency had found that the level of implementation varies.

UNHCR uses a questionnaire during its post-distribution monitoring to check which NFIs have been useful for recipients. Based on the responses over some years, it has identified the five most relevant items that it can provide with limited funding – a plastic sheet, a kitchen set, one jerry can, two blankets and two sleeping mats. Nevertheless, in some cases it has found that recipients sell items to raise money for medicines or food.

UNICEF’s education staff members consult with parent-teacher associations to mobilise the attendance of children and also to enlist their input into the establishment of temporary learning spaces. An education officer from UNICEF or its implementing partner provides feedback to the parent-teacher associations and collects information about their concerns. If the implementing partner has strong focal points in certain geographical areas, UNICEF relies on them to provide accountability to communities.

NGOs implementing CERF projects described their mechanisms for accountability to affected populations at the meeting in El Fasher. Oxfam America, which is certified by the Humanitarian Accountability Project, establishes health or water committees that are elected by the community and have a gender balance. It provides training and the committees participate in service delivery or monitoring. Tearfund has a beneficiary accountability officer who has helped to establish a helpdesk for recipients as well as community committees. UNICEF has implemented these structures in a number of areas.

NGOs implementing CERF projects described their mechanisms for accountability to affected populations at the meeting in El Fasher. Oxfam America, which is certified by the Humanitarian Accountability Project, establishes health or water committees that are elected by the community and have a gender balance. It provides training and the committees participate in service delivery or monitoring. Tearfund has a beneficiary accountability officer who has helped to establish a helpdesk for recipients as well as community committees. When relevant, the NGO refers issues raised by community members with the government or other organisations. It also uses community notice boards to make communities aware of their entitlements. In addition, it holds an inception meeting at the start of each project to inform communities of the objectives of the project and its implementation plan. World Vision has an independent monitoring and evaluation team that gathers feedback from communities. The NGO shares this feedback with the sector group when issues require a joint response.

Kabkabiya Smallholders Charitable Society, an NNGO, outlined a similar mechanism of establishing committees to involve community members in project activities. These committees also select project beneficiaries according to criteria set by local leaders (although the committees can discuss and revise the criteria). Masar, also an NNGO, explained that it works closely with tribal leaders and key community members in project implementation areas. Community representatives can discuss their needs and what they would like implemented with Masar. Another NNGO that provides health services mentioned filling questionnaires with those accessing services from its clinics. These include questions relating to satisfaction with services.

FAO’s NGO implementing partners report success stories from individual aid recipients. For example, partners working in Darfur had found recipients keen to organise themselves into village based Animal Feed Management Committees that managed a revolving fund to purchase animal feed. This was because they had found that the feed increased milk production, enabling some women to sell milk to
supplement their income. While this is not a form of accountability to affected populations, it does reflect their voices on the positive achievements of an intervention to a wider audience.

Recommendations

8. When monitoring CERF projects, M&R officers should cover the activities of CERF-recipient agencies as well as implementing partners, particularly the timeliness of the provision of inputs. To facilitate this, CERF-recipient agencies should make available their proposals and the project implementation dates to the M&R officers.

9. The M&R officers, coordinated by OCHA, should consolidate findings from their project reports to identify lessons that apply at agency, sector or inter-sectoral levels. For CERF projects, OCHA should share these consolidated findings with the CERF secretariat.

10. OCHA should distribute the RC/HC’s reports on CERF funding to sector coordinators and CERF recipient agencies should share the reports with their NGO implementing partners.

Section 6: CERF Guidance and Compliance

PAF indicator 14 seeks to assess whether the CERF Secretariat provides adequate guidance on reporting standards. The CERF secretariat runs regional training workshops quarterly (though it has not conducted any in the first half of 2014) and OCHA regional offices send information on the workshops to RC/HCs in the region, copying in the OCHA office. At country level, it is up to the heads of agencies to decide whether or not to send staff for training because the agency has to bear the travel costs. Only two interviewees had participated in CERF training, one of whom had undertaken the training in 2009. Some interviewees reported that other staff members had participated in CERF training courses but they had since left the agency or the country while others were completely unaware that such training was available. UNFPA had wanted to send one of its field staff members on a training course but was unable to secure a visa. All those consulted felt that it would be very helpful to have some form of training or guidance at country level since Sudan has been such a large recipient of CERF funds. While OCHA and agencies may circulate CERF guidance, staff members faced with a heavy workload probably did not read this in detail. UNICEF’s nutrition staff had shared guidance from the CERF website with the sector group since NNGOs and the government are increasingly involved in implementing CERF project. However, as they noted, the burden for ensuring compliance with CERF requirements falls on programme staff and the sector coordinator, and they have been learning by doing.

6.1 Compliance with CERF Requirements

It was clear from discussions as well the challenges in complying with CERF requirements described below that some agency staff were unaware of CERF rules about the timeframe for implementation and when to request NCEs. For example, UNICEF WASH sector staff noted that they were unsure of CERF rules about the implementation period for RR grants. While they were confident of being able to liquidate funds within the six-month period, the implementation of some activities may go beyond this. UNICEF education staff highlighted the challenge of implementing projects in a short timeframe, given access challenges, and were unsure about whether it is possible to get an NCE for CERF grants.

The CERF secretariat’s umbrella Letter of Understanding with agencies states clearly that all CERF funds must be expended and activities completed within the implementation period. This is six months from the date of disbursement for RR grants. For an UFE grant from the first allocation, the completion date is 31 December of that year. UFE grants from the second allocation need to be completed by 30 June of the following year. However, staff at country level were clearly not fully aware of this.

FAO
The review identified two cases where FAO project activities extended beyond the CERF implementation period. FAO received a grant from the UFE allocation in 2013 to provide agricultural inputs, vaccinate livestock and provide concentrated feed for livestock. Although FAO’s report on this project makes no mention of it, there was a delay in procuring the vaccines from the government. As a result, one INGO partner was only able to complete the vaccination campaign in March 2014. Although FAO procures the concentrated animal feed locally, it did not do so till October 2013 since the feed is required in the dry season from February-June/July. Therefore, the distribution to project participants started in January 2014. While it is appropriate to provide the animal feed at the time that it is required, this extends beyond the CERF implementation period so FAO should have informed the CERF secretariat.

FAO also experienced a delay with procuring animal vaccines for the project financed through the RR grant for Darfur in 2013. As a result, it did not sign an agreement with its NGO partner in North Darfur till December 2014, allowing the partner till June 2014 for implementation. As with the UFE project, FAO procured animal feed in October 2013, which was made available for distribution from January 2014. Due to insecurity and related access challenges, the partner was only able to complete distribution of the animal feed in July 2014. Since this was a RR project, it should have been completed by 26 February 2014. FAO’s report notes that, “During the project implementation period, the Partners experienced major challenges in terms of insecurity which contributed to delay some of the activities” in North and Central Darfur. However, it states that the project was completed on 26 February and does not mention that there were delays with procuring the vaccines or that one of the partners had to extend activities beyond the CERF implementation period.

UNICEF

The review identified a number of cases where delays with funding to NGO partners had led to project activities continuing beyond the CERF implementation period but UNICEF did not request NCES, as required by CERF regulations.

During consultations with NGO implementing partners, one highlighted challenges with a project funded from the CERF UFE allocation in 2012. The CERF secretariat disbursed funds to UNICEF on 3 October 2012 and, according to CERF rules, the project should have been completed by 30 June 2013. The NGO signed an agreement with UNICEF for a WASH project on 1 February 2013. It was due to complete the project by 31 May 2013, which is within the CERF implementation period. However, it required an NCE and UNICEF granted one till 31 August 2013. UNICEF then granted it a second NCE till 28 February 2014 so that it could rehabilitate an additional 200 latrines. This meant that project activities were not completed till eight months after the CERF deadline. UNICEF’s report to the CERF secretariat stated that the project had been completed by 30 June 2013, explaining that, “The project was delayed in starting due to delays in processing Project Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) but once PCAs were signed, implementing partners expanded provision of life saving WASH services, which they started using their own resources.” In addition, UNICEF reported that the INGO had distributed 4,000 jerry cans to 2,000 families. However, the INGO stated in writing that it had been unable to distribute the jerry cans because UNICEF had not supplied them and would not allow the INGO to purchase them directly.

UNICEF experienced delays with disbursing funds to five NGO partners (three NNGOs and two INGOs) selected to implement nutrition interventions with funding from the CERF UFE grant in 2013. The main body of the report on this grant makes no reference to delays in implementation due to payment delays. It simply states, “Insecurity restricted some partners from being able to fully implement the project and to reach the intended beneficiaries” to explain why the project reached a lower number of beneficiaries than planned. However, in the annex to the report that lists onward funding to implementing partners, UNICEF notes that delays in disbursement of funds or signing agreements delayed implementation for five partners but provides no details of the extent of the delays. The main report states that the project
duration was 9 April-31 December 2013 and the project had concluded. However, one of the INGO partners pointed out that it finally signed an agreement with UNICEF in September 2013, which included an extension to implement activities until May 2014 (the INGO received its payment on 3 October 2014). According to UNICEF’s report on this UFE grant, the other INGO also received payment in October 2013 because the INGO had uncashed funds from another UNICEF-funded project. The nutrition M&R officer paid a monitoring visit to this project in March 2014 and found that activities were still not complete. According to the information provided to the M&R officer, the duration of the project was July 2013-July 2014 even though this would exceed the CERF implementation period by seven months. However, UNICEF’s nutrition officer in the project area confirmed to the M&R officer that project activities had been completed by April 2014. This demonstrates that at least two of UNICEF’s NGO partners exceeded the implementation period for the CERF grant, with activities completed in April and May 2014, rather than by 31 December 2013, as reported by UNICEF.

In the case of a WASH project funded from the RR grant for Darfur in 2013, UNICEF had not disbursed funding to its INGO partner till 8 December 2013, even though the CERF secretariat had disbursed funds on 28 August. The partner agreed with UNICEF that it had from 15 December 2013 till 15 March 2014 to implement the project though it then experienced access challenges that delayed implementation beyond March 2014. Since the project was financed from a RR grant, UNICEF should have ensured that activities were complete six months from the date of disbursement, i.e., by 27 February, or requested an NCE. However, UNICEF did not mention the delay in its report and stated that the project was complete by 27 February 2014.

UNICEF negotiated an agreement with an INGO to implement a nutrition project from April-December 2013. Due to delays in approving the grant, the project was delayed till August 2013, when UNICEF received a grant from the CERF RR allocation for Darfur. Therefore, it used this to fund the INGO. It transferred the funding for the project to the INGO on 22 October 2013. Due to the delay in starting the project and implementation delays due to an outbreak of violence, the INGO requested an extension till 31 March 2014. This meant that the project exceeded the implementation period for the CERF grant because it should have ended by 26 February 2014, as stated in UNICEF’s report. UNICEF should have shared this information and requested an NCE but its report stated that the project had been completed within the implementation period.

**Recommendations**

11. CERF recipient agencies must take responsibility for ensuring that staff members dealing with CERF grants are aware of the key requirements.

12. The CERF secretariat should consider making its training course available online. This would reach a much larger number of agency staff members dealing with CERF funds, particularly at country level, and would contribute to improving compliance with CERF requirements.
Section 1.2: CERF funding to Sudan

Table 1 below lists funding amounts requested in the Strategic Response Plan/Humanitarian Work Plan for Sudan from 2006-2014 and the funding received against the appealed amounts. It also shows the funding received as a percentage of the amount requested. Figure 1 is based on these amounts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requested</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,365</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,110</td>
<td>1,840</td>
<td>1,130</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>1,098</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1,480</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% funded</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 below lists funding from the CERF, CHF and other donors to Sudan from 2006 to June 2014 (based on data from FTS and OCHA Sudan’s Humanitarian Financing Section). This shows total funding to the country, both against the appeal and outside it. These are the basis for figure 2 in the main report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CERF</td>
<td>35,519</td>
<td>25,475</td>
<td>16,025</td>
<td>25,820</td>
<td>23,857</td>
<td>18,321</td>
<td>20,158</td>
<td>47,447</td>
<td>26,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHF</td>
<td>122,098</td>
<td>133,444</td>
<td>146,779</td>
<td>99,800</td>
<td>130,398</td>
<td>85,085</td>
<td>76,811</td>
<td>67,249</td>
<td>41,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1,310,728</td>
<td>1,344,336</td>
<td>1,582,553</td>
<td>1,632,152</td>
<td>1,244,764</td>
<td>763,581</td>
<td>577,443</td>
<td>509,963</td>
<td>420,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,468,345</td>
<td>1,503,254</td>
<td>1,745,357</td>
<td>1,757,773</td>
<td>1,399,019</td>
<td>866,987</td>
<td>674,413</td>
<td>624,660</td>
<td>488,592</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 Available from: http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/sudan-administrative-map.htm
Table 3 lists the top five donors to Sudan and the amount that they contributed in each year (including funding outside the SRP/HWP) from 2006-2014. In the years when the CERF was not in the top five, the table gives its rank as a donor and the amount that it contributed. The table focuses on single donors or pooled funds and does not include an amalgamation of funds such as a carry over or allocation of un-earmarked funds by UN agencies in order to be comparable. The funding amounts shown in the table are in US$ millions.

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Table 4 below provides a breakdown of each CERF allocation to Sudan in 2013 and 2014 by recipient agency and sector.
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*Source: CERF secretariat database*
Figure 5: Timeline for Allocation of CERF UFE Grant in 2014

*Sources: Emails and documents provided by OCHA Sudan*
3.1.1 Allocation of Under-Funded Emergency (UFE) Grant in 2014

This section provides a narrative explanation of the key steps described in figure 4 above:

1. On 3 December 2013, OCHA New York emailed OCHA’s Country Director in Sudan informing him that they would be meeting CERF colleagues in three days’ time to discuss priority countries for the first UFE allocation of 2014. Sudan was one of the 25 countries short-listed on the basis of its funding gap but the CERF secretariat would select 10-12 as final recipients. OCHA Coordination and Response Division (CRD) New York asked the Sudan office to provide an update on 1) underfunded needs, 2) key target activities and 3) critical geographical areas. In particular, it requested OCHA Sudan to highlight 3-4 specific underfunded activities/geographical areas for which an injection of CERF funds would lead to concrete outcomes (as opposed to making more general references to macro-level funding challenges).

2. On 4 December, OCHA Sudan emailed sector leads to identify gaps, key activities and priority areas.

3. On 5 December, OCHA Sudan invited four sector lead agencies (UNICEF for nutrition and WASH, WHO for health, WFP and FAO for food security and livelihoods) to a meeting to discuss the idea of a multi-sectoral approach to addressing malnutrition in areas of highest need. This was in line with the Strategic Response Plan second priority to "address the extremely high levels of malnutrition and tackle the underlying public health issues driving these". Following the meeting, the humanitarian funding section of OCHA Sudan sent CRD New York a draft concept note for this approach. CRD New York shared this information with the ERC. Since the ERC had visited Sudan in May 2013 and also highlighted the high levels of malnutrition, she was very supportive of the approach.

4. On 19 December, OCHA held another meeting with the four sector lead agencies to continue discussion of the multi-sectoral approach to addressing nutrition.

5. On 21 December, the ERC emailed the RC/HC in Sudan, informing him that Sudan had been selected to receive an allocation of up to US$20 million from the UFE window. She explained that “Sudan was selected for an underfunded emergencies allocation due to the poor level of funding to the 2013 Work Plan and increasing humanitarian needs. Acute, large-scale nutrition needs have further created a critical situation in several regions of the country including conflict-affected areas. To ensure maximum impact, the CERF allocation should support the multi-sector response to the nutrition emergency. The Sudan HCT submission should be prioritized based on assessed needs through a limited number of key activities to ensure an effective use of funds.” She requested the RC/HC to confirm the country team’s implementation capacity and ability to use the CERF grant by 31 December and his commitment to leading the interagency prioritisation and submission process by 6 January.

6. On 22 December, OCHA Sudan’s humanitarian financing section shared the concept note provided to OCHA New York and the ERC’s email of 21 December with some agencies, including WHO.

7. On 8 January 2014, the humanitarian financing section of OCHA Sudan held telephone consultations with WHO and WFP about their satisfaction with the decision to adopt the multi-sectoral approach to addressing malnutrition and the discussion of the localities where the agencies would implement the approach. Both agencies confirmed in writing that they were satisfied with the process though WFP noted that the concept note shared with OCHA New York could have been circulated more widely.

8. On 9 January 2014, the RC/HC emailed the ERC to confirm his willingness to lead the interagency prioritisation and submission process.

9. On 13 January 2014, the HCT discussed the CERF allocation and the proposed strategy of using $15 million for a multi-sectoral approach to tackling malnutrition and the remaining $5 million for other under-funded needs. At this point, the heads of some agencies strongly disagreed with the proposed
strategy and the HCT decided that the majority of the CERF grant would be spent on sector-based responses.

10. Following the HCT meeting, OCHA Sudan organised a telephone call with the CERF secretariat on 14 January to discuss whether it was possible to change the allocation of the CERF grant to other lifesaving needs to which the CERF responded positively. In an email, the CERF secretariat confirmed that the concept note submitted by OCHA Sudan was used to advocate for an underfunded allocation to Sudan and not the official prioritisation strategy. The CERF secretariat requested that the HCT, led by the HC, develop and submit a one-page prioritisation strategy document.

11. The HCT met on 19 January to formulate the prioritisation strategy and agreed on a two-pronged approach:

1. A sector based approach to lifesaving needs (contributing sectors: Education, FSL, Health, NFI/ES, Nutrition, Protection, RMS, and WASH). With the CERF funding Top Lifesaving projects as identified in SRP in areas of critical and high need. **Total envelope USD 15 million.**


The HCT also agreed that OCHA should present a calculation to determine an envelope per sector for the $15 million sector-based approach. This would be based on the level of underfunding (i.e., more underfunded = higher proportion) and overall size of the sector in the HWP (i.e., larger size = higher proportion).

12. WFP suggested a refinement to the calculation that OCHA developed for the envelopes per sector, recommending that only the top- and high-level projects contributing to objective one of the SRP should be included in the calculation (rather than the total needs of a sector). OCHA Sudan circulated this proposal on 22 January 2014.

13. OCHA Sudan organised a meeting on 23 January with the heads of agencies and sector coordinators from the sector lead agencies (FAO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO) to discuss the revised calculation of the envelope per sector. It also invited a representative from the INGO Steering Committee and a donor representative.

14. Based on the agreement at the meeting on 23 January, the RC/HC submitted the prioritisation strategy to the CERF secretariat on 25 January.

15. Between 12 and 26 January, the sector Peer Review Groups met to review and score the concept notes submitted by sector members. Based on this, they put forward an envelope of concept notes to the Advisory Group. At this point, the PRGs discussed prioritisation between CHF and CERF funding.

16. On 28 and 29 January, the sector coordinators presented the sector strategy and envelope of concept notes to OCHA and the CHF Working Groups, which commented on prioritisation between CHF and CERF funding.

17. The CERF secretariat responded to the prioritisation strategy on 30 January, requesting additional information, for example, a list of the states to be covered by both the multi-sectoral response for nutrition and the sector-based approach and clarification of why the food security and livelihoods sector was receiving 20% of the CERF allocation when it had been 72% funded in 2013. In addition, the secretariat provided some general comments. This included a request that all sectors should “ensure that activities adhere to the CERF’s Life-Saving Criteria with a limited number of proposals to allow for a strategic use of funds. Activities should have a lifesaving impact within the implementation period”.

18. On 4 and 5 February, the sector coordinators presented the sector strategy and envelope of concept notes to the RC/HC and the CHF Advisory Group (with principals present). At this point, the groups decided on projects to be funded by the CHF and by the CERF.

19. The RC/HC submitted the responses of the agencies to the secretariat’s comments on 6 February 2014. This clarified that the sector-based humanitarian response would not have a geographic focus but that the multi-sectoral approach to nutrition would be implemented in selected localities in rural Kassala, and Ageeg, Haia, and Tokker in Red Sea state. It also explained that the reason for the large allocation to the food security and livelihoods sector was that the sector’s projects represent 50% of the top- and high-level activities in the HWP and that the sector expected funding to be less in 2014, with “many donors already reducing the size of their contributions by more than 50% or unable to provide a forecast” at the beginning of the year. The CERF secretariat responded the same day noting that the information provided was sufficient.

20. The RC/HC submitted an initial list of projects for funding from the CERF on behalf of the agencies to the CERF secretariat on 14 February. The agencies submitted their full project proposals between 5 and 31 March 2014.

Section 4.1 Timeliness of the CERF Secretariat
Table 5 below shows the number of working days that the CERF secretariat took to process the UFE and RR grants to Sudan in 2014. The CERF secretariat has begun to include UFE and RR in the grant numbers to distinguish between the two types of grants but to make the distinction even clearer, the former are shown in blue and the latter in black. Data for the table comes from the CERF secretariat’s database.

Section 4.2 Timeliness of onward funding
Table 6 below shows the number of working days that CERF-recipient agencies took to make sub-grants to NGO and government implementing partners. This is based on the RC/HC’s reports to the CERF secretariat on the UFE allocation in 2013 and on the RR grant for Darfur in 2013. As in table 5, to make the distinction between the grants clear, the UFE projects are shown in blue and the RR grants in black.

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33 These reports are available on the CERF website: http://www.unocha.org/cerf/reportsevaluations/residenthumanitarian-coordinators-reports/rchc-reports-2013
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Annex 2: Methodology

This annex briefly describes the methodology for this review. It used the following information sources:

- Face-to-face interviews and group consultations in Khartoum and El Fasher, conducted during a visit from 15 to 26 June 2014 as well as follow up requests for information by email. Table 7 below lists the number of interviewees per organisation. To maintain confidentiality, it does not name the individuals interviewed.
- A document review (the documents covered are listed below).
- Analysis of funding data provided by the CERF secretariat as well as FTS data.

While most meetings were with individuals, the evaluator conducted the following group meetings:

- Sector coordinators in El Fasher on 17 June.
- Implementing partners in El Fasher on 17 June.
- UNICEF WASH, education, nutrition and child protection staff on 16, 22 and 23 June
- UNHCR programme staff and sector coordinators in Khartoum on 22 June.
- Sector coordinators in Khartoum on 24 June.
- NGO implementing partners in Khartoum on 24 June.
- INGO Steering Committee representatives in Khartoum on 24 June
- M&R officers in Khartoum on 26 June

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</table>
At the end of the mission to Sudan, the evaluator presented preliminary findings and proposed recommendations for discussion to sector coordinators and agency programme staff dealing with CERF funding. Since the RC/HC was unable to be present at this meeting, the evaluator shared the PowerPoint presentation with him. OCHA Sudan also circulated the presentation to all participants.

**Document Review**

The document review covered the following:

- RC/HC reports on the UFE grant in 2013 as well as the RR grants for Blue Nile, Darfur and Kordofan
- 2013 Humanitarian Work Plan and 2014 Strategic Response Plan (including mid-year review)
- Agency proposals for grants in 2013 and the UFE allocation in 2014
- Prioritisation strategy for 2014 UFE allocation, together with correspondence relating to this
- Documents and correspondence on NCEs and re-programming of funds
- Documents and emails from OCHA Sudan relating to allocation of UFE grant in 2014
- CERF Secretariat data on funding to Sudan from 2006-2014, including the time taken to process CERF applications
- CHF funding data and CHF 2013 annual report
- CHF allocation strategy and timeline for 2014

**PAF Indicators**

Table 8 below numbers and lists the PAF indicators covered by this review. The review has also sought to answer questions identified in the Terms of Reference (see Annex 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>PAF Indicator</th>
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<th>PAF Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All members of Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and clusters aware of CERF availability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Intra- and inter - cluster prioritization process is inclusive of all relevant stakeholders (including INGOs and NGOs), (for RR and UFE) and adheres to Principles of Partnership (Endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform, 12 July 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Analysis of funding undertaken to inform prioritization process and facilitate appropriate direction of funds’</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CERF underfunded country selection/appoitionment process undertaken in a timely and transparent manner with available resources frontloaded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cluster submission to the RC/HC is of high quality and reflects views of cluster members</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Agency performance (capacity to implement within the timeframe of the grant, past performance, speed of distribution and absorptive capacity) is considered when developing proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CERF request adheres to cluster standards and CERF Life Saving Criteria</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Average number of working days between final submission of a CERF grant request package from RC/HC and ERC’ decision. (Benchmark: three working days for RR and 5 working days for UFE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Average number of working days between receipt of LoU from a grant recipient and request (memo for disbursement to OPPBA (Benchmark: two working days)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Average number of days between request (memo) for fund disbursement by OPPBA to grant recipient</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Average number of working days from</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Time from UN agency country offices signing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>disbursement from UN HQ to country office</strong></td>
<td><strong>project agreement with implementing partners to them receiving funding</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Agencies receiving grants have internal evaluation and accountability mechanisms</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>CERF Secretariat has provided adequate global guidance on the standards for reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>OCHA CO, in support of the HC, provides guidance to agencies, and facilitates input for annual report</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Agencies, both at HQ and in the field provide satisfactory input (as defined by CERF Secretariat Guidelines) to the annual RC/HC Report which adheres to reporting guidelines</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>CERF funds allow agencies to demonstrate capability to leverage donor confidence for future contributions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Availability of CERF funding recognized by recipient agencies as being fundamental to ability to respond to life saving needs and gaps</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Extent to which gaps, both geographic and sectoral, have been identified and addressed through use of CERF funds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Number of No-Cost Extensions requested</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>CERF funds fill a critical time gap as measured in relation to time that other contributions are received</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Percentage of total amount of CERF funding to flash appeals provided within the first two weeks (of appeal publications)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Response capacity is strengthened given knowledge that CERF is a reliable source of funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Operations deployed more rapidly due to ‘predictability’ of quick funding source</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Transparent information management of recipient agencies on status of CERF projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Accountability to affected populations, as outlined in the Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP), is incorporated into project submissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Evaluative mechanisms established (NOTE: CERF evaluative processes to be developed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Real-Time and internal agency evaluations, when conducted, demonstrate CERF’s contribution to a more coherent response</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Extent to which Cluster leads and RC/HC leverage CERF as a tool to incentivize coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Strengthened function of clusters and of inter-cluster forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Leadership and involvement of RC/HC in humanitarian operation improved</td>
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Annex 3: Terms of Reference

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE VALUE ADDED OF THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND (CERF) IN SUDAN

Terms of Reference

1. Background to the CERF and Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF)

It is widely recognized that the key strengths of the CERF lie in its ability to respond quickly and in the relatively high degree of flexibility it affords users compared with other sources of humanitarian funding. Member States and private donors require appropriate assurances that the considerable funds involved are managed appropriately and meaningful results are being achieved. The ERC function is charged with a formal fiduciary responsibility over the proper use of CERF funds, and relies upon the CERF Secretariat to assist with the proper discharge of these responsibilities. In this context, the development of a PAF for the CERF is regarded as an effective tool.

Paragraph 19 of General Assembly Resolution 60/124 calls for “the establishment of an appropriate reporting and accountability mechanism to ensure that the funds allocated through the Fund are used in the most efficient, effective and transparent manner possible.” Consequently, the CERF Advisory Group at its meeting on 12 October 2006 called for the development of a Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF). In addition, the 2008 CERF Two-year Evaluation gave as Key Recommendation 4: “The multiple lines of accountability for CERF need to be clarified, in consultation with the UN Controller and the operational agencies, to specify the roles of each actor.” In response, the CERF Secretariat worked on developing a PAF, a first draft was circulated in 2009 and a PAF adopted in 2010.

The CERF PAF proposes, among other things, the introduction of independent reviews to be conducted annually within a sample of three to five countries as determined by the ERC. The CERF Advisory Group supported the inclusion of such an independent country-level mechanism. Following a pilot review conducted in Kenya in early 2010, the CERF AG met on 1 July and endorsed the PAF. Since then, the CERF secretariat has aimed to conduct between three and five country-level reviews per year34.

2. Scope and Purpose

The main purpose of the present country-level review will be to assess the value-added of CERF funding towards the humanitarian response in Sudan during 2013.

A major aim of the review will be to provide the ERC with an appropriate level of assurance around the achievement of key performance benchmarks and planned results for the CERF mechanism. The review will also include recommendations aimed at improving operational aspects of the CERF and may also identify relevant policy issues which need to be addressed at a global level.

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34 A full list of reviews conducted to date and final reports are available online at:
3. Key issues

The critical overriding question on which assurance is sought by the ERC is: Have CERF operations in the country successfully added value to the broader humanitarian endeavor?

Using the PAF indicator sets, assurances will be sought around the following specific broad areas of concern to the ERC:

1. **CERF processes are achieving key management benchmarks in that:**
   - CERF submissions are based on an inclusive planning process and adhere to established quality criteria.
   - Transparent systems are in place for correct allocation, efficient flow and use of CERF by agencies.
   - Adequate monitoring and evaluation systems are in place at the agency level for measuring and reporting on results.

2. **There are reasonable grounds to believe that CERF operations favour the following results:**
   - CERF consolidates humanitarian reform by empowering the RC/HC and enhancing the quality of coordination within the cluster approach and across clusters.
   - CERF facilitates adequate coverage, eliminates gaps and facilitates an effective division of labour among humanitarian (especially smaller) actors.
   - CERF contributes to a more timely response to needs.
   - CERF favors the delivery of relevant life-saving actions at critical moments.

The review will also assess the extent of harmonization between the CERF and the Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF).

4. **Review Methodology**

During the PAF development process, UN agencies emphasized that the formal assessment of agency performance vis-a-vis CERF-funded activities remains the prerogative of recipient agencies via their own internal oversight procedures (internal performance reporting, audit and evaluation etc.). The review approach will therefore be designed in a manner which avoids duplication with such procedures and meets only the immediate assurance needs of the ERC in relation to the PAF.

Recognizing that CERF funds are often co-mingled with other donor funds by agencies and that the in-depth assessment of beneficiary-level impact is formally the charge of recipient agencies, the review will not attempt to link beneficiary-level changes to CERF activity, except where recipient agencies already have this data. The review mechanism will not seek to provide comprehensive coverage linked to detailed narratives and contextual analysis around how and why results are being achieved. Rather it will focus instead on providing an assurance around issues of the Fund’s operational impact.

Key components of the methodology will include a rapid desk review and field visits by the consultant to Sudan including interviews with key stakeholders. Visits to one or more regional coordination hubs can be envisaged if these play a substantive role in CERF processes. The analytical approach will be deliberately kept rapid and light.

Prior to leaving Sudan, the Consultant will leave with the RC/HC a short analytical report consisting of a series of short observations and recommendations in relation to the key assurance issues identified above.
The RC/HC, together with the HCT, will subsequently be requested to provide a “management response” to the recommendations contained in the report.

**Desk review:** A quantitative analysis will be conducted on the data, reports and files available at the HQ and Country level. These include:

- Funding data, including funding from sources other than the CERF (e.g. OCHA’s Financial Tracking System);
- Timelines on sums requested, allocated from CERF database;
- CERF country-level reports on context, needs, status of implementation, activities, results and lessons learned;
- CERF meeting minutes at HQ and country-level and notifications of application decisions;
- CERF Project files at HQ and country-level.

Semi-structured interviews at country level will include: RC/HC, Cluster leads, Heads of Agencies, I/NGO partner implementing CERF projects and those without access to CERF funds, host government, donors. Interviews will also take place with selected CERF Secretariat staff to get further background and perspective. UN Agencies and IOM will be asked to provide relevant documents and indicate interview partners to facilitate the review.

**Select project site visits:** These may be included as appropriate and time permitting to help provide some limited anecdotal information regarding the use of funding at the affected population level and can provide a field-level snapshot and some direct contact with affected populations.

**In-Country briefings** will be used as learning opportunities to discuss and validate the findings, explore possible recommendations and further refine the analytical approaches.

### 5. Proposed Consultants

The consultant will be independent and he/she has not been previously involved with any aspects of the country-level operations being reviewed. He/she should have the following skills:

- Expertise in UN humanitarian reform & financing and knowledge of the CAP and Flash Appeal process;
- Expertise and extensive experience in humanitarian evaluation;
- Expertise in analyzing financial data in tandem with other types of information;
- Expertise in project management and implementation;
- Knowledge, including field experience, with a broad range of humanitarian actors, such as UN agencies, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, local government disaster response structures and systems, and NGOs;
- Fluency in written and spoken English,
- Familiarity with natural and man-made disaster settings.

### 6. Management and Support

The review will be managed by the CERF Secretariat, who will identify country-level focal points to support the review mission. Their responsibilities will include to:

- Provide necessary administrative, coordination and logistical support to the consultant;
Facilitate the consultant’s access to specific information or expertise necessary to perform the assessment;

- Monitor and assess the quality of the review and its process;
- Ensure sufficient engagement by UNCT on initial findings prior to dissemination;
- When appropriate, recommend approval of final report;
- Disseminate final report; and
- Facilitate management response to the final report and subsequent follow up.

7. Deliverables

The main output will be one concise report in English to the ERC, through the CERF Secretariat, of no more than 25 pages (excluding appendices) in an electronic version plus an Executive Summary (up to two pages). The report will be structured in the form of short observations and conclusions around the different assurance concerns linked to the PAF. The reports will include, as appropriate, a set of specific, well targeted and action-oriented recommendations whose purpose should be to improve the performance of the CERF within the country or raising any policy issues. The annexes will include a brief description of the methods used and the tests performed and a list of persons interviewed.