

THE POOLED FUNDS COMPLEMENTARITY



Central Emergency Response Fund and Country and Regional Pooled Funds

OCHA

The OCHA-managed Pooled Funds, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country and Regional Pooled Funds, are among the most effective ways to ensure that life-saving help reaches people affected by crises. When both Funds respond to the same emergency, the highest-ranking UN representative in the country, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), makes sure that available resources are used in a complementary manner that maximizes their joint impact.

CERF provides speed and leverages the UN's economies of scale and normative power, while the Country and Regional Funds can ensure funding prioritization closer to the needs of affected communities and deeper reach through extensive local partnerships. While every crisis is different, CERF and the Country/Regional Funds are used by RC/HCs in ways that reflect their distinct strengths. Their combined use can unlock greater impact through:

CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND

CERF is the UN's global response engine, enabling critical humanitarian assistance to reach the most vulnerable people, when and where needed the most. CERF funding allows UN agencies and their partners to immediately jump-start relief efforts in emerging or escalating crises, including through anticipatory action, before other funding sources are available. CERF also serves as a strategic instrument for addressing critical funding gaps in underfunded emergencies.¹



COUNTRY AND REGIONAL POOLED FUNDS

The Country and Regional Pooled Funds act as the backbone of the humanitarian response in selected countries and regions. They provide predictable and flexible funding towards interventions that are identified and prioritized locally by humanitarian responders on the ground, including local and national organizations, as well as affected communities themselves.²

Temporal sequencing

CERF and Country and Regional Funds can support different phases of a response. For example, CERF often enables rapid scale-up at the onset of a crisis, while Country/Regional Funds sustain and deepen the response through locally prioritized interventions.

Complementary geographical targeting

CERF and Country and Regional Funds can be strategically deployed across different regions of a country to ensure optimal spatial coverage and meet the needs of the most severely affected communities. CERF is particularly effective in bringing UN-led operations to scale, while the Country/Regional Funds excel at reaching hard-to-access or underserved areas through their deep field presence and strong partnerships with local actors.

Complementary sectoral focus

Based on each Fund's comparative advantage, CERF and Country and Regional Funds' allocations can be used to meet needs in different sectors to achieve broader coverage in a way that best addresses the overall humanitarian situation.

Complementary recipients

CERF can only directly fund UN agencies, while Country and Regional Funds mostly direct resources to a broad network of national and international NGOs. Together, they ensure that aid reaches affected communities through different and complementary delivery networks to maximize impact.

Common promotion of global priorities

When used together, these pooled funds mechanisms can enhance the quality of humanitarian assistance by promoting the integration of thematic priorities and approaches – such as gender equality, disability inclusion, and community engagement – across both UN- and NGO-led programmes.

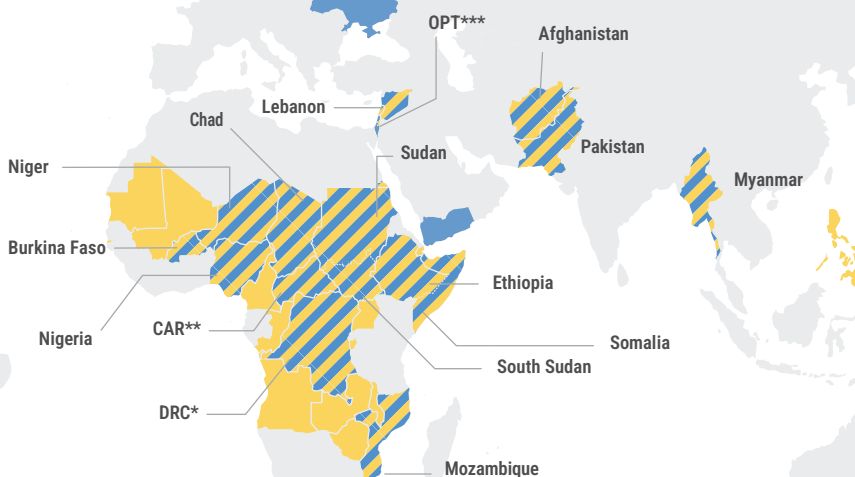
\$267M or 85% of CERF funding went to 18 countries that also have Country and Regional Funds in 2025.³

Total Pooled Funds allocations in 2025:

\$1.2 BN

\$893M allocated by the Country and Regional Funds across **23** countries and contexts.

\$312M by CERF across **31** countries and contexts.



■ CERF only recipient country
■ Country and Regional Funds only recipient country
■ CERF and Country and Regional Funds recipient country/territory
 * Democratic Republic of Congo
 ** Central African Republic
 *** Occupied Palestinian Territory

¹ For more information on how CERF works please visit here: <https://cerf.un.org/>
² For more information on how the Country-based and Regional Funds work please visit here: <https://www.unocha.org/country-based-pooled-funds>
³ All data on this infographic is as of November 2025. For more information please visit: <https://pfdata.unocha.org/?fund=cerf%2Fcbpf>
 The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

“In a world of staggering levels of humanitarian need, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund and the Country and Regional Pooled Funds have become an essential lifeline for millions of people. These prioritized and flexible funds enable swift action in response to emergencies promoting innovation, self-reliance and dignity for affected people.”

*António Guterres,
United Nations Secretary-General*



Lebanon. Thanks to the support of the LHF, the NGO Human Aid and Development (HAND) distributes clothing kits to displaced children affected by the conflict. Credit: HAND



Lebanon

Jointly ensuring an effective and inclusive response to escalating conflict amid a harsh winter

When clashes between Israeli forces and Hezbollah intensified in Lebanon in late 2024, **the RC/HC activated a response jointly supported by CERF and the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF) to address urgent humanitarian needs arising from conflict.** By the end of the year, over 4,000 civilians had been killed and more than 786,000 people were forced to flee—representing the country’s largest displacement crisis in nearly two decades. With winter approaching, families faced freezing temperatures, destroyed homes, and collapsing basic services.

The RC/HC, in collaboration with the humanitarian community in-country, developed a joint strategy to ensure the complementary use of CERF and LHF resources, maximizing their distinct strengths: CERF’s speed and ability to leverage the UN’s economies of scale for broad coverage, and the LHF’s deep reach through a wide network of local and international NGOs.

Within hours of the escalation, CERF fast-tracked a \$10 million allocation to meet the urgent needs of newly displaced people and those remaining in conflict zones. CERF funding enabled UN agencies to deliver large-scale, countrywide assistance to prepare for the upcoming winter quickly.

The CERF allocation was complemented by a **\$30.7 million allocation from the LHF,** which supported a wide network of pre-identified national and international NGO partners, selected as best placed to deliver the prioritized activities. These organizations enabled deeper reach into hard-to-access areas, ensuring tailored support—such as cash assistance, shelter

repairs, healthcare, education and protection services—to Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian communities, whether displaced, returning, or unable to return home.

Across both UN- and NGO-led interventions, CERF and the LHF helped to enhance the quality of the humanitarian response, with a focus on ensuring no one was left behind. UN agencies receiving CERF funding were encouraged to partner with women-led and disability-focused organizations, while the LHF facilitated sub-partnering with grassroots and community groups closest to the needs and priorities of affected people.

Through strategic sequencing of allocations, complementarity of recipient organizations, and joint promotion of inclusive approaches and community engagement, humanitarian leadership on the ground delivered an impactful response: fast, broad, deep and inclusive.



Lebanon. Thanks to the support of the LHF, the national NGO Association Nabad for Development distributes non-food items, including winter blankets, to displaced families. Credit: Association Nabad for Development / Zahraa Dirani



Sudan

Leveraging complementarity to sustain large-scale humanitarian response

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan has worsened dramatically in the second half of 2025, due to intensified armed conflict and siege tactics gripping key urban centers, particularly in Darfur and Kordofan states in the west and south of the country, trapping civilians without food, clean water, or medicine under relentless airstrikes and heavy shelling.

As displacement and disease outbreaks spread across affected regions, with several areas facing famine-like conditions and hundreds of thousands at risk of starvation, **the RC/HC strategically sequenced \$165 million⁴ in funding from the Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) and CERF** to sustain delivery capacity, reinforce emergency food assistance, and accelerate humanitarian operations in the areas of highest need. In coordination with humanitarian partners on the ground, the RC/HC outlined a strategy that leveraged the comparative strengths of both mechanisms: CERF's ability to mobilize UN supply pipelines at scale, and the SHF's extensive network of local and international NGOs, capable of reaching hard-to-access areas with essential services.

For example, in July, as cholera spread in Tawila, Darfur—where displacement had overwhelmed water, sanitation, and health systems—UN agencies flagged critical gaps in cholera kits, chlorine, and water testing supplies. CERF responded with a \$5 million allocation for WHO, UNICEF, and IOM to procure and deliver essential WASH and health supplies, complementing a parallel \$5 million SHF allocation for frontline NGO-led implementation in the same area. SHF-funded NGOs had already initiated response activities but lacked sufficient supplies to deliver at scale. This **dual-track approach, pairing UN-agency procurement with NGO service delivery, ensured speed, scale and deep reach.**

Overall, between July and September 2025, the **SHF allocated \$48 million to address escalating needs across high-severity states.** These allocations enabled national and international partners to deliver life-saving services such as healthcare,



Sudan. OCHA staff help coordinate the delivery of life-saving food and medical supplies to displaced people at the Tawila displacement site in North Darfur. Credit: OCHA.

protection, WASH, nutrition, and shelter – including in hard-to-reach areas experiencing high influxes of displacement. **The SHF also provided critical support to safeguard humanitarian access through a \$4 million allocation** for emergency mine action to clear areas affected by conflict.

Then, in late October, as violence against civilians and related displacement intensified in El Fasher and surrounding areas, **CERF allocated \$20 million in rapid response funding to UN agencies to scale up supply distributions for 2.5 million people and maintain reserves** for future operations across 17 hardest-hit localities, 11 of which overlapped with SHF's intervention zones. This funding helped mitigate pipeline breaks and ensured continuity of food, health, WASH, and non-food item supplies for the coming months. In parallel, the SHF launched an additional \$20 million for area-based, multi-sectoral programmes in the same 17 priority localities.

By leveraging CERF funding to replenish pipelines and synchronizing it with SHF allocations, the RC/HC sought to preserve the backbone of the humanitarian response in Sudan through **two mutually reinforcing funding mechanisms at the operational, sectoral, and geographic levels.** This approach enabled UN agencies to act during a critical window of reopened access and escalating needs, while safeguarding humanitarian gains from earlier SHF allocations.



Sudan. The Tawila locality in North Darfur hosts the highest number of IDPs of any locality in Sudan, over 650,000 people, according to IOM data as of the end of October. Credit: OCHA.

⁴ \$118 million from the SHF and \$47 million from CERF. All data on this infographic is as of November 2025.



Co-funding for Anticipatory Action

Acting jointly before crisis strikes

Anticipatory Action (AA) refers to acting ahead of predicted hazards, such as climate-related shocks (droughts, floods, storms) and disease outbreaks, to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold. Effective implementation of AA typically requires pre-agreed thresholds based on measurable forecasts for a hazard, a clear pre-established action plan, and automatic financing once the trigger is met.

At the country level, **the RC/HC leads the development of an AA framework**, supported by OCHA and in partnership with UN agencies, the government and key technical partners. This process offers strong potential to facilitate the complementary use of CERF and Country/Regional Funds, leveraging their combined strengths for greater impact.

CERF is currently the largest global contributor to collective AA frameworks, having allocated \$147 million to AA across multiple crises since 2020 and currently providing over \$100 million in pre-arranged funding for AA frameworks in 20 countries.⁶

CERF and Country/Regional Pooled Funds are increasingly working together to co-finance AA frameworks. Systematic co-financing strengthens local participation and leadership in planning and delivering anticipatory approaches by leveraging Country/Regional Funds' extensive local partnership networks and proximity to affected communities, combined with CERF's longstanding expertise in supporting collective AA at scale, through UN agencies.

OCHA FACILITATED ANTICIPATORY ACTION PORTFOLIO



⁶ All data on this infographic is as of November 2025.



Afghanistan Getting ahead of drought with a first-of-its-kind joint framework

In 2025, Afghanistan became the first country to develop a coordinated AA framework for drought supported by **pre-arranged, complementary funding from both CERF and the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF)**, with both funding sources simultaneously activated.

The framework was developed by UN agencies and coordinated by OCHA under the overall leadership of the RC/HC. From the outset, it integrated complementary efforts by combining the expertise and resources of multiple humanitarian partners into a single, coordinated plan. For example, the Cash and Voucher Working Group supported UN agencies and partners in planning targeting and ensuring fair, standardized amounts for households headed by women. The Accountability to Affected People Group identified 17 different channels to share early warning information, making communication more effective. Meanwhile, the Gender in Humanitarian Action Group advised on strategies to keep women engaged even when government restrictions limited participation. These combined efforts ensured the framework was responsive to the needs and priorities of affected people.

As forecasts confirmed that one of the monitored provinces was likely to experience its worst drought in over five years, the framework trigger thresholds were met, and the **first joint allocation in support of AA was automatically released – comprising \$6.7 million from CERF and \$7.5 million from the AHF.**

The coordinated framework ensured strong complementarity across CERF- and AHF-supported activities, spanning sectors and recipient organizations. CERF funding enabled five UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, FAO, and UN Women) to deliver large-scale assistance ahead of the drought peak, focusing on food security and livelihoods, WASH, and protection for approximately 200,000 people. In parallel, AHF funding supported 6 international NGOs and 10 Afghan organizations to implement complementary anticipatory interventions, including health and nutrition services, while extending the reach and impact of UN-led operations in protection and WASH through community-based outreach.

Together, the two Pooled Funds helped deliver a comprehensive package of support to at-risk communities before the worst impacts of the drought took hold, ensuring assistance was provided in a harmonized and timely manner while upholding the dignity and choice of affected people.



Afghanistan. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher meets with humanitarian responders and community members. Credit: OCHA



Nigeria Acting before the flood with joint anticipatory interventions

In 2025, Nigeria also developed a collective AA framework through a joint, government-led process that brought together the RC/HC, the Government of Nigeria, OCHA, UN agencies, and humanitarian partners, including national NGOs and the Nigerian Red Cross.

From the outset, the framework embedded sectoral and recipient complementarity between the CERF and the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (NHF), with CERF funding pre-arranged for UN agencies, and funding from the NHF pre-arranged for seven national NGO partners and the Nigerian Red Cross, thus strengthening localization and community engagement.

When rising water levels in Adamawa State, north-east Nigeria,

surpassed the pre-defined trigger threshold in late September, **allocations from CERF and the NHF were triggered simultaneously, enabling a layered response that protected 400,000 people across seven flood-prone areas along the river.** CERF allocated \$5 million for large-scale, UN-led food, WASH, agriculture / livelihoods, health and shelter support for 140,000 people – with over 50 per cent of the total CERF funding delivered as multi-purpose cash. At the same time, the NHF allocated \$2 million to scale multi-purpose cash, strengthen community-level preparedness, evacuation-site management, early-warning dissemination, child-protection and gender-based-violence prevention through its network of national partners.

Through sectoral and recipient complementarity, the two Pooled Funds collectively enabled the humanitarian community to **act swiftly before peak flooding, while ensuring locally led interventions and deep reach into communities** – reducing disaster impact and protecting lives.