



# This is CERF



Central Emergency  
Response Fund



Photo: UNICEF/Ammar

Established by the [United Nations General Assembly \(UNGA\)](#) in 2005 as the United Nations global emergency response fund, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) enables humanitarian actors to deliver life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable people, when and where needed the most. CERF funding allows UN agencies and partners to collectively jump-start relief efforts in emerging or escalating crises before other funding sources are available. CERF also serves as a strategic instrument for addressing critical funding gaps in underfunded emergencies.

“

I strongly urge you to have the ambition to make the CERF a larger Fund, because that will dramatically improve our capacity to respond to the multiplication of emergency situations that we witness and to the protracted problems that are more and more difficult to address. Be absolutely sure that what you will invest in CERF is probably the most profitable investment you can make for the good of humankind.

António Guterres,  
United Nations Secretary-General

”

Strong and predictable donor support has enabled CERF to continuously innovate and adapt to changes in humanitarian needs.

Since CERF's inception, contributions from 133 UN Member States and observers, as well as regional governments, corporate donors, foundations and individuals, enabled humanitarian partners to deliver more than \$9.2 billion in life-saving assistance in over 100 countries and territories. Acknowledging the importance of CERF's assistance, 58 recipient countries have contributed to CERF, making it a 'fund for all, by all.' For a complete list of CERF donors, go to: [contributions | CERF \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/cerf/contributors/).

Beyond the provision of critical funding for life-saving assistance for millions of people globally, CERF continuously serves as a catalyst for positive change throughout the humanitarian system. CERF supports anticipatory action which enables partners to get ahead of predictable hazards and mitigate humanitarian crises. CERF also dedicates funding to underfunded priority areas such as gender-based violence and the needs of people with disabilities.

In recognition of CERF's achievements and proven capacity to provide fast and timely funding for life-saving assistance in humanitarian crises across the globe, in 2016 UNGA endorsed an annual funding target of \$1 billion for CERF. A fully resourced CERF is critical for supporting the global humanitarian system in meeting growing needs, as an expression of shared global solidarity.

# How CERF works

**In a humanitarian crisis, humanitarian organizations on the ground jointly assess and prioritize humanitarian needs.** UN funds and programmes and specialized agencies are eligible for CERF funding and implement grants in partnership with local, national, and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), host governments and Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) can apply for CERF funding when new needs in the country exceed the UN organizations' capacity to respond. Determining the level and severity of needs and identifying people who most urgently need assistance requires joint planning, coordination, and prioritization by UN Country Teams/Humanitarian Country Teams (UNCT/HCT) and other humanitarian organizations under the leadership of RC/HCs.

**CERF is guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, and resources are allocated in line with CERF's Life-Saving Criteria.** These criteria serve as guidance for the RC/HC and UNCT/HCT on how to develop applications for CERF funding.

**By building on the UN and humanitarian coordination architecture, CERF provides funding based on needs, risks and collective priorities.** Humanitarian partners work together to identify and prioritize activities to be included in a CERF request, based on evidence, assessments of need and, in sudden-onset disasters, projections and forecasts. RC/HCs submit a prioritized proposal to the CERF secretariat, which then reviews the application and supports the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) in deciding on the allocation of funding to partners on the ground.

Photo: UNICEF/Alhamdani



# Funding windows

CERF channels funds to UN entities through its **Rapid Response (RR)** and **Underfunded Emergencies (UFE)** windows.

While the process of developing a formal application is similar for both funding windows, the starting point for allocations differs.

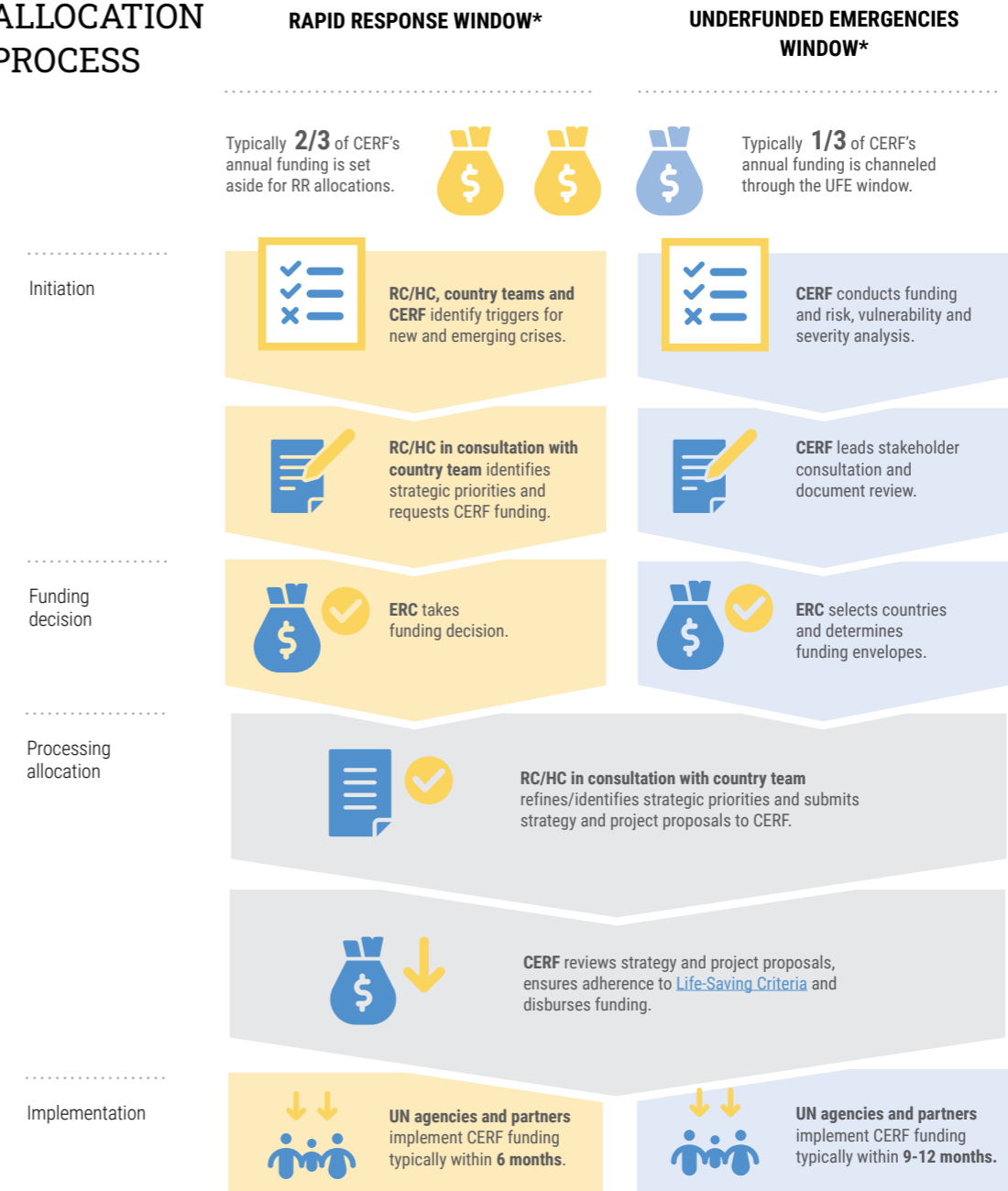
For the RR window, the RC/HC – in consultation with humanitarian partners – can request funds at any time to respond to new and unforeseen humanitarian emergencies when timely response is critical. CERF also continues to be more forward-leaning by making allocations earlier in an emergency on a ‘no-regrets’ basis – even when information is still incomplete and uncertain – and by making allocations partially based on projections and forecasts (e.g., of drought, food insecurity and displacement). Thus, CERF-funded assistance reaches people sooner and, in some cases, before the peak of a humanitarian shock. To ensure evidence-based allocation decisions, CERF uses a real-time dashboard and a statistical model

to facilitate the comparison of new crises with past allocations. CERF continuously improves its methodology.

**UFE allocations start with a comparative global analysis of risk, vulnerability, and funding levels for ongoing humanitarian emergencies through a consultative process at headquarters- level involving UN agencies, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and NGOs.** CERF has developed a rigorous methodology to establish a strong evidence base for the selection of the most underfunded and neglected humanitarian crises to receive funding. This includes three components:

1. A quantitative analysis of funding levels and the severity of humanitarian needs and risks aggregated into the CERF Index for Risk and Vulnerability.
2. Consultations with UN agencies, NGOs and other partners.
3. A desk review of Humanitarian Needs Overviews, Humanitarian Response Plans and other documents.

## CERF ALLOCATION PROCESS



Information on the mechanics and parameters of funding decisions can be found in the [CERF Handbook](#)

## Loan facility

In addition to the two funding windows, CERF has a \$30 million loan facility to cover cash-flow gaps in UN humanitarian operations. This facility can be used when UN agencies experience cash-flow problems in responding to humanitarian emergencies due to delays in receiving contributions from donors. The ERC determines the amount to be advanced in each situation.

CERF allocations are designed to complement other humanitarian funding sources, such as Country-Based Pooled Funds and bilateral funding.

## CERF Climate Action Account

In recent years, the CERF has spearheaded innovative humanitarian financing solutions for climate-related responses, including collective anticipatory action at scale. To better support people suffering the humanitarian consequences of climate change, CERF has launched the Climate Action Account. The account is designed to attract new and additional financing to help address the ever-increasing humanitarian impacts of climate-related disasters worldwide. For more information, [please see here.](#)



Photo: FAO/Saikat Mojumder



# CERF management

The Emergency Relief Coordinator manages CERF on behalf of the UN Secretary-General and is supported by OCHA. OCHA ensures that funds are allocated properly, disbursed in a timely manner and that the use of funds is reported appropriately and transparently.<sup>1</sup>

The [CERF Advisory Group](#), an independent body comprised of diverse individuals drawn donor and recipient Member States and other stakeholders, provides policy guidance to the UN Secretary-General on the use and impact of the fund. Membership selection procedures are designed to ensure the necessary expertise in the group, while also considering appropriate geographic and gender diversity among the members. The Advisory Group holds two official meetings a year.

<sup>1</sup> As a revolving fund, CERF may disburse more or less than its income within a calendar year.



Photo: OCHA/Paolo Palmero

# CERF strategic added value

**CERF is designed to ensure that every dollar it allocates leverages additional benefits in support of the humanitarian response on the ground.**

For each CERF allocation, RC/HCs articulate, through a 'strategic statement,' the added value and co-benefits that will be achieved using CERF funding – in addition to the operational, life-saving objectives that are central to all CERF allocations.

**Setting out a clear, succinct strategic vision at the outset of an allocation process helps ensure that partners work towards a common strategic objective.** This provides CERF and the ERC with assurance that CERF funds are utilized to their fullest potential.

When reporting on the use of CERF funding at the end of the grant period, RC/HCs are asked to reflect on the achievement of the strategic objectives as set out in the initial strategic statement, and to assess how the allocation contributed to achieving its four overarching core objectives that underpin CERF's design and mandate: speed, timeliness, coherence and catalytic effect.

IN THE REPORTS ON THE USE OF 2022 CERF GRANTS\*, RC/HCs STATED THAT:



**100%**  
of Rapid Response CERF allocations led to **fast delivery of assistance**



**100%**  
of CERF allocations responded to **time-critical needs**



**100%**  
of CERF allocations **improved coordination**



**97%**  
of CERF allocations **improved resource mobilization from other sources**

\*Due to the nature of the CERF reporting cycle, the RC/ HC assessments only become available a full year after the calendar year under review. Assessments of 2023 allocations will only be available in early 2025

## Country-Based Pooled Fund.

While the Funds are unique, they each provide rapid flexible funding fostering coherent and coordinated responses under the leadership of the RC/ HC. When CERF and CBPF resources are provided to the same contexts, RC/HCs ensure that the resources are used in a complementary and coherent manner.



Photo: OCHA/Oleksandr Ratushniak



# Why fund CERF?

## CERF is



### PROMOTING COORDINATION AND COHERENCE

CERF funding is allocated to multiple organizations based on each organization's comparative advantage and in line with humanitarian partners' commonly agreed priorities. This promotes coordination among humanitarian actors, eliminates duplication and overlaps, prevents fragmented responses and supports the achievement of collective outcomes.



### GLOBAL

CERF provides humanitarian support across the globe, expanding the reach of its donors to all crises, whether new, worsening or forgotten.



### CATALYTIC

CERF enables humanitarian partners to quickly scale up response and leverage additional donor support through demonstrated and timely humanitarian action. CERF also allows Resident Coordinators/ Humanitarian Coordinators (RCs/HCs) to implement their vision for a better humanitarian response, supporting cross-cutting and other humanitarian priorities in a way that can catalyze positive change in the quality and accountability of humanitarian responses.



### FAST

CERF allocates funding within hours of a crisis, making resources available when they are needed the most. Time lost means lives lost.



### COST EFFECTIVE

CERF offers value for money by allowing donors to efficiently assist people in need wherever crises strike. When donors contribute to CERF, they ensure that limited resources go as far as they can to save lives and reduce the suffering of millions of women, men, girls and boys caught up in crises.



### ANTICIPATORY WHERE POSSIBLE

Where possible, CERF enables the delivery of life-saving assistance to vulnerable people ahead of predictable emergencies, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system.



### NEUTRAL, IMPARTIAL AND INDEPENDENT

CERF is fully unearmarked, principled and independent to ensure funding goes to meet the most urgent, life-saving needs wherever crises hit.



### FOSTERING PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

CERF interventions support the involvement of implementing partners, particularly local organizations. Each year, approximately a quarter of CERF funds is implemented through a large network of local and international responders who have partnered with UN agencies.



### SUPPORTIVE OF THE GRAND BARGAIN

CERF plays a key role in delivering the Grand Bargain: CERF funding is flexible, efficient, unearmarked, principled, transparent, supports cash programming, empowers humanitarian leadership, and promotes a coordinated, inclusive and strategic humanitarian response.



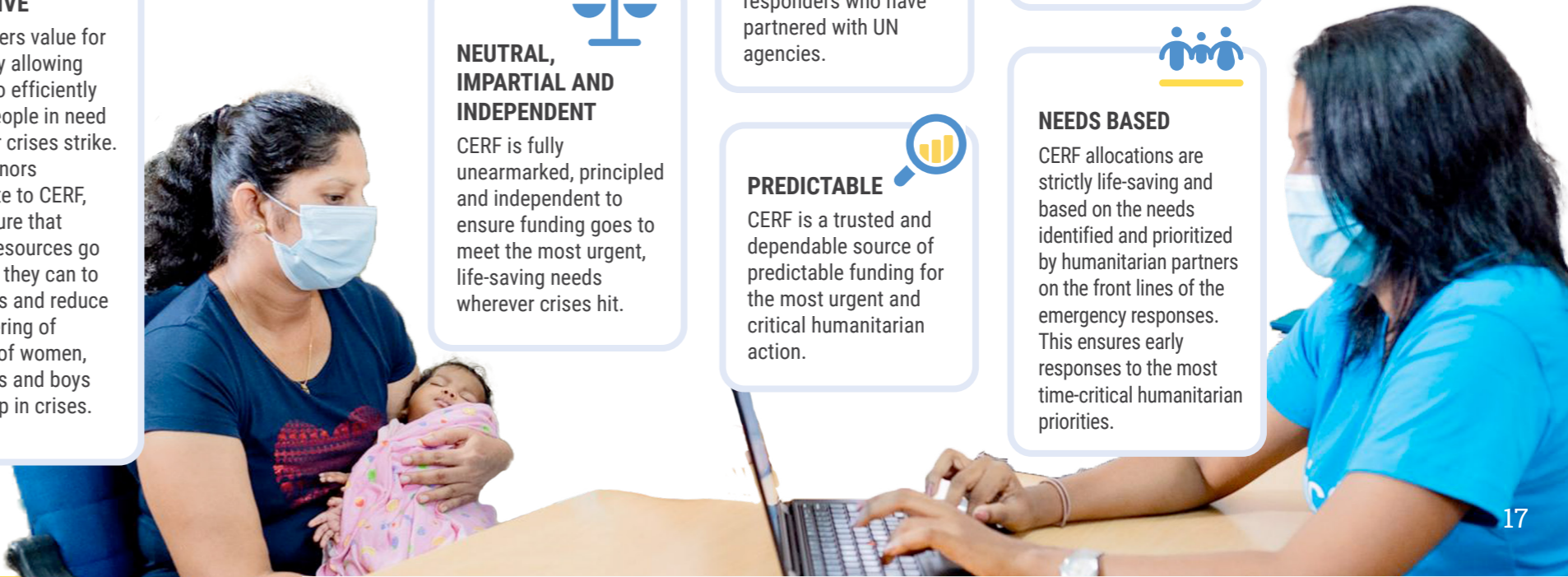
### NEEDS BASED

CERF allocations are strictly life-saving and based on the needs identified and prioritized by humanitarian partners on the front lines of the emergency responses. This ensures early responses to the most time-critical humanitarian priorities.



### PREDICTABLE

CERF is a trusted and dependable source of predictable funding for the most urgent and critical humanitarian action.



# A fund for all, by all

With humanitarian needs skyrocketing in 2023, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) remained an indispensable element of the global humanitarian architecture.

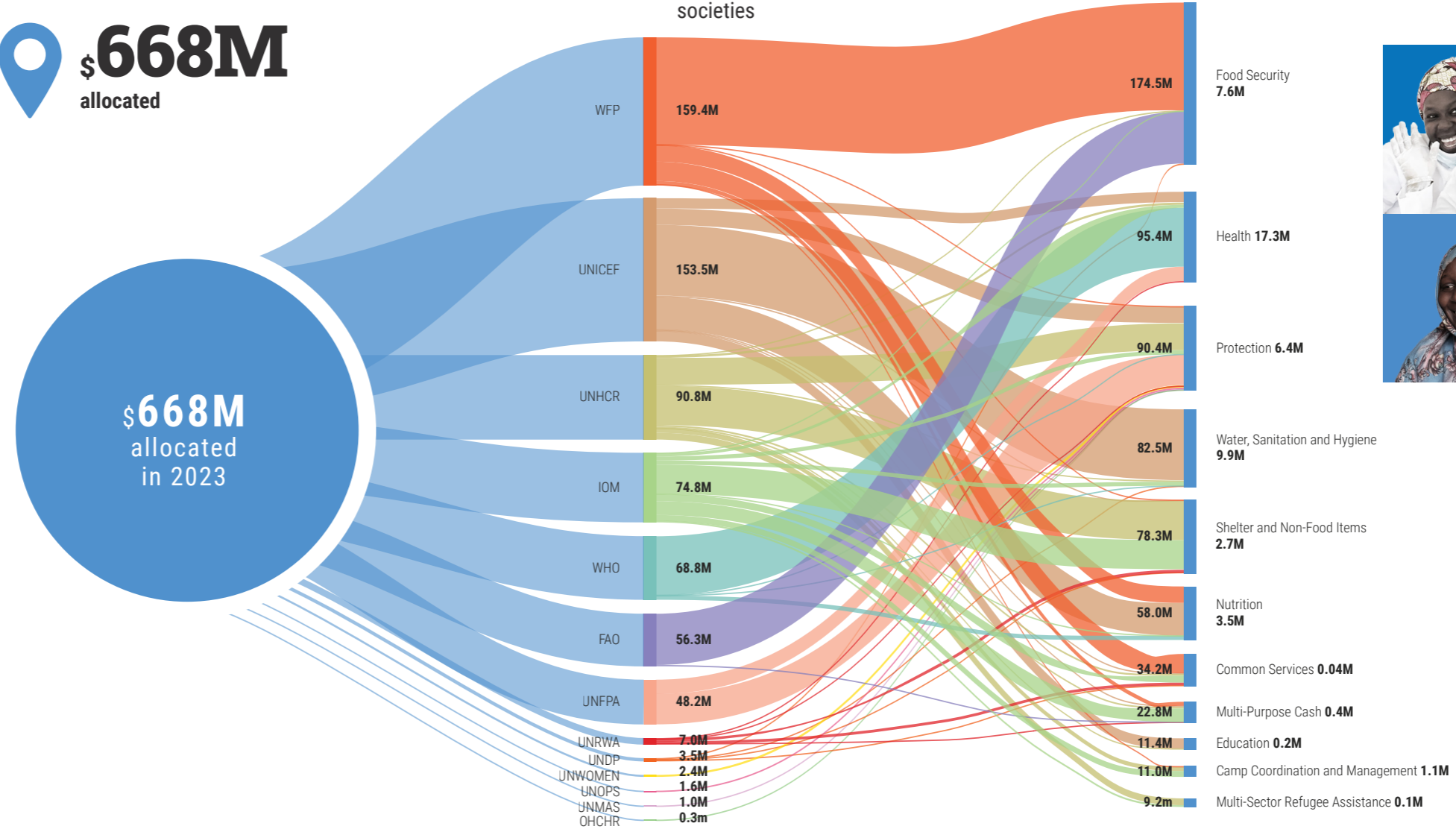
Thanks to the generous support of its donors, CERF allocated \$668 million for humanitarian assistance in 40 countries – the third-highest amount in the Fund’s history. This enabled UN agencies and partners to provide life-saving assistance and protection for 32.8 million affected people across the globe. Despite donors’ fiscal pressures related to global financial instability and economic downturn funding, CERF received \$559 million in paid contributions in 2023. Contributions to CERF declined by only 9 per cent compared to 2022 (\$612 million), a significantly smaller reduction compared to that of global coordinated humanitarian appeals. This is a testament to donors’ continued confidence in CERF.

Comprehensive, detailed and real-time information of CERF allocations is available in the Fund’s online information tools, including the [CERF online allocation tracker](#), the [CERF Data Hub](#) and the [Pooled Funds Data Hub](#).

## 2023

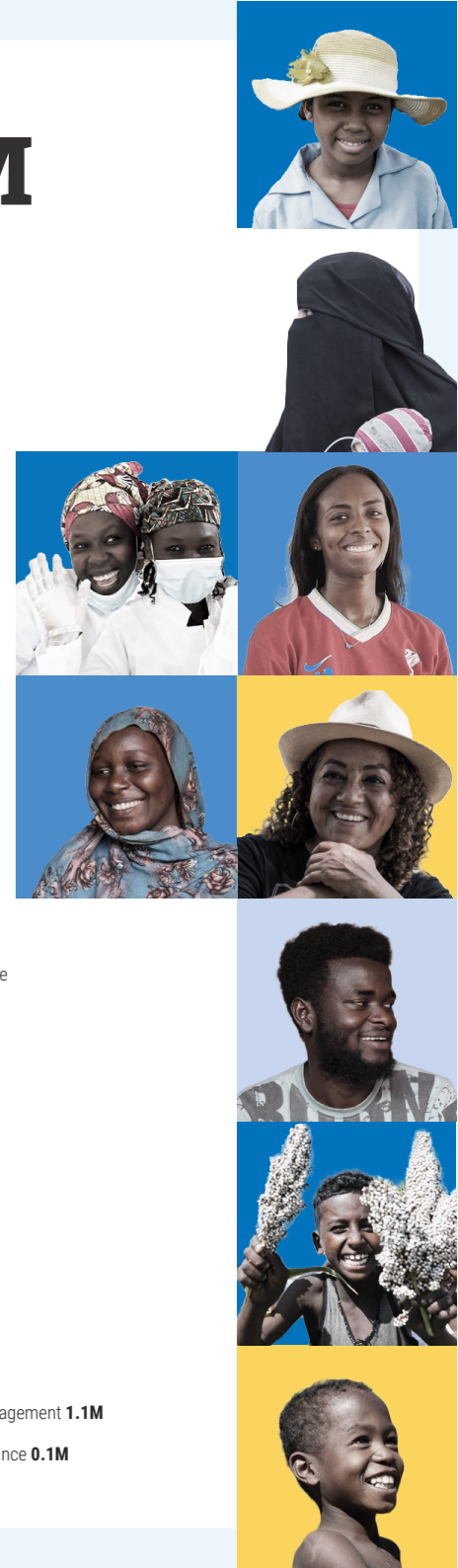
**\$559M** in contributions from 59 Member States, 3 regional and local authorities, and multiple private contributions.

**\$668M** allocated



**13** UN agencies in partnership with International NGOs, National NGOs, Government entities, and Red Cross/Red Crescent societies.

**32.8M** people assisted in 40 countries



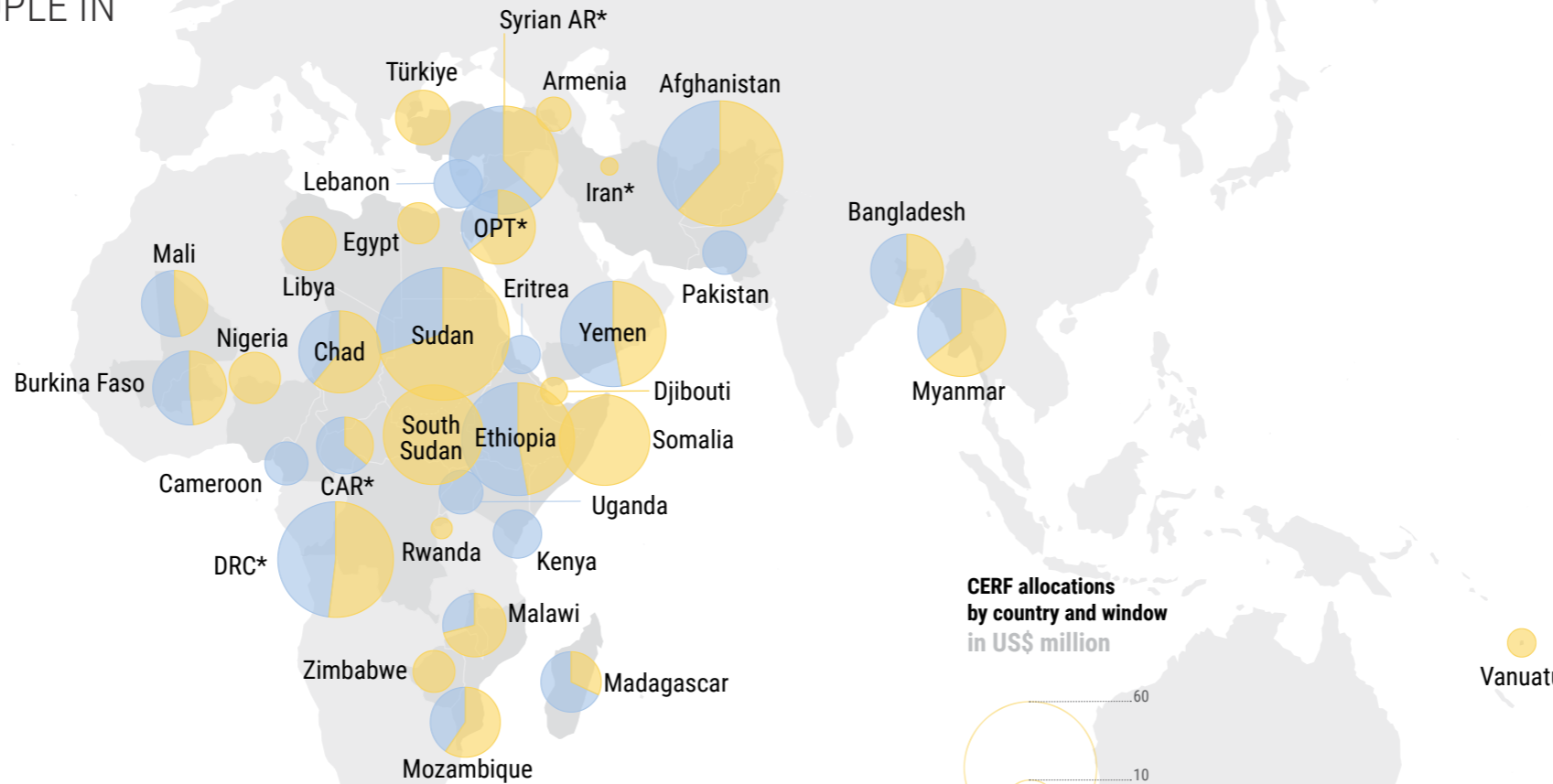
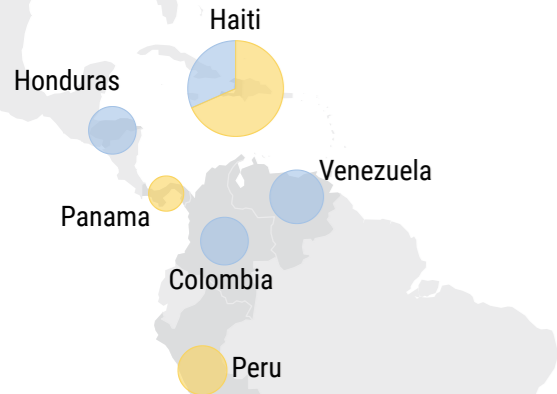
IN 2023, CERF ALLOCATED

**\$667.9M**

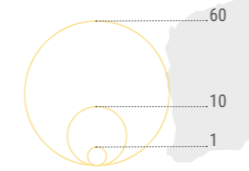
TO ENABLE LIFE-SAVING ASSISTANCE FOR

**32.8M** PEOPLE IN

**40** COUNTRIES



**CERF allocations by country and window in US\$ million**



● Rapid Response window  
● Underfunded Emergencies window

\* CAR - Central African Republic  
DRC - Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Iran - Islamic Republic of Iran  
OPT - Occupied Palestinian Territory  
Syria AR - Syrian Arab Republic

**Allocations by country and window in US\$ million**

Sudan	60.1
Afghanistan	53.7
Democratic Republic of the Congo	45.8
Ethiopia	43.5
Syrian Arab Republic	40.0
Yemen	38.0
South Sudan	34.0
Somalia	28.0
Myanmar	26.4
Haiti	26.3
Chad	23.0
Occupied Palestinian Territory	18.7
Burkina Faso	18.7
Bangladesh	18.0
Mozambique	16.8
Mali	15.0
Malawi	13.8
Madagascar	12.5
Central African Republic	11.0
Türkiye	10.2
Libya	10.0
Nigeria	9.0
Venezuela	8.2
Kenya	8.0
Lebanon	8.0
Peru	6.9
Colombia	6.5
Uganda	6.5
Honduras	6.5
Pakistan	6.5
Cameroon	6.4
Zimbabwe	6.0
Egypt	5.8
Eritrea	5.0
Armenia	4.0
Panama	3.5
Vanuatu	2.8
Djibouti	2.5
Rwanda	1.5
Islamic Republic of Iran	1.0

# How to contribute to CERF?

CERF's achievements are only made possible thanks to the generous support of its donors. Every contribution to CERF, no matter how small, when pooled, helps CERF save lives at a global scale. By contributing to CERF, Member States, observers and other authorities, as well as individuals, corporations and foundations, join hands with the international community's collective humanitarian action to reduce the suffering of millions of people caught up in crises across the world.

Interested donors are also encouraged to support OCHA, the UN office that manages CERF and enables its operations worldwide.

**DONATE**

**01** Member States, observers and other authorities that wish to contribute to CERF can contact the OCHA Donor Relations Section ([ocha.donor.relations@un.org](mailto:ocha.donor.relations@un.org)).

**02** Individuals, corporations and foundations can visit <http://bit.ly/GIVETOCERF> to contribute directly to CERF.

**03** For general information about CERF, please contact [cerf@un.org](mailto:cerf@un.org) or visit [cerf.un.org](http://cerf.un.org).

The CERF High-level Pledging Event (HLPE) is organized annually by OCHA in December in New York. The HLPE serves to showcase CERF's achievements and unique role, and provides an opportunity for donors to express global solidarity and announce pledges to CERF for the following year.

## CERF 2023 donors





United Nations  
**CERF**

Central  
Emergency  
Response  
Fund

CERF was born out of necessity and it continues through generosity.  
Donors enable CERF to support emergency life-saving humanitarian  
activities throughout the world. As crises persist, so does our resolve.  
**With your help, we respond.**



[cerf.un.org](http://cerf.un.org) | [pooledfunds.impact.unocha.org](http://pooledfunds.impact.unocha.org)



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