

## Background

The current version of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Life-Saving Criteria was developed through an inter-agency, inter-cluster collaborative process in 2009 and approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in January 2010.<sup>i</sup> The Criteria define which humanitarian, life-saving activities can be considered for CERF funding. For a decade, the Life-Saving Criteria have served as a fundamental document guiding the use of CERF funds and as a reference guide for humanitarian operations across the globe.

While the General Assembly's mandate for the Fund has not changed, the humanitarian landscape in which the Fund operates has evolved resulting in the need for a review of the Life-Saving Criteria to ensure the Fund remains true to its mandate while also supportive of current policy frameworks and operational contexts.

## Objectives

The exercise aims to update the Life-Saving Criteria to better reflect changes in humanitarian response and agreements within the IASC and across the humanitarian sector since the criteria were developed in 2010. The exercise will not revisit the core mandate of the CERF and does not seek to significantly expand or change the range of activities supported by the Fund but rather to clarify and update language from the 2010 document. It is anticipated that the provision of clearer criteria and guidelines will facilitate a better application and prioritization process in the field and support the quick and consistent review of grant proposals by the CERF secretariat.

The Fund remains focused on life-saving interventions as referenced in the GA resolution that established the Fund. A 2019 independent study by ODI noted that “CERF’s current life-saving criteria offers significant scope for including well-planned and sequenced early action” and that “early action differs more in timing than in content from traditional humanitarian support.”<sup>ii</sup> Further, lessons will be learned from the anticipatory action pilots underway and planned for 2020. As such, at this time, no significant changes to the criteria are foreseen regarding anticipatory action for CERF.

In summary, the goal is to refine the current life-saving criteria, not broaden or fundamentally change them.

## Methodology

Between 2018 and 2019, the CERF secretariat embarked on a series of internal discussions and external consultations with CERF focal points at UN agencies<sup>iii</sup> to identify key aspects and areas of the criteria that require further refinement, clarification or updating in accordance with IASC agreements since 2010.

In a first phase, UN agencies provided to the CERF secretariat written comments and suggested updates to the criteria, which were then discussed in bilateral teleconferences. In cases where multiple or divergent comments were provided by agencies operating in the same sector – for example, health and protection – the CERF secretariat requested agencies consult amongst themselves to provide consolidated and agreed inputs.

The second phase is planned for the first half of 2020 and includes consultations with Global Clusters and other key stakeholders and culminates in the presentation of the updated criteria to the CERF Advisory Group in June 2020.

## Proposed Updates

The first phase of the consultations found a consensus regarding both the need for an update to the criteria as well as the desire to maintain the strict focus of the criteria on humanitarian action. The proposed updates focus primarily on two aspects: First, the consultations identified the need to update terminology and references to IASC

policies and agreements or sector-specific standards and guidance across the CERF Life-saving Criteria document and align activities which may qualify for CERF funding accordingly. Second, the UN agencies highlighted the need to integrate and strengthen cross-cutting issues like the centrality of protection, accountability to affected people, gender and cash programming.

It was, for example, proposed by UN agencies to support the integration of gender-based violence (GBV) risk mitigation and response into all cluster responses, to ensure support to national and community-based systems that mitigate GBV and ensure their full alignment with the IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV in Humanitarian Action (2015).<sup>iv</sup> UN agencies also advocated for additional activities under the Child Protection Sector/Cluster to complement those currently listed in the CERF Life-Saving Criteria. One of the proposed activities focuses on the identification of high-risk areas and factors driving abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children in emergencies to be able to strengthen prevention strategies. Other proposals include consultations with local actors to help identify physical dangers causing unintentional injury or death to children in emergencies and subsequently the mitigation of these risks through infrastructure improvement and/or information campaigns.

## Timeline and Key Benchmarks

Activity	Responsible	Timeframe
<b>First Phase</b>		
UN agencies provide (harmonized) first round of inputs followed by bilateral consultations	UN agencies	May – October 2018
UN agencies provide second round of inputs followed by selected bilateral consultations	CERF secretariat & UN agencies	October 2018 – January 2019
<b>Second Phase</b>		
First revised draft shared with UN agencies and Global Clusters for comments	CERF secretariat & OCHA, UN agencies, Global Clusters	January – February 2020
Second draft shared with Global Clusters & UN agencies	CERF secretariat & OCHA	March 2020
Third draft shared with the ERC	CERF secretariat	April 2020
Final revision	CERF secretariat	May 2020
Presentation to CERF Advisory Group	CERF secretariat	June 2020

<sup>i</sup> The CERF life-saving criteria does not seek to define broadly which humanitarian intervention are life-saving, but rather it establishes the type of humanitarian actions that are considered eligible for CERF funding under its life-saving mandate.

<sup>ii</sup> Accessible through the following link: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12643.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Since the establishment of the Fund, the CERF secretariat has relied on focal points at key UN agencies for inter-agency collaboration on key guidance and policies related to the fund. UN agencies included in the first phase consultations on the update to the Life-Saving Criteria are: FAO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO

<sup>iv</sup> Accessible through the following link:

[https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/guidelines\\_for\\_integrating\\_gender\\_based\\_violence\\_interventions\\_in\\_humanitarian\\_action.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/guidelines_for_integrating_gender_based_violence_interventions_in_humanitarian_action.pdf)