

Background

As discussed at the Advisory Group meeting in November 2013, the CERF secretariat revised the fixed reporting deadline for Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) to put in effect a rolling reporting schedule aligned with the CERF grant cycles. Instead of the previous 15 March deadline, RC/HCs are now asked to submit their reports within three months of each grant package's expiration (for both Rapid response and underfunded allocations). The RC/HC narrative reporting template and supporting guidance have also been adjusted to improve the substance and relevance of reports and to ensure that all key information is provided.

While these modifications were primarily implemented to improve the overall quality of the reports, the new schedule has the following additional benefits¹:

- The reporting burden for recipient agencies is reduced. The need for interim reports has been eliminated and reporting does not necessarily coincide with peak seasons;
- Staff who were involved in the relevant emergency response are more likely to contribute to report preparation;
- Report submission to the CERF secretariat and subsequent the subsequent review and feedback process is more timely;
- The report structure has been simplified.

This note provides a brief status update on the roll-out of the revised RC/HC reporting schedule and format, as well as a brief description of other initiatives implemented in relation to the new reporting framework.

New initiatives

In addition to the changes described above, the CERF secretariat has introduced a number of new initiatives to improve the RC/HC reports.

The CERF secretariat has developed new assessment and data extraction systems to strengthen systematic use of the information collected through the report review process. These systems will facilitate thorough quality assessments of the reports, consistent analysis of reported achievements obtained with CERF funding, systematic extraction of relevant data (about beneficiaries, sub-grants, lessons learned and other key information) and the methodical identification, tracking and follow-up on key programmatic and strategic issues.

The CERF secretariat has also recommended including After Action Reviews (AAR) as a standard component of the RC/HC reporting processes to promote a more reflective and inclusive reporting. Finally, to improve integration with the overall CERF performance and accountability structure, oversight of the RC/HC reporting process has become the responsibility of the CERF Performance and Monitoring Unit. The unit has strengthened its capacity to manage and support the reporting process.

Status of roll-out

The new rolling reporting schedule became mandatory as of 1 January 2014. To ease the transition to the

¹ The advantages of the revised reporting schedule were described in detail in the related note to the Advisory Group meeting in November 2013 which is attached for reference.

new schedule, RC/HCs were allowed to report according to the new schedule (i.e. within three months of completion of the grant tranches) instead of waiting until 15 March 2014. Of the 15 grants that expired during that period, seven RC/HC offices adopted for the new reporting schedule and eight kept the 15 March 2014 reporting deadline (mainly in respect to already prepared work plans). An additional 12 RC/HC reports have been submitted since the new schedule became compulsory. By the end of March 2014, a total of 27 reports have been submitted to CERF since September 2013. The reports have been cleared and posted on CERF's website (<http://cerf.un.org>).²

Since the Advisory Group meeting in November 2013, 28 interim³ 2012 RC/HC reports submitted in March 2013 have been updated by the RC/HC offices and resubmitted to the CERF secretariat as final reports covering the full implementation of the grants. With the new rolling reporting schedule, the need for interim reports will be eliminated and starting with 2013 CERF grants there will only be one report submission per grant package. This will considerably reduce the workload for RC/HC offices, recipient agencies and the CERF secretariat.

Preliminary observations

Although the response to the implemented changes has been overwhelmingly positive, the limited number of finalized reports received so far makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions as to the impact of the changes on the overall quality of the reports. A few preliminary observations can be noted:

- **Improved reviews:** The staggered submission of reports has allowed the CERF secretariat to provide more detailed report reviews and has led to more thorough identification, tracking and follow-up on key issues. With the transition period allowing 2013 report submission until 15 March 2014, and the an influx of RC/HC reports for grants from first underfunded round of 2013 in March 2014, the CERF secretariat experienced particularly heavy peak reporting season. This has underlined the advantage of the rolling schedule for the CERF secretariat's effort to provide timely and in-depth reviews of the reports.
- **Improved use of data:** The systematic tracking of reporting issues has improved identification and follows up on a number of operational and financial issues by the CERF secretariat. The rolling schedule and systematic data extraction have made it possible for the CERF secretariat to continuously update data regarding beneficiaries, sub-grants, lessons learned and other key information. This has improved the CERF secretariat's ability to provide donors, Member States and other stakeholders with relevant information.
- **Improved timeliness:** Of the 27 reports submitted since the roll-out of the new schedule, only three were submitted more than a week after the deadline.
- **Improved quality:** Of the 10 reports cleared to date, seven reports have been rated 'very good' and three have been rated 'good'. The scale ranks reports as 'very good' 'good', 'reasonable', 'weak' or 'unacceptable'.

Next Steps

The CERF secretariat will conduct an internal AAR of the new reporting framework, focusing on the quality of the reports and the effect and usefulness of the review framework. Adjustments will be introduced if required. The CERF secretariat will present the AAR's findings at the fall 2014 Advisory Group meeting.

CERF secretariat, 1 April 2014

² Some are still being reviewed by the CERF secretariat or are being amended by RC/HC offices based on feedback.

³ Under the previous reporting schedule interim reports were submitted for CERF grants not fully implemented at the March reporting deadline with final reports submitted a year later.