CERF Handbook

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Handbook. While CERF's guidelines, instructions and templates have always been available to the public on the Fund's website, this compilation was recently produced with CERF partners as foremost users in mind. The Handbook provides information on all aspects of CERF: background and mandate; applications, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes; and communications and branding approach.

CERF is the UN's global emergency response fund, a "Fund for All, by All". Through its unearmarked funding, it assures early funding for life-saving action in emergencies across the globe, be they due to conflict or caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes, storms, droughts. Further, it helps to sustain operations when the spotlight has moved on in chronic emergencies that do not get the attention they need. In addition to the grants windows, in situations where donors have committed funding but are unable to disburse immediately, CERF offers a loan facility to individual UN agencies at the headquarters level to allow them to initiate early action and bridge the gap until the pledge is realized.

In recognition of CERF's effectiveness in saving lives at the onset of humanitarian emergencies and in underfunded emergency contexts, the UN General Assembly endorsed in December 2016 an increased annual target of a $1 billion by December 2018. The Handbook is launched to support the field-driven coordination and prioritization process for CERF grant applications by the recipient UN-agencies and partners under the overall leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator.

I hope the Handbook will be useful in ensuring, with CERF funding, delivery of coordinated humanitarian assistance as early and as efficiently as possible and to the most vulnerable populations in urgent need around the globe.

Mark Lowcock
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
and Emergency Relief Coordinator

What you will find in the CERF Handbook

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Using the CERF Handbook

The Handbook is a reference tool to find quick answers on the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) as well as a guide to applying for and maximizing the impact of CERF funds.

The CERF Handbook describes CERF as a Humanitarian Financing tool and the activities involved in all parts of the CERF process, from coordinated prioritization to applying for CERF funds and reporting. You will also find explanations of what is meant by using CERF strategically, and the context specific relevance of the CERF Life-Saving Criteria in different situations.

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Target audience

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The Handbook is particularly relevant for those involved in any part of the CERF cycle at the country level and at headquarters:

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- Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HC), prioritizing needs and activities for consolidated CERF applications, endorsing and submitting proposals within the applications, and submitting timely consolidated CERF reports;

- The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) who inform on and analyse humanitarian needs and funding gaps, and make recommendations for CERF support the RC/HC;

- The UN Country Team (UNCT), and sectors (in countries that have neither an HC, clusters or an HCT);[1]

- Representatives of UN agencies as primary CERF recipients and their implementing partners;

- Representatives of the double-hatted agencies/organizations who are also designated as sector/cluster leads at country level;

- Cluster Coordinators;

- OCHA Country Office staff and OCHA Regional Office staff providing guidance and support to in-country leadership and coordination mechanisms in the prioritization of needs and the related projects; facilitating inter-cluster needs analysis; guiding

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[1] The Handbook refers throughout to RC/HC and clusters as a matter of simplicity; the information applies to application from any country for emergency response.

the CERF application process or coordinating and consolidating the reporting components;

- UN agency CERF Focal Points at headquarters and other interested UN staff;
- OCHA headquarters staff supporting field processes.

Though these are the expected primary users of the Handbook, other parties can also access the Handbook to seek answers to queries regarding CERF.

Intention of the Handbook

The Handbook is a reference designed to provide a broad overview and understanding of what CERF is and how it works, and to point users in the right direction to navigate the CERF process. You are likely to find consulting the CERF Handbook useful when:

- You are part of a HCT or UNCT preparing to recommend that the RC/HC makes an application for CERF Rapid Response funds;

- You are already involved in a CERF application process or supporting its development (Rapid Response or Underfunded Emergencies funding window), as OCHA staff, UN agency staff, NGO staff, or staff in the office of the RC/HC;

- You have a role in monitoring and reporting on the use of CERF funds;

- You are new to the CERF process and want to understand how it works and the actions that are required.

You may start anywhere in the Handbook using the Table of Contents as a guide to the topics or questions you most need to review or through digital search of key words.

UN and CERF policy and guidance documents are referenced as sources for the information and for further details you may need. Links to policies, guidelines and procedures, and templates and forms are provided throughout the Handbook, and in a compendium (►► Annex).

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About CERF

CERF has earned its place in the current humanitarian environment as one of the most effective ways to enable the timely provision of life-saving assistance, including supplies, basic services and protection to millions of people in need.

CERF's establishment

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) is a stand-by fund established by the United Nations General Assembly to enable timelier and more reliable humanitarian assistance to people affected by natural disasters and armed conflict. Originally created in 1991 as a revolving fund of US$ 50 million providing loans to UN agencies, the United Nations General Assembly upgraded the CERF adding a grant element on 15 December 2005 through the resolution A/RES/60/124 to achieve the following objectives:

- Promote early action and response to reduce loss of life;
- Enhance response to time-critical requirements;
- Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in under-funded crises

Since its operational launch in 2006, CERF has proven to be one of the fastest and most effective ways to support rapid humanitarian response. It is also a lifeline for those caught up in the world's most neglected, underfunded and protracted crises.

CERF's achievements

CERF pools voluntary unearmarked contributions from donors around the world into a single fund. Between 2006 and 2018, CERF has enabled UN agencies, funds and programmes as well as implementing partners to provide more than US$5 billion worth of life-saving assistance. This has been made possible thanks to the voluntary contributions from 126 UN Member States and observers as well as corporate donors, foundations and individuals.

Each year on average, CERF grants help humanitarian partners deliver critical health care to 16 million people, food assistance to 7 million people, water and sanitation to 10 million people, protection to 4 million people, and shelter to 2 million. The fund supports services for refugees and displaced people, nutrition programmes, mine action, agriculture in emergencies, emergency education and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) for millions of people in need to mention but a few areas of intervention.

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CERF's increased funding target

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The ever-increasing scale and intensity of emergencies points to the need for a larger CERF to address the growing needs. During the first ten years of CERF global humanitarian needs have quadrupled while the share of CERF current funding target against the global requirements has declined. In December 2016, the UN General Assembly endorsed the Secretary-General's call to expand CERF's annual funding target from $450 million to $1 billion by end 2018. GA resolution A/RES/71/127 was adopted in recognition of the significant achievements of the CERF in facilitating life-saving assistance to crisis-affected people. In addition, it calls upon all Member States to consider increasing their voluntary contributions to the fund and invites the private sector and all concerned individuals and institutions to do so.

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CERF's management structure

Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC)

In December 1991, the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/46/182, to strengthen the United Nations response to complex emergencies and natural disasters, while improving the overall effectiveness of humanitarian operations in the field. The resolution created the high-level position of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (USG/ERC), to combine into a single United Nations focal point the functions carried out by the Secretary-General's representatives for major and complex emergencies and natural disasters. The USG/ERC oversees CERF's operations on the Secretary-General's behalf.

CERF secretariat

The CERF secretariat, which is part of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), supports the ERC and the DERC in managing both the grant and the loan elements. It is responsible for ensuring that the funds are allocated properly, disbursed in a timely manner, and that use of the funds in individual countries is reported transparently.

CERF Advisory Group

Established per instruction of the UN General Assembly in 2005, the CERF Advisory Group provides the Secretary-General with periodic policy guidance and expert advice on the use and impact of CERF, through the USG/ERC.

Advisory Group members serve in their individual capacity, and not as representatives of their countries or Governments. They include Government officials from contributing and recipient countries, representatives of humanitarian non-governmental organizations and academic experts. Candidates are nominated by Member States and selected by the Secretary-General for two-year periods. Members are carefully selected to reflect a geographical and gender balance.

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Overview of CERF Funding Elements

CERF receives contributions from donors and the money is available in several components for immediate use at the onset of emergencies.

CERF is comprised of a grant and a loan element. Furthermore, the grant element is divided into a Rapid Response (RR) and an Underfunded Emergencies (UFE) funding windows. Approximately two-thirds of CERF's annual budget is allocated through the RR window, and up to one-third through the UFE window.

CERF's Grant Element

Rapid Response grants

Rapid Response (►► Chapter 6) grants are requested by Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HC) to provide seed money for life-saving, humanitarian activities in the initial days and weeks when a sudden onset crisis has occurred or after a significant deterioration in an existing emergency. CERF RR funds may be used to respond to time-critical requirements to minimize loss of life and damage to social and economic assets. CERF RR grants are intended to jump-start or expand the immediate humanitarian response while additional resources are mobilised. The process is field-driven, in that RC/HCs directly apply based on an on-the-ground joint analysis of priority needs.

Underfunded Emergencies grants

Underfunded Emergencies (►► Chapter 7) grants target the world's most underfunded and neglected crises. Countries with significant unmet humanitarian needs are eligible for UFE support. Twice yearly, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) selects countries based on quantitative data analysis of funding levels and humanitarian needs, risk and vulnerability, and qualitative, contextual information from consultations with UN agency and OCHA headquarters, NGOs and other public source documents

Snapshot of CERF's annual allocations

CERF manages allocation volumes (►► CERF Allocation) according to available funds. Most years CERF allocates approximately $450 million to humanitarian operations in some 50 different countries through some 450 grants. A maximum of $30 million is normally applied to any one disaster or emergency unless in exceptional circumstances *for example:*

In January 2018, the ERC released the largest-ever allocation of $50 million to enable scale up of urgent life-saving assistance in Yemen where people bore the brunt of ongoing hostilities and severe economic decline. An alarming 22.2 million people were in need some kind of humanitarian or protection assistance. CERF's intervention focused on an integrated, comprehensive food, nutrition, safe water and health support in 27 high-priority districts at risk of famine as well as on responding to worsening diphtheria outbreak.

Frequency of receiving CERF allocations

A country can receive both RR allocations and UFE allocations in the same year. Similarly, if multiple emergencies occur in the same country during a short time span, RC/HCs can request multiple rapid response allocations. Further, to better diversify the countries benefitting from the UFE window, one country is not traditionally selected in two consecutive UFE rounds.

CERF Loan Element

Determining eligibility for CERF's loan element

As decided by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/66/119, CERF maintains a loan facility of $30 million which acts as a cash-flow mechanism to ensure a rapid and coordinated response to humanitarian emergencies. The loan element is aimed at strengthening humanitarian coordination efforts by ensuring that adequate preparedness measures are put in place to address humanitarian needs. The utilization of the loan element shall also be guided by General Assembly resolutions A/RES/48/57 and A/RES/56/107. The ERC is responsible for determining the amount to be advanced in each situation and may make advances up to the total amount of cash available in CERF's loan element

CERF loan guidance

The organization making the request sends documentation, as follows, in accordance with ST/SGB/2010/5:

1. A formal letter to the ERC, specifying why the loan is needed in response to a humanitarian emergency and how exactly it will be used. The letter must specify that the loan will be repaid as first charge on contributions received by the agency for the programme or project.

2. A completed Letter of Understanding (LOU) using the template.

3. A budget for the loan amount using the CERF loan budget template.

4. Copies of pledge/commitment letters received by the agency which provide evidence that the operational organization will be able to repay the loan.

5. Any other documents required according to the Letter of Understanding (LOU).

6. Loans must be repaid within one year from the date of disbursement.

7. Send the documents to the ERC through with copy to the CERF secretariat at cerf@un.org

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Strategic Use of CERF

A strategic use of CERF funds to kick-start a jointly prioritized and life-saving component of the response is the optimal way to maximize the impact.

CERF's niche

CERF is designed to address the highest priority life-saving needs in a crisis as determined by humanitarian actors on the ground. Due to its speed of response and inclusive allocation processes, CERF adds strategic value to humanitarian action beyond the mere amount of money allocated.

While CERF is not intended to address root causes, finance preparedness activities or regular planned programmes, it focuses on providing flexible funding at critical moments when and where it is needed the most. This makes CERF an indispensable tool of global humanitarian architecture. As such, CERF is often one of the first sources of funding to sudden-onset emergencies.

Scope of the CERF

The main consideration the CERF secretariat looks at during the application process is the compatibility with the Life-Saving Criteria (LSC) (►► Chapter 5) within these contextual factors:

Targeted, focused approach

- The objectives of the application and individual projects are directly related to the trigger causing an acute humanitarian crisis; the projects are not routine programmes.

- The prioritisation is based on the severity and urgency of the need rather than solely on funding gaps in a response plan, for maximum life-saving impact.

Timeframe

- The implementation period for a RR project is **six months** while UFE projects are allowed **nine months**. All of the funds must be expended and all activities completed, including those of implementing partners, within the implementation period. Projects or activities that require long lead times to set up and cannot expect to have a life-saving impact within the timeframe, are not appropriate for CERF funds.

Complementarity and coherence

CERF allocations are approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) to support a joint strategy developed by humanitarian partners on the ground. The strategy should use CERF only for highest priority, immediate life-saving activities, while other funds and contributions are used for longer-term needs, such as reconstruction and recovery. The aim is to maximize the impact of resources available through all financing streams by targeting each source, so that together national resources, bilateral contributions, and

pooled funding mechanisms, including Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) and CERF facilitate a coherent response.

Coordination & prioritization

Consequently, during the CERF application process, the Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HC) are requested to provide a brief overview about how CERF and other resources will complement each other. This allows for a better assessment of the requested CERF allocation's contribution to response efforts in the country.

Apart from providing timely and flexible funding, CERF processes are also designed to strengthen humanitarian leadership, improve coordination among humanitarian actors and increase coherence of the response. Unlike most bilateral funding that focuses on agencies' individual outputs, CERF funding is designed to enable the humanitarian community's joint response towards achieving collective outcomes.

This strategic added value is achieved through inclusive CERF application processes lead by RC/HCs and carried out by HCTs and clusters with the participation of country-level humanitarian actors.

Necessary elements for prioritising activities

Once the strategic priorities are defined and activities are prioritized, they are compiled into a consolidated application to the ERC for CERF funding on behalf of the country level humanitarian community. This process ensures that CERF funds are implemented by humanitarian actors in a coordinated manner according to a coherent strategy. Furthermore, the implementation of CERF funding is later reviewed and reported on jointly by implementing organizations. CERF gives incentives to humanitarian actors to participate in these forums that prioritize CERF funding requests and strengthens the lead roles of RC/HCs and cluster leads.

The following questions should be addressed when preparing a CERF application

- Has the RC/HC inquired with the CERF secretariat whether a CERF loan or a CERF grant is suitable before proceeding with the application?

- Has the RC/HC, with the UNCT/HCT, built a coherent and focused approach to address life-saving humanitarian needs taking contextual factors into account?

- Has CERF's niche for maximum impact been identified, and are CERF funds to be used to complement other available or expected agency resources?

- What are the priority life-saving needs and gaps to be addressed with a CERF-funded response? Can the needs and gaps be addressed within the six-month timeframe of a CERF RR response and 9-month timeframe of a UFE response?

- Who and how many are to be reached with CERF-funded activities and where?

- What is the impact or change that CERF funds can make now?

Additionally, the following factors should be considered throughout the prioritising activities:

Coherence of proposed activities

The entire package of CERF projects need to show a strategic rationale, not only individual projects. Projects should be planned in a logical way; for example, the distribution of food assistance together with agricultural inputs so that once distributions stop, seeds will have been planted.

NGOs as implementing partners

The partnerships with implementing partners (national and international NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies and/or government counterparts) should be in place, and there should be adequate access and capacity among the partners to implement the activities within the timeframe. When designing the CERF project's implementation calendar, consideration should be given to the time it will take to sign agreements and transfer the funds to the implementing partners as this has proven to sometimes be time-consuming leaving less time for actual implementation.

Advocacy

When the ERC communicates to the international community that CERF is allocating funds to an emergency, messages about the need for additional resources should be ready to leverage the attention generated by the CERF funding.

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CERF's Life-Saving Criteria

To achieve its mandate to enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to people affected by disasters and emergencies, CERF follows the Life-Saving Criteria (LSC).

The concept of the Life-Saving Criteria

Support from CERF is based on the aim to prioritize life-saving assistance to people in need. To ensure adherence to its mandate the CERF adheres to the basic humanitarian principle of placing the people and communities affected in the focus and applies a rights-based approach traced back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular the right to life with dignity.

CERF's Life-Saving Criteria aim at clarifying definitions and determining criteria for the CERF grant elements. The Life-Saving Criteria was developed through a collaborative process with humanitarian partners and the Global Cluster Leads and endorsed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) in 2010. The intent of these guidelines is to allow inclusivity of different types of activities, while simplifying interpretation at the field level. It is anticipated that the criteria will assist in improving the quality of submissions as well as simplify and speed up the approval process.

Application of the Life-Saving Criteria

The inclusion of an activity in the LSC does not guarantee its inclusion in a CERF application. Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) have the overall authority to determine funding priorities in country following an inclusive and transparent consultation process.

The LSC guidelines cover general as well as cluster and/or sectoral criteria for both the Rapid Response (RR) and Underfunded Emergencies (UFE) windows of the CERF. If the Cluster Approach is not in place, these guidelines should be used by the sectors to guide interventions, as well as to guide agency-mandated activities that do not fall under clusters/sectors (such as UNHCR's refugee mandate).

Contextual issues to be considered

The LSC were developed with a range of crises in mind but must be interpreted in relation to the specific emergency context. The LSC is not an exhaustive list of activities that may qualify for CERF funding; humanitarian activities not reflected in the LSC may be considered for CERF funding based on the specific context. The context on the ground will guide the determination and an appropriate degree of flexibility will be exercised regarding funding decisions. Nevertheless, the use of CERF funds will not be

used to address issues that require long-term interventions, or are not situated in a humanitarian emergency context.

The CERF secretariat may sometimes have questions for the RC/HC about "grey areas" that need more explanation of how the requested activities are life-saving in the particular context. Providing a rationale grounded in the field perspective of the context can strengthen a request that initially might appear to be outside the LSC.

Grey areas

Whether agriculture and livelihood activities meet the LSC depends very much on the context. The key for demonstrating that livelihoods activities meet the LSC is showing that the needs are a result of the crisis as opposed to chronic under-development and that the activities result in a life-saving benefit within the CERF implementation period. *An example:*

> *When a measles outbreak occurred in March 2018 in Lebanon, the country has had not secured the entire funds necessary to cover the operational cost of the regular measles immunization activities. Under these circumstances a CERF grant was allocated to fight and contain the new outbreak, supporting mobile vaccination units in very isolated and rural areas, a mass campaign in urban and densely populated areas, and compulsory vaccination of children crossing the border and of refugee children attending the UNHCR reception centre.*

Guidance on common services

CERF funding can be requested for common or enabling services that will be provided to the full humanitarian community, inclusive of NGOs. This section clarifies questions that repeatedly come up in submissions as well as explores broader contextual issues that impact the funding decision. The example activities presented here are not exhaustive:

Multi Agency Assessment

Multi-agency assessments are considered only for new emergencies and only under the RR window, and must be endorsed by the RC/HC and UNCT/HCT. CERF will not fund sector-specific assessments.

Coordination efforts in new disasters

Funding for cluster coordination only will be supported in new emergencies and only under the RR window where there is a demonstrated need for support. Cluster coordination staff and costs must be part of a larger agency project which has been prioritized by the RC/HC and HCT. Coordination will not be supported in a stand-alone project.

UN Humanitarian Air Service

According to CERF's Guidelines for Funding for UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), air operations (persons and cargo) that are essential to deliver life-saving activities in difficult to reach locations or where ground transportation is unsafe over a large area may be considered in the context of the crisis. UNHAS must demonstrate the need for new routes or a greater frequency of flights on established routes to be eligible for CERF rapid response funding.

Emergencies Telecommunica-tions	As outlined in CERF's Guidelines for Funding for Emergency Information and Communications Technology Equipment and Services, networks for new emergency operations or the upgrade of existing equipment in a deteriorating humanitarian situation with a changed security risk assessment may be considered.
Safety & Security of Humanitarian Community	Based on CERF's Guidelines for Funding for Common Emergency Safety and Security, extra-ordinary security programmes and equipment may be considered to close critical security gaps for common security services at the onset of a natural disaster, a severe outbreak of disease or new complex emergency. These services must be provided to the entirety of the humanitarian community; not a single agency. Traditionally, this role is played by the UN Department of Safety and Security.

Activities outside of CERF's scope

The CERF mandate is clear about activities that are **not eligible for CERF support**:

Prevention

Activities to enable outright avoidance of the adverse impact of hazards and the means to minimize related environmental, technological and biological disasters. This does not exclude activities for an ongoing emergency. *For example:*

> *Construction of retaining walls to prevent flooding; routine vaccination campaigns*

Preparedness

Activities and measures taken in advance to ensure effective response to the impact of hazards, including the issuance of early warnings and the temporary evacuation of people and property from threatened locations. *For example:*

> *Capacity building of national emergency management agencies; operation of early warning systems*

Prepositioning

Regular stockpiling or pre-positioning of relief goods as a contingency measure is not eligible. In the case of a sudden onset emergency, if an agency starts to respond using emergency stocks or diverts stocks intended for other operations, the replacement of these stocks can be included in their rapid response submission. *For example:*

> *Pre-positioning of relief supplies in a regional warehouse prior to cyclone/hurricane season*

Disaster risk reduction

Activities to minimize vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society, or to prevent or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impacts of hazards within the context of sustainable development. *For example:*

> *Earthquake or flood resistant housing; sandbar cropping to prevent riverbed erosion*

Early warning

Providing information that allows individuals exposed to a hazard to act to avoid or reduce their risk and prepare for effective response. *For example*:

> *Installation of flood/rain gauges; construction or operation of a watch tower*

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Rapid Response

With CERF Rapid Response (RR) grants, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) allocates funds for sudden onset emergencies or to address a rapid deterioration within existing crises, in various contexts.

Determining CERF Rapid Response eligibility

Through the RR funding window, CERF can make funds for life-saving assistance available within a short time of a disaster. RR grants may be requested following a new emergency or a significant deterioration in an existing situation, allowing UN agencies and implementing partners to start work right away. As CERF allocations aim to meet urgent, immediate needs, they in turn kickstart operations that would otherwise remain on hold until other resources are mobilized, while the critical window of opportunity to save lives following a disaster quickly closes. In summary, three main conditions can be considered for RR eligibility:

- Rapid or sudden onset emergency:
- Sudden or significant deterioration in an on-going crisis
- Time-critical situation.

Developing a joint application

The process of applying for a RR grant is based on a field-driven process that gives the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) overall authority to determine priority activities and submit a consolidated funding request to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). Consultations in country with United Nations Country Team/Humanitarian Country Team (UNCT/HCT) and inter-cluster coordination mechanism, if present, are key to identifying needs and priorities for CERF funding.

Every CERF application is unique and based on country-level needs. There is no one-size-fits-all decision tree. Early consultation is recommended between the RC/HC and the CERF secretariat on the possibility of rapid response funding, *before* developing a full-fledged application.

Experience shows that critical time can be saved when those at country level make an initial analysis that is guided by the criteria the CERF secretariat uses. An early go/no-go determination can be made that either moves the application forward, or allows the RC/HC and UN agencies to avoid investing significant time and effort on applying for situations or activities that do not meet the CERF's Life-Saving Criteria.

CERF aims to alleviate needs that have been triggered by an emergency—not root causes or chronic/underlying issues—or activities that can be done through routine

programming. In order to determine whether the potential request falls within the mandate of CERF's Rapid Response window the following key question might help to take a decision:

Rapid or sudden onset

1. What is the trigger—what is causing an acute humanitarian situation?

   Examples of rapid onset triggers include:

   - Health related: new disease outbreaks, such as measles or Ebola.
   - Natural disaster: earthquake, cyclone, tsunami, floods

2. What information can be provided to demonstrate the humanitarian nature of the crisis (how many are affected, where, when)?

Significant deterioration in an-ongoing crisis

1. What event happened, when (must be recent), that caused the significant deterioration?

   - Escalation of violence resulting in new and significant displacement
   - Refugee arrivals above planning figures or current caseload;
   - New disease outbreak within a complex emergency (such as cholera in Yemen);

2. Present information that demonstrates the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and timing of the event (dates).

Time-critical intervention

1. What is the trigger or event for time-critical needs?

   - Examples of time critical needs include:
   - New access that allows humanitarian partners to identify new needs within a community or in a location that was previously inaccessible;
   - Drought in protracted/chronic emergencies: the situation must be significantly worse than usual demonstrated by comparing current data (for example, rainfall, crop production/crop loss, malnutrition prevalence) with a five-year trend and a lifesaving niche for CERF needs to be clearly identified
   - Review the Basic Guidance on Drought Submissions for CERF Rapid Response

2. What is the rationale? What is the assessment that shows an immediate response is required?

Allocation amount

CERF RR grants are meant to 'jump start' responses or support the rapid scale-up of current responses rather than fully fund a response or target all the needs of the affected population. Similarly, CERF RR funds are not meant to fill funding gaps or pipeline breaks in ongoing programs. Projects/activities should therefore be identified and prioritized by the UNCT/HCT, with only a portion of 'new' or 'additional' needs requested from CERF. *For example:*

> *In nutrition, UNICEF may include activities related to the immediate treatment of severe acute malnutrition (rapid procurement and distribution of RUTF) rather than large scale sensitization campaigns for nutrition/WASH. WFP may consider including general food distributions rather than asset creation activities and FAO may consider quick impact activities such as distribution of fast-maturing seeds rather than activities focusing on the uptake of drought tolerant crops.*

CERF cannot fund 100% or a large share of project requirements. Normally, CERF contributes to a limited amount of the total requirement to meet the most time critical and life-saving requirements, but this may vary depending on the context and situation. The requested amount should reflect the urgent life-saving humanitarian requirements for the *new* crisis that triggered the application to CERF. *For example:*

> *In May 2018 a $2 million RR grant contributed to fight and contain a new outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Equateur Province). While the full response plan amounted to $26 million to scale up response activities, CERF allocated million to help UN agencies and partners to kick-start the immediate response including time-critical and life-saving activities such as surveillance, treatment, community mobilization and sensitization, safe and dignified burials as well as supporting logistics services.*

Navigating the application process

A RR allocation is requested and managed by a country's RC/HC and may be done at any time a crisis meets the criteria of the RR window and the RC/HC considers it necessary to access CERF funds.

a) **Contact the CERF secretariat:** The first step is for the RC/HC to inform the ERC of a rapid response emergency or early warning indicators of an imminent emergency—done at the working level by the RC/HC office contacting the CERF secretariat. This should be done as soon as possible by phone or email.

b) **Provide the rationale:** Develop the details related to the RR for discussion with the CERF secretariat about the trigger and objectives of the CERF request. A Concept Note may be requested by the CERF secretariat at this point (prior to making an application) for a deterioration in an ongoing emergency or a time critical crisis (new access or slow onset). The Concept Note is requested for a

rapid onset emergency only when the trigger is unclear or when the impact of a CERF allocation is not clear.

c) **Initiate the prioritization process:** When the CERF secretariat agrees that the crisis is eligible for a RR allocation the RC/HC leads the process to prioritize activities and projects that will be included in the CERF application package.

Procedures & criteria for application

Once the consolidated CERF RR application is submitted by the RC/HC, the CERF secretariat reviews the request and makes recommendations to the ERC on the overall RR allocation amount and on individual projects. During this phase, the CERF secretariat continues to liaise with relevant country-level actors as necessary to clarify or revise aspects of the submission. Concerted efforts are made to minimize and streamline requests to the field to reduce transaction costs and processing time.

When evaluating the amount for a RR allocation, the CERF secretariat considers several factors including, but not limited to:

- Available funds in CERF and forecasted income;
- Scale and severity of the needs;
- Overall funding requirements and the proportion requested from CERF;
- Current and historical comparison with other emergencies or applications;
- Operational capacity;
- Activities proposed for funding;
- Potential complementarity with other resources.

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Underfunded Emergencies

With CERF Underfunded Emergencies (UFE) grants, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) allocates funds for emergencies that have not attracted or are unlikely to attract sufficient and timely funding for life-saving activities.

Determining CERF Underfunded Emergencies eligibility

Twice each year through the CERF UFE funding window, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) allocates CERF grants for life-saving activities in the least funded and forgotten humanitarian emergencies. The selection of humanitarian emergencies for the two UFE allocation rounds is made up of two components: (1) a quantitative analysis of data on humanitarian needs, funding levels, risk and vulnerability, and (2) qualitative, contextual information collected from consultations with UN agency and OCHA headquarters, NGOs and public source documents. The UFE window accounts for approximately one third of CERF grants annually.

Launch of the Underfunded Emergencies round

Each UFE round begins with the circulation of the CERF UFE Guidance Note, in October or November for the first round and in May or June for the second round. The UFE Guidance Note specifies the amount of funding to be allocated; provides the selection criteria; identifies ineligible countries - those that had received support in the previous UFE round and thus have ongoing UFE allocations under implementation or for other reasons; and provides a timeline for the round.

As explained in the [Underfunded Emergencies Technical Methodology](#), the CERF secretariat begins by identifying the most underfunded emergencies with severe humanitarian needs among the countries with a Humanitarian Response Plan or equivalent appeal, known as "HRP countries." Simultaneously, the headquarters representatives of the UN agencies and OCHA that participate in the Underfunded Emergencies Work Group (UFEWG) identify and recommend a specific number of countries without an HRP or common appeal plan, referred to as "non-HRP countries".

The selected emergencies are those that have not attracted or are unlikely to attract sufficient and timely funding for life-saving activities, as judged by:

Quantitative & qualitative data analysis

a) **Degree of funding shortfall[2]**
   The funding analysis identifies emergencies with the highest levels of underfunding, the primary criterion for inclusion in a UFE round. The data for

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[2] Refers to funding received against total annual requirements.

the funding analysis of HRP countries comes from the Financial Tracking Services (FTS) while members of the UFEWG provide the data for non-HRP countries.

In the analysis, available funding for humanitarian programming is compared to funding requirements to calculate the funding level. The funding level of each eligible HRP country and the recommended non-HRP countries is compared to the average funding level. Emergencies whose funding level is below the average will be considered for UFE funding.

b) Analysis of risk, vulnerability, and severity of humanitarian needs and type of programs/activities:

For the emergencies defined as underfunded during the funding analysis, the level of risk, vulnerability and severity of humanitarian needs is assessed. Data on all aspects of risk, vulnerability and humanitarian needs are combined into a single index - the CERF Index for Risk and Vulnerability (CIRV).

c) Consultations:
The draft funding, risk and vulnerability analysis is shared with the UFEWG, members of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) Humanitarian Finance Working Group, and other parts of OCHA, including the Assessment, Planning and Monitoring Branch (APMB). CERF holds consultations with each group before finalizing the analysis.

Allocation decisions

Based on the funding, risk and vulnerability analysis, the headquarters representatives of the UN agencies and OCHA that participate in the UFEWG recommend countries to the CERF secretariat. Taking the analysis, consultation and nomination process into account, the CERF secretariat recommends a final selection of countries to the ERC who takes the decision both on which countries will be included in the UFE round and the funding apportionment.

The ERC decides on and announces CERF UFE country allocations, usually in December for the first round and July for the second round. The total allocation amount per round depends on the resources available for the CERF grant component. The objective is to frontload emergency funding by disbursing a larger proportion of the annual amount set aside for the CERF UFE window in the first round.

Prioritization process

The ERC asks the RC/HCs of the selected countries to develop a clearly prioritized, implementable and focused strategy for the CERF allocation in collaboration with their HCT/UNCT. The prioritization strategy is the basis for the UFE country submission and should provide a brief overview of the needs and gaps while identifying the critical activities, target groups and geographical locations that will be addressed with CERF support. It provides an opportunity for the RC/HC and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to build a coherent and focused approach to address specific humanitarian problems within a complex context. The CERF secretariat will provide feedback on the strategy and agree that it meets CERF's criteria. Once the strategy is finalized UN

agencies begin drafting proposals based on the agreed strategy to avoid delays during the project review process.

For countries with a Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and with an HRP or similar humanitarian strategy, the RC/HC may use the HNO's needs assessment and the HRP's strategic priorities, cluster objectives and projects to inform the CERF application. In countries with an HRP, the CERF Underfunded Emergencies window can only fund HRP projects.

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Linkage: CERF Allocations, Flash Appeals and Humanitarian Response Plans

The Flash Appeal for a new emergency and the CERF application may be developed simultaneously in a major sudden onset disaster. Once a crisis is regularized it could require a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

Flash Appeals & CERF

CERF does not replace appeals; it interacts with them. Flash Appeals and CERF requests can be developed in tandem during a Rapid Response crisis. Humanitarian emergency situations requiring international assistance often require both a Flash Appeal and CERF funds. CERF generally provides the initial injection of funds for the most urgent life-saving projects in the Flash Appeal cover the time lag between issuance of the Appeal and receipt of commitments and funds from donors.

1. **Do a Flash Appeal** which clearly articulates humanitarian needs, priority sectors for response, an outline of response plans, and roles and responsibilities. Flash appeals should include priority projects from all key humanitarian organisations (UN, NGO) on the ground. It should consider the actions and plans of entities not in the appeal (e.g., government, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement).

2. **Submit the highest-priority Flash Appeal** projects that address life-saving activities to the CERF. All that is required is an endorsement letter from the HC. The Flash Appeal projects should then include the necessary information on those projects in the CERF application template and budget.

3. **Revise the projects within the Flash Appeal** as better assessment information becomes available, and new projects can be inserted.

CERF & HRPs

The CERF acts as an important source of funding for coordinated humanitarian action. A strategic Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is prepared for a protracted and for a sudden onset emergency that requires international humanitarian assistance. The HRP

articulates the shared vision of how to respond to the assessed and expressed needs of the affected population.

Response plans are primarily management tools for the HC and HCT; however, they can be used to communicate the scale of the emergency and scope of the response to donors and the public and thus, serve as a secondary purpose for resource mobilization. Where HRPs or Flash Appeals exist, these should form the basis for setting priorities and proposing activities for CERF funding. The plan's strategic objectives and collective priorities should be the first filter when setting in-country criteria for a CERF application. As such, no project should be submitted to the CERF that is not included and prioritized in the HRP or foreseen in the Flash Appeal.

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Mechanics of Applying and Navigating the Process

Collaboration takes place under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) within the existing coordination structure at field level and with the CERF secretariat.

The RC/HC has the overall authority to determine funding priorities in the country. UN agencies do not submit requests directly. Only grant requests submitted by RC/HCs are considered for both RR and UFE.

The CERF process is a collective effort by in-country humanitarian partners under the leadership of RC/HCs. That leadership is critical to shift the focus from the implementing organizations' funding goals toward the achievement of collective outcomes through a coordinated and coherent response. Challenges arise from the complexities of 'multi-hatted' roles: when the HC is also the RC, and HCT members also represent UN agencies, as do Cluster Leads.

The CERF secretariat reviews the prioritisation as evidence of the leadership, collaboration, inclusiveness, consultation, participation, and engagement of the humanitarian actors in the field, arriving at the most effective use of the CERF funds, regardless of affiliation.

United Nations agencies, funds and programmes can receive CERF funds for life-saving activities in emergencies around the world.

CERF Grant: UN operational funds, programmes and specialized agencies may be direct recipients of CERF grants, while OCHA cannot receive CERF funding. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and governments - may receive funding as implementing partners of agencies that receive a CERF grant.

CERF Loan: UN operational funds, programmes and specialized agencies, including OCHA, may apply for a CERF loan.

The field-based activities in the CERF process start with a crisis trigger in RR or with the selection of the crisis as underfunded in an UFE round. In both grants, essential responsibilities are managed at the country level.

The HC or RC/HC leads and manages the CERF submission process, ensuring the strategic use of CERF funds through rigorous prioritisation. They have the authority to include or exclude activities/projects in the submission package.

Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) participates in the strategic prioritisation process. In countries where there is no HCT, this will be the UN Country Team.

Clusters advise the RC/HC and HCT on needs, the strategic use of funds and the adherence to CERF's Life-Saving Criteria (LSC). (Where clusters do not exist, this will be sectors.)

UN Agencies draft their own projects proposals and implement CERF-funded projects in line with the objectives of the CERF application
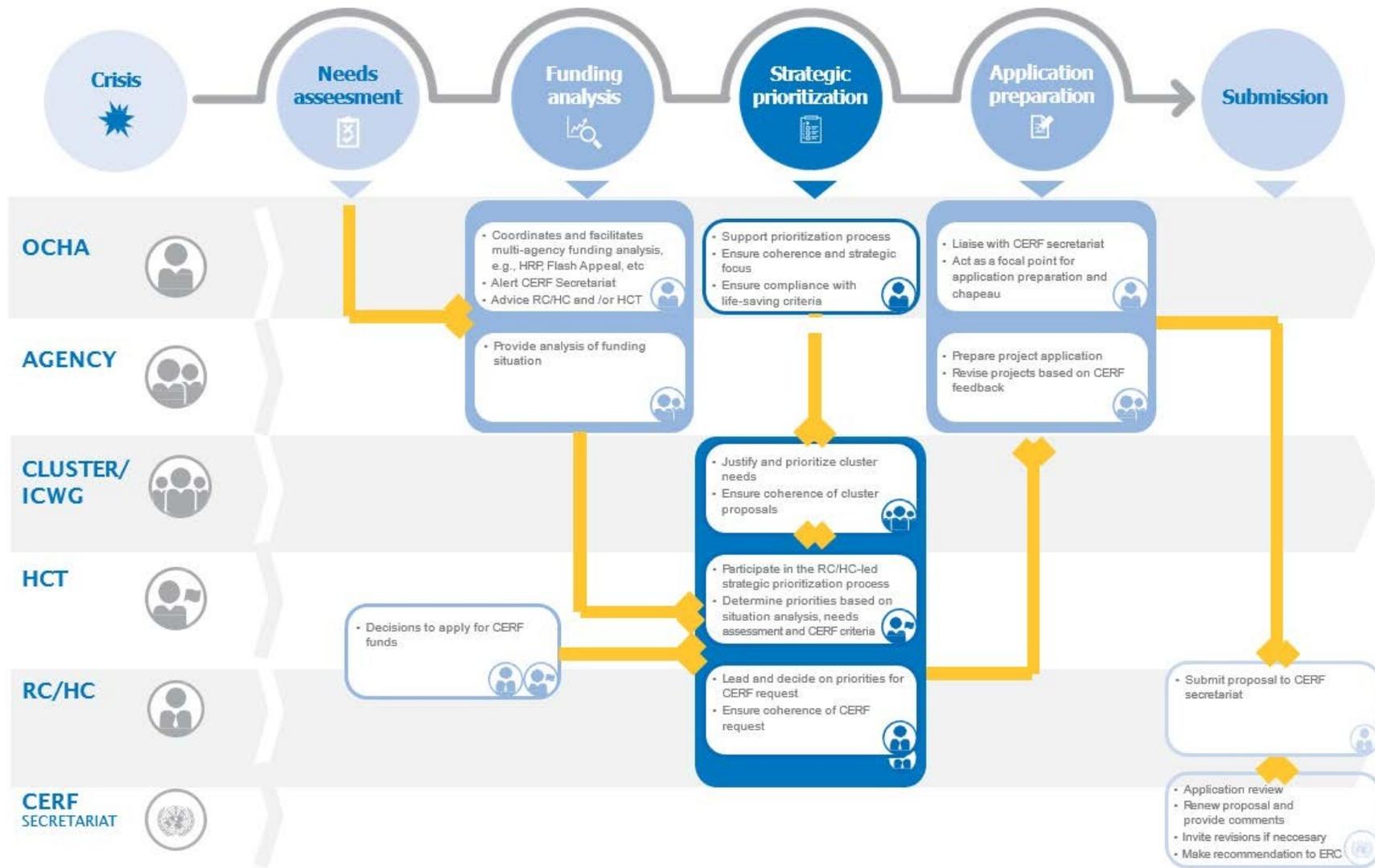
NGOs actively participate in the cluster/sector structures, serve as members of the HCT, and provide inputs to the prioritisation, and implement projects in partnerships with UN agencies and IOM.

OCHA Country Offices (and Regional Offices) provide guidance and support to the HC and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to advise on rules and procedures of the CERF, facilitate inter-cluster coordination to organize joint needs assessment, provide information on funding status of sectors and specific projects during the prioritization of needs and the related projects.

Also, act as focal point for compiling information and preparing an application for CERF funding, review draft project proposals, liaise with the CERF secretariat to ensure revision of applications as per the comments for time-efficient project approval. For the UFE window, OCHA provides analytical inputs to the country selection process.

OCHA Operations and Advocacy Division (OAD) Desk Officers use their knowledge of the country situation to provide advice and guidance to the OCHA Country Offices on the CERF process at country level, and can advise the CERF secretariat about the humanitarian needs in the country context to justify CERF funding for projects under consideration. Country submissions are reviewed by the CERF secretariat in liaison with OAD.

Roles and Responsibilities in the CERF Process

Crisis → **Needs assessment** → **Funding analysis** → **Strategic prioritization** → **Application preparation** → **Submission**

OCHA

- Coordinates and facilitates multi-agency funding analysis, e.g., HRP, Flash Appeal, etc
- Alert CERF Secretariat
- Advice RC/HC and /or HCT

- Support prioritization process
- Ensure coherence and strategic focus
- Ensure compliance with life-saving criteria

- Liaise with CERF secretariat
- Act as a focal point for application preparation and chapeau

AGENCY

- Provide analysis of funding situation

- Prepare project application
- Revise projects based on CERF feedback

CLUSTER/ ICWG

- Justify and prioritize cluster needs
- Ensure coherence of cluster proposals

HCT

- Participate in the RC/HC-led strategic prioritization process
- Determine priorities based on situation analysis, needs assessment and CERF criteria

RC/HC

- Decisions to apply for CERF funds

- Lead and decide on priorities for CERF request
- Ensure coherence of CERF request

- Submit proposal to CERF secretariat

CERF SECRETARIAT

- Application review
- Renew proposal and provide comments
- Invite revisions if necessary
- Make recommendation to ERC

| **How to complete the application template?** | The CERF application template which is available in English and French is comprised of a consolidated section **"Part I: Overall Grant Request"** (available in English and French) and a section for the individual agency project proposals **"Part II: Agency Project Proposals"** (available in English and French). |

Part I should be drafted by OCHA or the RC's Office based on the contributions provided by the UNCT/HCT, cluster or sector leads, agencies and their implementing partners.

Part II containing the project proposals should be completed by the requesting agencies in line with the agreed strategy in Part I. Inputs will be consolidated by OCHA or RC's Office into one joint document.

How to complete budget tool?

Each CERF project proposal must include a budget which details the costs to be funded by CERF and which strictly adheres to the CERF budget template and budget guidelines. The CERF budget template is in line with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) budget categories. The budget should reflect activities described in the project narrative, meaning that it should be relevant and eligible, and include sufficient details to provide a transparent overview of how CERF funds will be spent.

CERF does not fund the cost of existing or established offices or structure or staff unless costs have increased in relation to the implementation of CERF projects.

As each UN agency prepares its own budget, UN agencies should not pass on CERF grants to other UN agencies as implementing partners. Joint projects (i.e. more than one agency implementing a project) can have a joint narrative, but must present separate budgets for each agency, as CERF makes separate disbursements to each agency.

CERF has developed an EXCEL budget tool for preparing CERF proposal budgets, that is designed to compile the correct calculations of various budget items. The calculations can then be transferred to the CERF application for submission.

How to determine the number of beneficiaries?

The CERF secretariat tracks direct beneficiaries only, which are defined as first-hand recipients of goods or services funded by the CERF. The CERF secretariat does not track indirect beneficiaries, which are larger groups of people whose situation may have improved due of the implementation of CERF-funded interventions.

The CERF secretariat tracks planned and reached beneficiaries at project, sector, application and global levels.

- Planned beneficiaries are estimated by field level partners in CERF funding applications.
- Reached beneficiaries are reported against planned figures by field level partners in RC/HC reports on the use of CERF funds.

Since CERF applications usually include several projects in several sectors, these projects often provide assistance to the same people. Therefore, CERF undertakes measures to avoid double counting of beneficiaries. This is done in two steps:

- First, in CERF applications and reports, sector leads are asked to remove duplications between beneficiaries at sector level if targeted groups overlap between respective projects.
- Second, at application and report level, focal points are asked to remove duplications between beneficiaries if targeted groups overlap between sectors.

To whom to submit the application?

Beneficiary figures aggregated following this methodology are entered into CERF's Grants Management System, which allows for generating various types of overviews. Given the complexity of beneficiary tracking, it is important to note that this methodology will never be an exact science and can only lead to best possible estimates.

Proposals for both UFE and RR are sent as an email package with an email request or cover letter from the RC/HC to the ERC and copied to the CERF secretariat (cerf@un.org).

To whom to submit the counter-signed letter?

For the timeliest response to emergencies, CERF aims to disburse funds as soon as possible. Upon receipt of a project approval by the ERC, the grant-requesting agency must submit the duly signed project approval letter immediately—CERF aims to receive the counter-signed project approval letter within no more than two working days. Submissions of counter-signed letter should be sent to the ERC and copied to the CERF secretariat (cerf@un.org).

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Pre-submission Checklist

- ❑ Projects adhere to the overall strategy and agreements; the proposals and the chapeau match
- ❑ Beneficiary figures add up and are consistent throughout the project proposal
- ❑ Beneficiary figures between the chapeau and project proposals are consistent
- ❑ Geographic locations are consistent with agreed priorities and across projects
- ❑ Duration of activities are consistent with agreements
- ❑ Cluster/sector and/or project narratives complement each other; synergies are apparent
- ❑ Monitoring plan is included in proposals
- ❑ How the agency plans to implement is clear (implementing partners, timeline, etc.)
- ❑ Logframe matches budget
- ❑ Cost effectiveness of the intervention is clear
- ❑ Costs in budget are reasonable according to context
- ❑ Costs in budget are eligible as per CERF budget guidance
- ❑ [i]Mainstreamed elements are apparent (protection, gender, age, AAP, etc)
- ❑ Do No Harm
- ❑ Documents are clean with no comments or tracked changes

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Implementation

Agencies provide information on implementation of CERF projects to the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), the Humanitarian or UN Country Team and cluster/sector coordinators. OCHA, where present, manages CERF related processes and facilitates flow of information.

Implementation roles & responsibilities

The implementation roles and the monitoring actions are agreed upon and documented in the CERF application.

Recipient agencies have full responsibility for the use of and reporting on all funds disbursed under the fund, and for compliance with the reporting requirements.

The RC/HC oversees that CERF-funded activities are implemented as intended.

The HCT/UNCT is collectively accountable for a CERF allocation and is expected to keep the CERF implementation on the HCT/UNCT agenda and jointly follow the implementation of CERF projects.

OCHA, where present, manages CERF-related processes and facilitates flow of information. The OCHA office supports the RC/HC by managing the agreed CERF monitoring and reporting processes, collecting the required information, updates and reports related to CERF project implementation from recipient agencies, and consolidating and communicating the reports.

HCT/UNCT monitoring agreement

When the CERF request is submitted, the application includes the HCT/UNCT's agreement on how the overall CERF allocation will be monitored, including:

- CERF recipient agencies' plans for project-level monitoring, and how information on individual CERF projects will be provided to the RC/HC;

- Focal points within each CERF recipient agency who will act as OCHA's contact for information related to CERF monitoring;

- When the interim CERF project update template will be completed and provided to the RC/HC;

- When this information will be discussed by the HCT/UNCT, and in countries with a Humanitarian Response Plan, how relevant information shall be reflected in periodic monitoring reports.

- Whether any collective monitoring will be undertaken through clusters or through monitoring systems of country-based pooled funds where these exist.

Monitoring the implementation of CERF grants

Monitoring is the systematic collection, analysis, communication and use of information from projects and programmes during the project cycle. Recipient agencies are responsible for monitoring the implementation of individual CERF projects and providing the requested information on the implementation status to the RC/HC, the HCT/UNCT, OCHA and relevant cluster coordinators, according to the HCT/UNCT agreed schedule.

Agencies are expected to integrate the CERF projects into their programme monitoring arrangements in the country. It is especially important for agencies to track and take action for any challenges or delays in the projects, keeping the RC/HC informed.

CERF's contribution to the response should ideally also be reflected through system-wide monitoring processes that are in place at sector/cluster level. The RC/HC in consultation with the HCT may decide to complement agencies' own regular monitoring efforts with collective monitoring of CERF projects, led by clusters or using monitoring frameworks from country-based pooled funds (CBPFs) where these exist.

Review the full guidance for Monitoring of CERF Allocations.

Mandatory interim project status update

Agencies shall provide updates according to agreed frequency and timing to the RC/HC and the HCT/UNCT on the implementation of CERF-funded humanitarian action, including the progress toward achievement of project targets, early detection of potential challenges, and actions taken or planned to adjust the project activities to meet the designated CERF implementation period.

To facilitate this process the CERF secretariat has developed a light template for organizing the interim update from recipient agencies on the implementation of CERF grants. The template has been developed based on best practices from the field.

To make the process as light as possible for field partners, when each CERF allocation is approved, the CERF secretariat provides the RC/HC with the interim update template, pre-populated with key information from project proposals.

The template is used by agencies to provide project updates at agreed milestone(s) during the implementation period (typically halfway through the cycle).

The various agency inputs are consolidated by the OCHA or RC's office and shared with the RC/HC, the HCT/UNCT, cluster coordinators and other relevant humanitarian partners.

Moreover, relevant project implementing partners should be involved in cluster, inter-cluster and HCT meetings where regular updates on the progress of implementation of CERF projects are discussed.

No-cost extensions

Based on the consolidated information, the status of CERF implementation should be presented to and discussed by the HCT/UNCT and the completed template shall be sent to the CERF secretariat. If significant challenges or delays are emerging for one or

several CERF projects, the need for a no-cost extension or reprogramming should be discussed.

The project implementation monitoring should highlight circumstances that are preventing implementation outside of the control of the recipient agency. Compelling reasons for project extensions might be situations like increased access restrictions, changes in government policy, or a fundamental change in the socio-political climate that was underpinning the application for CERF funds. Technical and procedural details are outlines in CERF's Guidelines for No Cost Extensions, Reprogramming and Redeployment of Funds.

A project extension request should be submitted by the RC/HC to the ERC (with the CERF secretariat in copy) on behalf of the recipient agency as soon as the need for an extension is detected and at the latest two weeks before the end of the implementation period.

Reprogramming of activities & redeployment of funds

CERF funds generally cannot be re-programmed because they are bound by the specific proposals that were approved based on analysis of the situation as detailed in the original application package.

If external circumstances and/or important changes of scope (target beneficiaries, sector, activities, or geographic area) are affecting the objective or targets of the approved project make it unlikely that the original programming can proceed, a reprogramming request may be made to the ERC to approve changes within existing projects on an exceptional basis.

Requests should be submitted by the RC/HC to the ERC (by sending an email to the CERF secretariat) explaining and justifying the changes, keeping within the life-saving mandate of the CERF.

The RC/HC's email should include the CERF No-Cost Extension and/or Reprogramming Request Form completed by the agency, as well as his/her endorsement of the change in scope. Approval by the ERC must be given before any changes are made.

The ERC will decide either to ask the agency to return unused funds and if required, to prepare another grant request for the new emerging situation, or to consider the changes within the existing scope and intent of the original request.

A formal request for redeployment of funds must be sent by the agency to the ERC through the RC/HC when the adjustment pertains to a cumulative shift of more than 15 percent between budget categories of the direct project costs or any change to staff costs or programme support costs. Approval of the entire budget change must be requested from the ERC prior to implementation of the change.

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Oversight and Accountability

Reporting from field level is the basis for giving an accounting of the use of CERF funds to the Secretary-General and donors

The Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) has the overall responsibility at country level to oversee the activities implemented with CERF funds, and to report on the use of CERF funds when project activities are completed.

The HCT or UNCT should gather together for an After-Action Review (AAR) at the end of implementation of each CERF allocation, to reflect on results achieved and lessons learned.

Recipient agencies should provide complete, high-quality, and timely inputs to the RC/HC report on the use of CERF grants. It is recommended that agencies collect and incorporate inputs from their implementing partners.

 The OCHA office, where present, or the RC office, supports the RC/HC by gathering and compiling agencies' inputs and managing the process (including the AAR) to complete the narrative CERF report according to the guidelines and template.

Detailed CERF reporting requirements are outlined in a brief overview.

The recommended in-country process for preparing the report is based on CERF's experience and feedback from the field. It is a collective effort by all relevant stakeholders at country level that aims to produce both a quality report as well as a collective reflection on the CERF process and lessons learned for improving future allocations.

The report is due within three months after expiration of each grants package. The first notification from the CERF secretariat will go to the RC/HC 12 weeks before the expiration.

At that time, the RC/HC appoints an in-country focal point for the CERF reporting process, and sends the contact details to the CERF secretariat.

In most cases, the in-country focal point is from OCHA (where present) or from the RC's Office. However, there are instances where one of the recipient agencies may take up

the report focal point role (single sector or single agency allocations, refugee responses coordinated by UNHCR, etc.).

The RC/HC uses the *official reporting tool* to explain whether set targets have been met and how funds have been prioritized and utilized to meet life-saving humanitarian needs. RC/HC reports are published on CERF's website.

Notifications

Preparation of report inputs should start as soon as possible after grant expiration. Four weeks prior to expiration of each grants package, the CERF secretariat sends a reporting package to the RC/HC's office that contains a tailored template (including the Annex) and guidelines. To reduce the reporting burden, key information from the grant proposal package is inserted in the tailored reporting template by the CERF secretariat.

After Action Review

The HCT/UNCT reflects on the overall CERF process, how the CERF recipient agencies and the broader humanitarian community worked together, lessons learned, achievements with the grant, required follow-up actions and recommendations for the future. The timing of the AAR should be determined by the RC/HC with the aim to maximize participation and promote meaningful and informed discussion. It should be held during the initial stage of the reporting process, when the institutional memory of CERF processes, implementation and achievements is still fresh with the recipient agencies. Experience from several countries indicates that the ARR tends to be more successful when preliminary inputs from agencies are gathered in advance and used as a basis for discussion and common reflection. The detailed process of the AAR is outlined in the AAR Guidance. Information collected during the AAR is key to inform certain sections of the RC/HC report.

Reporting time after grant expiration

Informed by the outcomes of the AAR and the preliminary agency inputs, the RC/HC's appointed in-country focal point drafts basic elements of the report (i.e. mainly sections I to V of the reporting template) while:

- Recipient agencies develop information on project results (Section VI) including information on sub-grants to implementing partners (Annex 1); and

- Cluster/Sector-Leads assist in the development and validation beneficiary estimates (Tables 4 and 5 in section IV)

Zero draft

Within seven weeks after grant expiration, the in-country focal point consolidates all inputs and circulates a zero draft to recipient agencies and cluster/sector-leads for review and comments. Cluster/sector-leads are expected to circulate the draft within the cluster/sector and consolidate relevant comments

Reporting meeting

Within 9-10 weeks after grant expiration, the RC/HC brings key stakeholders together to discuss the draft CERF report, clarify any outstanding issues or missing information, and ensure that the report reflects the common understanding.
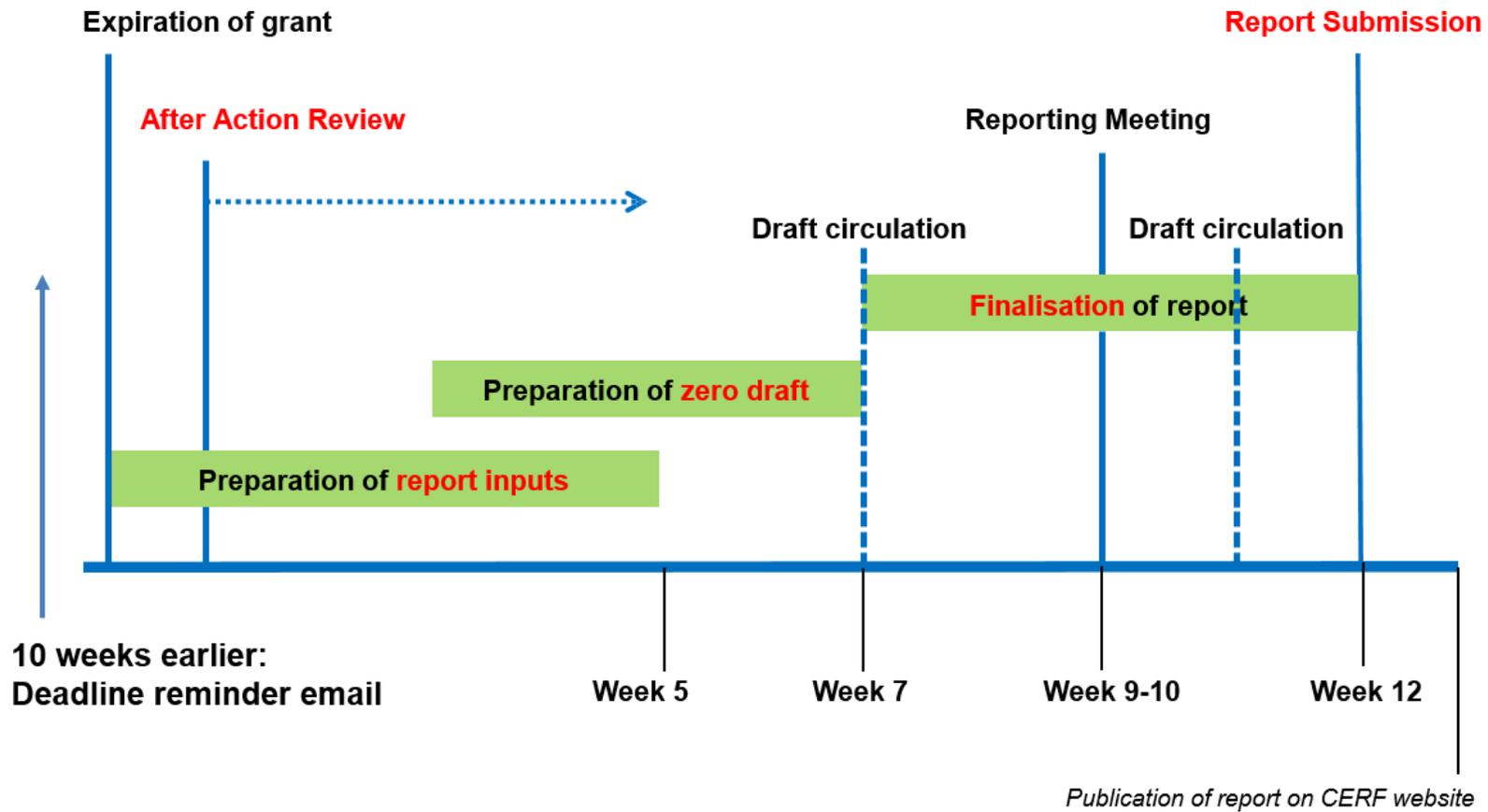
Final draft & submission	After the meeting the draft report can be finalised and circulated to the HCT/UNCT for endorsement, before final review and approval by the RC/HC and submission to the CERF secretariat.
CERF secretariat review & clearance	The CERF secretariat reviews the draft RC/HC report, providing comments and requesting clarifications or missing information from the RC/HC whenever required. Once all comments are addressed and missing information provided, the RC/HC report is cleared and published on the CERF website. Key information and data from the RC/HC reports is systematically extracted and used to produce analysis, statistics and public information/communication material.

Expiration of grant

Report Submission

After Action Review

Reporting Meeting

Draft circulation

Draft circulation

Finalisation of report

Preparation of zero draft

Preparation of report inputs

**10 weeks earlier:
Deadline reminder email**

Week 5

Week 7

Week 9-10

Week 12

Publication of report on CERF website

| **CERF Financial Reporting** | To comply with the reporting and accountability requirements, recipient organizations must submit three financial reports a year to the CERF secretariat and to the Director, Accounts Division of the United Nations, using the format in the CERF Income and Expenditure template. |

- An interim financial report for each grant as at 31 December, certified by the duly authorized designated official(s) of the organization as accurate and complete shall be submitted by 15 February of the following year.

- A final financial report for each grant as at 31 December, certified by the duly authorized designated official(s) of the organization, shall be submitted by 30 June of the following year.

- For rapid response projects with an implementation end date between 1 January and 30 June of a given year, the organization submits an interim report by 15 August of the same year.

Submission of financial reports discontinues when the financial report shows full completion of the project financially, including full refund of any unspent balance.

| **Refund of Unspent Balance** | Unspent grant funds should be returned to CERF, taking into consideration extensions approved by the ERC. Refunds should be reflected in the organization's certified financial reports. |

75% of the uncommitted portion of the unspent funds, including any interest accrued on the funds, should be returned by:

- 15 August for projects with an implementation end date between 1 January to 30 June of the same year, or, alternatively, immediately following the implementation deadline and;

- 15 February of the subsequent year for projects with an implementation end date between 1 July to 31 December.

Any remaining unspent balance, including any accrued interest on unspent funds, shall be refunded by 30 June of the year following the end of the implementation period.

In conjunction with the refund schedule, it is reasonably expected to submit completed financial report by 15 February of the following year after one year from the project end date.

| **Annual Agency HQ CERF Report** | Organizations receiving CERF resources submit an Annual Headquarter (HQ) Report on the overall strategic impact of CERF funding within their global emergency programmes. |

The reports focus on the overall impact of CERF funding on each agency's global emergency programmes, linking the agency's results to CERF's mandate of facilitating the swift implementation of time critical, life-saving activities in new emergencies and

strengthening the core response activities of underfunded emergencies. The procedural and technical details are outlined in the Annual Headquarter Report Guidelines.

Agencies will receive a tailored template for the annual reporting. Details on what will be asked for in the report are found in the guidelines.

Audits

Recipient organizations must comply with internal and external audit procedures as set out in their financial regulations and rules. If an external audit report contains observations specific to the contribution of the CERF, the organization must communicate the recommendations and the organization's responses to the ERC through the CERF secretariat.

The organization will prepare a summary of any internal audit report on activities related to the CERF contribution at intervals agreed upon between the organization and ERC. The summary will highlight to the ERC the specific recommendations for the CERF contribution and the organization's response. If the General Assembly or the Board of Auditors require information specific to the CERF funds contributed under a Letter of Understanding, the recipient organization must cooperate with the UN Secretariat to provide the information.

Evaluations & studies

The CERF secretariat commissions a variety of studies and supports evaluations that promote transparency, accountability and learning, including the General Assembly-mandated evaluations of CERF, agency evaluations relating to their use of CERF, and regular assessments of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of humanitarian financing that provide guidance on CERF's strategic direction and performance. All evaluations and studies are conducted by external evaluation experts.

Fraud communications & case follow up

Fraud poses a serious risk to humanitarian action and efforts to support people in need. Agencies have committed to keep the CERF secretariat informed of any investigation into potential fraud cases involving CERF grants, and the CERF secretariat contacts relevant departments within agencies at least twice a year to ensure that no cases go unreported.

The CERF secretariat has likewise committed to keep interested CERF donors informed of investigations by agencies into potential fraud cases involving CERF funds and the outcome of such investigations.

The CERF secretariat has developed procedures for communicating potential cases of fraud under CERF-funded projects which are outlined in a Guidance Note on Communicating the Fraudulent Use of CERF Funds.

Potential cases of fraud related to CERF grants are handled through the regulations and rules and oversight mechanisms of the recipient agencies and of the United Nations. In each case, the investigation service of the respective agency informs the ERC and the Chief of CERF by letter or email. The CERF secretariat logs each case and follows up with the respective agency until conclusion of the case. Donors are kept updated

throughout the life-cycle of a case in accordance with the fraud communication guidance and CERF's Standard Operating Procedures for such cases.

CERF Performance & Accountability Framework

The accountability mechanisms and reporting processes that ensure CERF funds are being used and managed appropriately are described in the Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF). The PAF details the CERF process elements, and the links between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact, and the associated indicators.

Looking into the PAF, you will find the indicators and responsible entity clearly defined for each part of the CERF process. The CERF secretariat currently tracks many of these indicators, and the RC/HC reports on the use of CERF funds are one mechanism for doing so. Consultation with the UN agencies informs fine tuning of the indicators and development of the mechanisms for monitoring.

The PAF stipulates country-level reviews as an oversight tool that provides the ERC with an appropriate level of independent assurance about the achievement of key performance benchmarks and planned results for CERF. Reviews assess CERF's added value against the indicators of the PAF.

The first country-level review was piloted in 2009 and CERF aims to conduct three to five reviews per year. The reviews are conducted by external consultants using a standard methodology, and managed by the CERF secretariat.

Reviews typically cover a single CERF recipient country, but may also have a regional or thematic perspective. Reviews include recommendations aimed at improving specific operational aspects of CERF, and may identify policy issues which need to be addressed at a global level.

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Telling the story of CERF: Communication and Branding

Photographs, stories, quotes and profiles telling the story of CERF to strengthen the global visibility of CERF and demonstrate achievements as well as results of CERF-funded activities.

Visibility of CERF

Telling the story of CERF is vital to strengthening the global visibility of CERF and demonstrate achievements and results of CERF-funded activities. The CERF secretariat encourages implementing partners to share content, including photographs, stories, quotes and profiles, from CERF-funded activities, that can be featured on CERF's digital platforms or in one of CERF's flagship publications.

CERF may use these materials for additional public outreach and visibility efforts, ahead of key milestones, including the annual high-level pledging event. Due credit will be given to each individual agency or organization.

Digital platforms

CERF's website is the fund's digital portal; it conveys the global identity of the fund, and showcases CERF to the public. The website is the resource for crucial information and data for partners, donors, recipient agencies and others who want to know about CERF.

CERF's social media platforms such as Twitter (@UNCERF) and Facebook reach a wide range of partners globally. CERF creates and disseminates compelling digital assets tailored for different platforms – including GIFs (animated graphic videos) and visuals – to showcase CERF actions and achievements.

Donor visibility

Donor visibility is a key priority for CERF and is central to all advocacy and communication efforts across all communication platforms. This includes press releases, flagship publications, communication assets for digital outreach and specific initiatives on results for donors.

CERF branding & use of logo

CERF encourages implementing partners to make use of the CERF logo for the purposes of identification and branding by placing the logo on relevant communication digital and print material as well as on items related to CERF-funded activities, including stickers and banners.

Stories from the field

Many examples of CERF's life-saving impact in the field are posted on the CERF website. Most stories have been created jointly by CERF and implementing partners.

Annex

Terms and Definitions

CERF Allocation is the conglomeration of multiple grants for the same emergency approved by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC).

CERF Application is a consolidated funding request from a country/emergency, including a summary document (Chapeau) and individual agency project proposals submitted by Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC).

CERF Grant is funding through one of CERF's funding windows for a project to be implemented by UN operational funds, programmes and specialized agencies.

Complex Emergencies are characterized by: extensive violence and loss of life, massive displacements of people, widespread damage to social and economic assets, widespread violation of rights, and multi-faceted humanitarian responses, requiring an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency. (IASC, December 1994).

Concept Note refers to a summary of the justification for a CERF application to facilitate early consultations between the Humanitarian Country Team and the CERF secretariat on the funding possibility of a rapid response request before preparing a full-fledged application.

Disasters are serious disruptions of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human suffering, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. They can be caused by natural hazards or be induced by human processes. (UNISDR, May 2009)

Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator(USG/ERC) is responsible for the oversight of all emergencies requiring United Nations humanitarian assistance and also acts as the central focal point for governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental relief activities. The ERC also leads the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), a unique inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making involving the key United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian partners.

Financial Tracking Service (FTS) website and modified it: FTS is a centralized, web-based source real-time data and information on humanitarian funding flows managed by UN OCHA.

Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) is an inclusive governance structure at the field level. Led by the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator RC/HC, it could be co-chaired by a UN representative, an NGO or the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. The HCT should be broad-based and representative, to

include all relevant humanitarian actors from UN agencies the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement or NGOs.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance established in June 1992 in response to Resolution 46/182. It is a unique forum involving the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners.

The Interim Update is the main tool used by the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) to monitor the status of implementation of projects under a CERF allocation. The update highlights challenges that may affect implementation, corrective actions (to be) taken and expectations of meeting the planned targets.

Life-saving and/or **core emergency humanitarian interventions** are those actions that within a short time span remedy, mitigate or avert direct loss of life, physical and psychological harm or threats to a population or major portion thereof and/or protect their dignity.

The **CERF Life-Saving Criteria (LSC)** (►► Chapter 5) ensure that CERF only funds those activities that within a short time span remedy, mitigate or avert direct physical harm or imminent threats to a population or major portion thereof (CERF Life-saving Criteria, 2010).

Time-critical response refers to necessary, rapid and time-limited opportunities for rapid injection of resources to save lives either in complex emergencies or after natural disasters, to minimize additional loss of lives and damage to social and economic assets.

Compendium

Underfunded Emergencies window

Technical Methodology

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/Underfunded%20Emergencies_Technical%20Methodology.pdf

Rapid Response window

Technical Methodology:

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF%20Rapid%20Response_DA.pdf

Procedures and Criteria

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF_Rapid_Response_Window_September_2011.pdf

Application templates and Budget tool

RR and UFE application Templates

https://cerf-gms.unocha.org/sites/CerfAgency/SitePages/CERFApplicationTemplates.aspx

CERF Loan .

CERF Loan budget template and guidance

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF%20loan%20budget%20template%20and%20guidance%20-%20Jan%202013-final.docx

CERF Loan LOU template

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF%20loan%20LOU%20template-2014.pdf

CERF's Life-Saving Criteria

Life-Saving Criteria (English | French | Spanish | Arabic)

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF%20Life-Saving%20Criteria%2020202.pdf

Guidance on Common Services

Guidelines for Funding UN Humanitarian Air Service

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF_Funding_for_UN_Humanitarian_Air_Service.pdf

Guidelines for Emergency Information and Communications Technology Equipment and Services

http://www.unocha.org/cerf/sites/default/files/CERF/CERF_Funding_Emergency_Infor

mation_Communications_Jun11.pdf

Guidelines for Funding for Common Emergency Safety and Security

http://www.unocha.org/cerf/sites/default/files/CERF/CERF%20Funding%20Security%20and%20Safety%20Cleared%20SOM%2028Aug2012.pdf

Implementation	**Guidance for Monitoring CERF Allocations**

http://www.unocha.org/cerf/sites/default/files/CERF/CERF%20Monitoring%20Guidance%20%282017%29.pdf

Guidelines for No-Cost Extensions and Reprogramming

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERFGuidance_No_Cost_Extension_and_Reprogramming_Nov2011.pdf

Request Form for No-Cost Extensions and Reprogramming

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF_Project_Revision_Request_Jul2016.docx

Budget Redeployment Template

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF_Budget_Redeployment_Template_2019.xls

Request Form for Redeployment of Funds

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERFGuidance_Redeployment%20of%20Funds%20Request_Jan2013.xls

Oversight & Accountability	**Overview Reporting Requirements**

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/Overview_CERF%20reporting%20requirements_2019.pdf

Proposed in-country RC/HC CERF Reporting Process

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/Proposed%20in-country%20RCHC%20CERF%20Reporting%20Process%20%282015%29.pdf

CERF After-Action Guidance

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/CERF%20After%20Action%20Guidance.pdf

Guidelines for Annual Headquarters Report on the use of CERF Funding

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/Guidelines%20Annual%20Agency%20HQ%20CERF%20Report.pdf

Guidance Note for Communicating the Fraudulent Use of CERF Funds

https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/Communicating%20the%20Fraudulent%20Use%20of%20CERF%20Funds.pdf

Contact	**Chief of CERF secretariat**

https://cerf.un.org/about-us/who-we-are/cerf-secretariat/organizational-structure

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