Making the case for an investment in the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)

CERF secretariat, November 2017
With a funding level of $450 million, on average each year CERF grants have helped UN agencies and their humanitarian partners deliver:

- Critical health care to 20 million people
- Water and sanitation to 13 million people
- Food assistance to 9 million people
- Livelihood support to 5 million people
- Protection to 5 million people
- Shelter to 1 million people

... as well as support services for refugees and migrants, nutrition programmes, mine action, emergency education and camp management, for millions of people in need.
The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established in 2005 as the UN’s global emergency response fund to pool voluntary contributions from donors around the world into a single fund, allowing humanitarian responders to deliver life-saving assistance whenever and wherever crises hit.

For more than a decade, the Central Emergency Response Fund has saved countless lives. It is there when diseases, natural disasters, conflict or the risk of famine hit. It helps kick-start a global life-saving response - impartially, efficiently and immediately. We can all be proud of its success.

—United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres

CERF is...

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

Fast
The first days of an emergency response are critical. Time lost means lives lost. CERF gives funding within hours of a crisis.

Based on needs
CERF interventions focus on life-saving priorities for affected people, assessed and prioritized by humanitarian partners on the ground. This reinforces collaboration and coordination among humanitarian organizations.

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

Predictable
In a world of unknowns, CERF is a source of predictable funding to support the most critical needs of people affected by crises.

Cost-effective
CERF reduced its overhead costs from 3% to 2% in 2016, making it one of the most cost-effective funding tools, thereby offering strong value-for-money for its donors.

Contributing to the SDGs
CERF is a lifeline for the world’s most neglected and protracted humanitarian crises. As such it contributes to the SDGs’ overarching objective of leaving no one behind – and reaching those furthest left behind first.

Embodying the Grand Bargain
CERF is flexible and unearmarked, facilitating collective and strategic humanitarian response; it enhances leadership and coordination; and supports cash programming with no specific conditions for eligibility.

Partnering with NGOs
Each year, approximately 25% of CERF funds are implemented by NGOs and local responders who have partnered with UN agencies.

Supporting refugees & IDPs
In 2015 and 2016, two-thirds of CERF’s allocations supported millions of people forced out of their homes by violence, instability and natural disasters as well as their host communities.
WHAT IS CERF’S ADDED VALUE?

CERF’s value is not measured by how much money it raises, but by the number of lives it saves.

To assess its added value on the ground, the CERF secretariat systematically gathers and analyses evidence through independent expert studies and partner feedback. In addition to information on people assisted and humanitarian results achieved with CERF funds, Resident Coordinators / Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) and UN agencies are asked to assess CERF’s contribution to the following four objectives in their reports on the use of CERF funds:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fast</td>
<td>14% partially, 86% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timely</td>
<td>6% partially, 94% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent</td>
<td>10% partially, 90% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalytic</td>
<td>6% No, 62% Yes, 32% partially</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since 2013, RC/HCs have assessed each allocation against CERF’s key objectives as follows:
Germany considers the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) as a key instrument for immediate, and flexible assistance. In 2016 alone, the UN provided fast and life-saving humanitarian assistance to more than 38 million people through the fund. We strongly support the goal of increasing CERF funding to $1 billion annually by 2018. Germany increased its funding in 2016 and plans further steps.

—Sigmar Gabriel, Federal Foreign Minister of Germany

In a world marked by dramatically increasing humanitarian needs, the CERF is a cornerstone in the humanitarian system. The fund’s flexible funding enables speedy, effective and principled humanitarian response to people most in need. That’s why Sweden is proud to be a longstanding top donor to the CERF.

—Isabella Lövin, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden and Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate

My country is deeply grateful for the support that we have received from CERF. CERF’s early allocation of funds in response to the drought in Kenya saved many lives in the country’s arid and semi-arid regions.

—Ambassador A. M. Kihurani, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations

CERF is a lifeline for people caught up in crises that don’t make the headlines but where needs are just as urgent.

—António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

CERF was widely recognised by recipient agencies and their partners as a timely and critical support in all five countries and there were numerous examples where CERF played a key role in supporting start-up of operations for activities in life-saving sectors while at the same time reinforcing the role of the RC/HC and other humanitarian coordination systems.

—Independent Review of the Value Added of the CERF Fund in the Countries Affected by the South Sudan Crisis

Overall, the CERF rapid response window contributed to enhancing WFP’s capacity to respond rapidly to unforeseen needs.

—WFP’s Pooled Fund Evaluation

CERF acted as a catalyst. It is an act of trust by the donors in the ability the United Nations and agencies to prioritize in the most neglected situations. CERF is vital and UNHCR supports the expansion of CERF to $1 billion.

—Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

CERF is bringing life-saving reproductive health services closer to the beneficiaries, reducing significantly travel time for the provision of emergency care.

—Bangladesh RC/HC Report (2016)

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—Isabella Lövin, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden and Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate

CERF funding was instrumental in kick-starting life-saving assistance and thereby enabled participating agencies to demonstrate results, which helped mobilize visibility and interest for the refugee response, leading to substantial further funding.

—Rwanda RC/HC Report

Oftentimes, support from CERF is the only thing that keeps us running. We’re thankful to CERF, and to all of the donors who provide resources for this global pooled fund, for enabling us to continue to provide life-saving health services, even under these extremely difficult circumstances.

—Dr. Jaffar Hussain, WHO Representative in Libya

CERF has substantially contributed to improving coordination at all levels among UN agencies, local NGOs, Government, local authorities, health centers and other stakeholders.

—Honduras RC/HC Report

... Livelihoods are people’s best defence against famine and this $22 million loan from CERF was critical to FAO’s famine prevention and drought response in Somalia...

—Daniel Gustafson, FAO Deputy Director-General
CERF IN ACTION

From earthquakes, storms and droughts to displacement and disruption of basic services, supporting responses to natural disasters and conflicts remains central to CERF’s work. Crises have grown more severe, protracted and complex, as can be seen in the “mega-crises” in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, as well as catastrophic storms and widespread floods that expand across hundreds of communities. Along with these, there are also protracted and neglected emergencies such as in Afghanistan, the Lake Chad Basin and the Horn of Africa. Every emergency is unique, but all have two things in common: great human suffering and a need for resources to alleviate that suffering. CERF as the essential enabler of global humanitarian action allows country teams to kick-start relief efforts immediately in a coordinated and prioritized response through a vast network of partners wherever and whenever a new crisis emerges. It also helps scale-up and sustain protracted relief operations to avoid critical gaps when no other funding is available.

Famine Prevention

In 2017, CERF was one of the first responders to warning signs in north-east Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, where more than 20 million people have been facing near famine conditions. By end-August, CERF had released $128 million to support the most critical early action and life-saving activities prioritized by the humanitarian team on the ground, making it one of the largest funding sources for the four affected countries in the early stages of the response:

• In north-east Nigeria, CERF allocated $32 million to help approximately 1.3 million people affected by Boko Haram-related violence and food insecurity with emergency assistance, services and the establishment of humanitarian hubs to enable operations.

• In Somalia, CERF allocated $33 million to help more than 500,000 people affected by conflict and drought in Puntland, Somaliland and South Central. During this time, FAO also received and repaid a loan of $22 million to ensure a scale-up of famine prevention.

• In Yemen, CERF allocated $26 million to famine prevention and cholera response, focusing on the provision of food, nutrition and health supplies, as well as necessary logistical and security support for all humanitarian partners.

• In South Sudan, CERF allocated $16 million to support humanitarian action in locations where famine or elevated risk of famine has been declared - as well as urgent needs in areas of new and/or active conflict.

FROM 2006 TO 2017 CERF HAS ALLOCATED $5 BILLION TO 100 COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES
Natural Disasters
CERF has been fast to respond when disaster strikes, allocating emergency funding in a matter of days following a 7.8-magnitude earthquake that struck Ecuador in April 2016 and after Hurricane Irma and Maria hit the Caribbean region in September 2017. CERF has also been one of the first and largest supporters of early humanitarian action in response to El Niño. From mid-2015 to end of 2016, CERF disbursed $118 million to support humanitarian response to El Niño in 19 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands. CERF’s support to global humanitarian action against El Niño phenomena illustrates the fund’s global reach and its important role in triggering timely response to emergencies while other funding is being raised.

Underfunded Emergencies (UFE)
CERF is a lifeline for the world’s most underfunded and protracted crises that fail to attract adequate resources. In January 2017, CERF released $100 million to sustain aid operations in nine neglected emergencies. CERF’s largest allocation of the year is reaching more than 6 million people in these crises where levels of vulnerability are alarmingly high but funding remains critically low. In August 2017, the Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated $45 million for the second round UFE, which will support one million people in four ongoing conflict and displacement crises in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad and Sudan. These four countries are among the world’s most protracted crises of fifteen years or longer.

“Mega-crises”
CERF has supported the scale-up of humanitarian operations at critical junctures in ‘Mega crises’. Iraq was the largest recipient of CERF funds in 2016, with $33 million allocated to life-saving assistance to address humanitarian needs resulting from intensified conflict. In 2017, CERF allocated $26.6 million to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the children and families affected by armed conflict and insecurity in the country.

Displacement
With the rising number of displaced people, since 2011 CERF has allocated over $1.5 billion to support millions of people forced from their homes by violence, instability and natural disasters. In 2015 and 2016, two-thirds of CERF allocations supported operations targeting IDPs, refugees and host communities.

This trend continues in 2017. In response to the world’s fastest growing refugee crisis, CERF allocated $19 million in September and October to assist the most vulnerable people fleeing violence in Myanmar’s Rakhine State and their host communities in Bangladesh.

### Table: Underfunded Emergencies (UFE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Sahel drought</td>
<td>CERF allocates more than $100M for response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Super Typhoon Haiyan hits the Philippines</td>
<td>CERF funding approved in 48 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Three L3 crises under way</td>
<td>CERF allocates $116M for South Sudan regional response; $60M for Central African Republic regional response; $26M for Iraq.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$77M for Syria regional response—largest single allocation for an emergency to date.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>CERF allocates more than $118M for El Niño-related response in 19 countries since 2015.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$128M released to support critical early action and famine prevention in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

In 2012
15.5M people receive water and sanitation aid.

In 2013
9.3M people receive food aid.

In 2015 and 2016
almost 70% of CERF allocations have been provided to operations in support of people displaced by crises in more than 40 countries.

In 2017
$19M for Bangladesh in response to humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees.
CERF STRETCHED TO THE LIMIT

The humanitarian reality in which CERF operates today is very different from when it was established over a decade ago. Due to an increase in frequency, scale and magnitude of humanitarian emergencies, the number of people in need has tripled since 2006. In 2017, $23.6 billion is required to provide assistance to the most vulnerable, compared to $5.2 billion in 2006.

By contrast, CERF’s annual funding target of $450 million has remained unchanged, which means that the share of CERF funding against the global requirements has declined from 8.7 per cent in 2006 to 1.9 per cent in 2017.1

As a result, CERF funding has been spread thinner. In 2017, CERF’s support was stretched to the maximum with early and catalytic funding disbursed, amongst others, to partners in the four countries facing famine (Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen), to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese refugees in Angola, the Rohingya refugee crisis and multiple hurricanes in the Caribbean.

As high-profile crises attract donor funding, CERF is an increasingly important donor to underfunded crises. But in the summer of 2017 CERF’s resources had been so stretched that the second semi-annual CERF allocation to underfunded emergencies was at risk of being cancelled and ultimately had to be reduced from $50 to $45 million. The $5 million that CERF did not have available could have enabled life-saving assistance. For instance, a $5 million allocation to Rwanda last year led to the delivery of critical aid to 132,000 people.

Due to the overwhelming number of requests and the limited amount of funding available, reducing amounts allocated to individual crises has become a necessity for CERF. For example:

- In Sudan, a funding request of $9 million for assistance to conflict-affected people had to be lowered to $5 million, resulting in halving the rations of general food distribution and reducing the number of households assisted with livelihood support by a third.
- In Nigeria, $10 million was allocated to famine prevention although $20 million was needed, so the planned response component providing assistance for returning displaced people could not be funded.
- In Palestine, a request for $8 million had to be reduced to $4 million, meaning the supply of fuel powering medical facilities could only be provided for three months instead of six.
- In Cuba, $8 million was allocated, which was $2.4 million short of the request. This meant that 8,000 people were at risk of being left without adequate shelter, 25,000 people could not access vital reproductive health services like safe delivery equipment, 56,000 people did not receive water purification tablets and safe water storage supplies, and 559,000 people had to survive on food rations reduced from 30 to 22 days.

Despite challenges in meeting increasing requests for emergency funding, CERF’s allocations were essential and life-saving in the situations above and in the many other crises that CERF responded to in 2017. But more funding is needed so that CERF can continue to enable a timely, robust and strategic humanitarian response and efficiently fulfil its mandate as the UN’s global emergency fund.

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A larger CERF can also address emerging humanitarian challenges differently and better than at current funding levels. New strategies and approaches will be developed in close consultation with partners and in sync with increasing funding available to CERF. These approaches will build on CERF's existing strengths and experiences.

An expanded CERF will be able to make larger allocations and will have greater coverage, hence it will be able to better address today's humanitarian needs. It will have a greater impact, in line with prioritized needs, while maintaining its focus, scope and speed. In addition, an expansion of the Fund will multiply its strategic and catalytic role in the provision of humanitarian funding so that more people are protected and more lives are saved.

A larger CERF will:

- Enable more comprehensive humanitarian response through larger allocations reflective of the scale and range of needs.
- Allow for more timely humanitarian response as more funding will be frontloaded, so more people will be reached with life-saving assistance in the immediate aftermath of crises.
- Enable greater strategic impact as a broader humanitarian response will be based on joint assessment and prioritization of needs by humanitarian organisations on the ground.
- Lead to a better coordinated humanitarian response by further empowering RC/HCs in bringing key partners together.
- Have greater catalytic impact as mobilizing funds from other sources will be easier for humanitarian partners once comprehensive response activities have been kick-started.
- Expand essential, life-saving support to smaller and less visible crises that receive little donor attention and to which CERF often is the top or only humanitarian donor.
- Capitalise on economies of scale to achieve higher efficiency and greater value for money as transaction costs decrease with larger CERF allocations.
While CERF was established as a “Fund for all, by all”, Member States have accounted for 99.7 per cent of all donations since 2006; the top 10 donors have provided almost 90 per cent of all contributions received and the top 20 donors have accounted for more than 98 per cent. Reliance upon a few donors makes the fund vulnerable to the risks pertaining to domestic policy shifts. The CERF secretariat consistently seeks to broaden the diversity of donors and expand its financial support base while still maintaining and where possible increasing funding from CERF’s strongest supporters. New and additional support from a diverse range of Member States and regional and private entities is needed for the fund to be able to provide urgent ‘first aid’ to people trapped in the midst of the worst natural catastrophes and human atrocities of our lifetime. Currently there are 145 million people requiring urgent humanitarian assistance and 20 people forcibly displaced from their homes every minute, adding to the record 65.6 million refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers. A $1 billion CERF is an ambitious goal, but essential when we consider the many lives that depend on its success.

A strong CERF able to deliver on its mandate is every Member State’s responsibility and a step towards our commitments to leave no one behind and reach the furthest left behind first.

“A strong United Nations needs a strong, reliable CERF to reach people trapped in crises and to respond to the needs of those furthest behind.”

—UN Secretary-General, António Guterres
UN Member States and Observer Missions, please contact:

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PRIVATE DONORS AND INDIVIDUALS

1 Online donations
To donate online, visit: www.unocha.org/cerf/donate.

Your online donations will be channelled through the United Nations Foundation, a US 501(c)(3) public charity. Donations through the United Nations Foundation portal are tax-deductible for US taxpayers.

2 Bank transfer to CERF
Please visit www.unocha.org/cerf/donate and contact the CERF secretariat for details.

3 Text to donate (US only)
To donate $5 to CERF using your cell phone, text CERF to 90999.

4 Payment by cheque
Please make cheques payable to the United Nations Foundation. The memo line of the cheque should read “Donation to CERF”. Cheques should be mailed to:
United Nations Foundation
Central Emergency Response Fund
P.O. Box 96721
Washington, D.C., 20090-6721
USA

Please include your name and contact information to identify your contributions.

Note: US tax-deductible donations can also be made via money order or wire transfer. Please contact the United Nations Foundation for more information, at www.unfoundation.org/contact-us.html.
CERF was born out of necessity and it continues through generosity. Donors enable CERF to support emergency life-saving humanitarian activities throughout the world. As crises persist, so does our resolve. With your help, we respond.

Member States and observer missions
cerf@un.org

Private sector and individuals
www.unfoundation.org/cerf