

# OCHA on Message: Central Emergency Response Fund

## What is the Central Emergency Response Fund?

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) is a humanitarian fund established by the General Assembly in 2006 to enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to those affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts. The fund is replenished annually through contributions from governments and the private sector, and constitutes a pool of standby funding to support humanitarian action.

The CERF has a grant facility of US\$450 million and a loan facility of \$30 million. Since its inception, CERF has raised nearly \$2.8 billion for the grant facility from 124 Member States, two Observer missions, two regional and local authorities and 26 private organizations.

More importantly, \$2.4 billion in CERF funding has been allocated to humanitarian country teams in more than 85 countries since 2006. In an average year, CERF allocates approximately \$400 million to 50 different country teams. Sectors that typically receive funding include food, health, water and sanitation, and shelter. CERF has a

ceiling of \$30 million for each humanitarian emergency. Two thirds of CERF allocations go to rapid response allocations (for a sudden-onset emergency or a significant deterioration in an existing crisis) within 72 hours of an application being received from a Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). The remaining third is allocated through the “underfunded window” in two rounds each year to programmes in countries where the gap between demonstrated needs and available funds can be shown to be greatest. Both windows are designed to complement existing humanitarian funding mechanisms, including the Consolidated Appeal Process (see *OCHA on Message: CAP*), flash appeals and country-based pooled funds. Top CERF recipients include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan and Ethiopia.

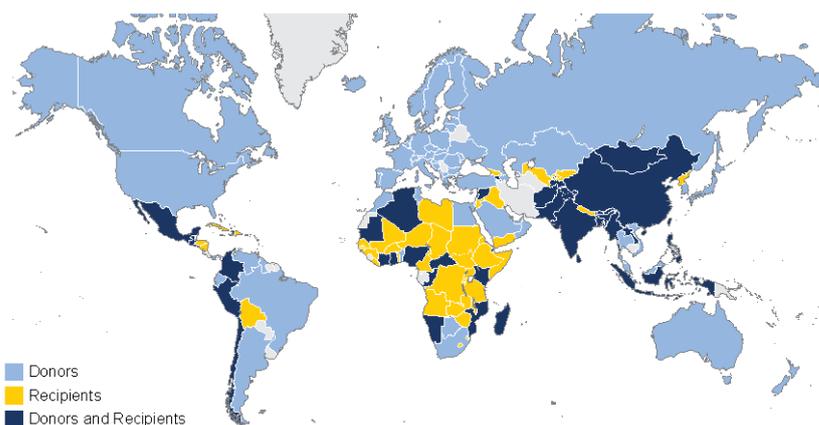
United Nations humanitarian agencies and the International Organization for Migration can apply for CERF funding. WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR are the top three agency

### CERF objectives as set by the General Assembly:

- Promote early action and response to avoid loss of life.
- Enhance response to time-critical requirements.
- Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises.

recipients of CERF funding. Applications for CERF funding must demonstrate that proposed activities are in line with CERF’s life-saving criteria. The RC/HC submits applications to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the CERF secretariat, based on an in-country prioritization process. The General Assembly resolution that created CERF does not allow for NGOs to apply directly for CERF funding. However, NGOs frequently receive CERF funding when they act as implementing partners of United Nations agencies. OCHA cannot receive CERF grants as the ERC is the Fund Manager.

Donors and recipients of CERF funds since inception



## What is OCHA's role?

The ERC serves as Fund Manager and is supported by the CERF secretariat, which is situated within OCHA. At the headquarters level, desk officers often play key roles in helping RC/HCs and country teams prepare CERF proposals. A 23-member CERF secretariat 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. At the same time, the Secretary-General appoints independent experts to serve on the CERF Advisory Group, which gives him policy advice and guidance on the fund.

At the country level, OCHA supports RC/HCs in mapping emergency humanitarian needs. This

data informs the country-based prioritization process and, in turn, CERF project applications. OCHA staff often support country-based efforts to apply for funds and to report on the use of funds after they are received.

A key component of humanitarian reform is more adequate, flexible and timely humanitarian financing. CERF plays an important role in this.

## What does OCHA say?

**1.** CERF has strengthened the humanitarian community's ability to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies, and it has saved lives across the world.

**2.** CERF ensures that funds are delivered fast and fair. It evens disparities among appeals and sectors.

**3.** CERF is a fund by all, for all. OCHA is working to grow sources of funding, broaden the donor base and secure long-term, multi-year donor pledges.

### Case Study

More than 13 million people remain in urgent need of assistance in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti due to drought and food insecurity in the Horn of Africa. Since the beginning of 2011, CERF has allocated more than \$128 million to UN agencies and IOM to respond. UNICEF has received more than \$37 million to meet the needs of children in the Horn of Africa, of which \$22 million went to interventions in Somalia.

Louis-Georges Arsenault, Director of UNICEF's Emergency Operations, said: "CERF funds have been critical for enabling us to carry out humanitarian activities, especially in a country like Somalia. UNICEF has had to take on responsibilities beyond our traditional programmes, and provided blanket supplementary feeding in south-central Somalia. We are also reaching hundreds of thousands of children through innovative life-saving programmes. CERF funding is critical to help us meet urgent requirements on the ground."

Contact:

**Susan Le Roux,**  
CERF secretariat  
[leroux@un.org](mailto:leroux@un.org)

## To find out more

- <http://cerf.un.org>

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