How CERF Works: Underfunded Emergencies—Djibouti

Djibouti was an obvious case for CERF. Its people, particularly pastoralist communities, share much with neighbours in Somalia and Ethiopia, most living well below the poverty line and extremely vulnerable to drought and famine. But the precarious humanitarian situation in Djibouti is often ignored, and available funding for emergency programmes is scarce.

Djibouti suffered its fourth consecutive year of drought in 2010. Access to food and water became increasingly difficult, livestock perished, already modest incomes were further reduced and malnutrition rates soared among children under age 5. To make matters worse, increasing violence in south-central Somalia drove fresh waves of asylum-seekers into Djibouti. For a country where 80 per cent of food is imported, a new rash of global price increases in late 2010 could not have come at a worse time.

By mid-2010, there was an urgent need to kick-start aid programmes held back by a lack of donor funding. United Nations agencies recommended Djibouti for funding from CERF’s underfunded window. Once the CERF secretariat in New York had calculated the gap between the actual humanitarian needs and the available funds, it released $3 million for life-saving programmes.

The funds were carefully allocated, taking into account the needs in different sectors. Some $500,000 went to the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide emergency health services for 120,000 people. The World Food Programme (WFP) provided food assistance to 44,000 vulnerable people and refugees, using $900,000 from CERF. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) used CERF funds to manage acute malnutrition cases among 40,000 people and provide water and sanitation services for 60,000 people.

More than $400,000 was earmarked for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for emergency livelihood support to 60,000 drought-affected people in pastoral areas. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) received $350,000 to provide protection services and multi-sectoral assistance to more than 12,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from Somalia. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) secured $150,000 to provide reproductive health interventions in drought-affected areas and at the Ali Addeh refugee camp.

In the end, CERF funds constituted roughly half of all humanitarian assistance received for Djibouti in 2010.