The Global Evaluation of Emergency Response Funds (ERFs)
Final Report
March 2013
Acknowledgements

Before commencing this Evaluation Report, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all stakeholders with whom we have collaborated during this evaluation, giving special recognition to the staff and management of OCHA offices worldwide. We wish to specially thank the staff and management of OCHA’s UN and NGO partners worldwide who gave so generously of their time. We also wish to thank the staff and management of Evaluation and Guidance Section for rapidly mobilizing data, and for engaging a network of global partners in the evaluation process. It is as a direct result of this level of cooperation and enthusiasm that the realization of this evaluation has become possible.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed are those of the Evaluation Team, and do not necessarily reflect those of the OCHA. Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the authors. Publication of this document does not imply endorsement by OCHA of the opinions expressed.

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

This is the first global evaluation of the ERF mechanism. Prior evaluations and audits were of individual ERFs and were country level evaluations or compilations of country cases. In response to OIOS audit of OCHA’s management of emergency response funds in 2010, it was determined that a comprehensive evaluation of the ERF mechanism would be conducted triennially. This evaluation was also occasioned by requests from donors to look more broadly at the ERF mechanism in general as opposed to looking at it from a disaggregated country approach. The evaluation covers all ERFs currently in operation with the exception of the Syria ERF, which was established in early 2012 and deemed to be beyond the scope of this evaluation.

The results of the evaluation will at the global level inform the review of ERF Guidelines in 2013 and development of policy in relevant areas. At the country level, the evaluation is expected to lead to improvements in ERF management, processes and operations. The evaluation recommendations will be addressed through the Management Response Plan as per OCHA Evaluation Policy.

The Objectives of the evaluation are to:

• Provide an independent assessment of the contribution of ERFs to the humanitarian community’s ability to address critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner;

• Examine the contribution of ERFs to strengthening the leadership of Humanitarian Coordinators, coordination role of the cluster system, and building partnerships (in particular with national and local NGOs);

• Examine the role of the elements of OCHA that plan, administer and report on ERFs, map the progress made since 2009 in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of ERFs, and identify areas of strengths and weaknesses.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation utilized a wide range of methods, including document review, key stakeholder interviews and small group meetings. Two electronic surveys were mounted. The first was directed at OCHA Headquarters managers and the staff and management of OCHA country offices where an ERF is in operation. The second was an external survey of nearly 1,000 NGO representatives, primarily at the country level, who had received an ERF grant over the last three years, combined with key global NGO and UN partner stakeholders. The evaluation was based on the existing ERF Results Framework, augmented by a provisional Theory of Change, both described in the Methodology Appendix of this Volume. Five country case studies were conducted: Afghanistan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Indonesia and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The evaluation process was supported by an advisory body consisting of the key external and internal stakeholders of the ERF, which has reviewed and approved all tools and methods utilized.

There were some limitations to the process. First, it was not well understood by field level staff that the case studies were not in-depth reviews. An additional challenge lay in a dichotomy related to the focus of the evaluation. As part of the Inception process, it became evident that there were tugs and pulls between those stakeholders who were seeking a global assessment of procedures and operational practices, and those who were seeking a more strategic assessment of the overall value of the ERF mechanism. This ambiguity was one between a process evaluation versus a strategic one that would be concentrating on the higher level objectives for ERF - such as how they fill gaps, how they build synergies and how they improve the effectiveness of the humanitarian architecture as a whole. In the end, the evaluation tends to be more focused at the strategic level.
OVERARCHING CONCLUSION

Before laying the Findings of this evaluation, it is very important to stress that notwithstanding some of the issues that are raised with respect to specific shortfalls, the ERF mechanism has, and is, making valuable albeit limited contributions to the attainment of its strategic objectives.

It is important to underscore this positive Overarching Conclusion:

The ERF mechanism works; however, like any process, is in need of continual adaptation and evolution so that it can remain relevant.

The above general conclusion points to the overall positive value of the ERF mechanism. In addition, it is beneficial to preface the specific findings that follow with a list of some of the highlights of Best Practices that were observed. More can be found in the Final Report itself.

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC FINDINGS

The evaluation presents 38 specific Findings organized in seven categories:

1. FUNDING AND PROJECT ISSUES

The current ERF model, which does not permit capacity building for NGO applicants, may hinder the quality of project proposals and prolong the application process. Approval processes are largely focused on procedural matters and do not give enough attention to where a project may fit in the larger context of a CAP or similar instrument. The evaluation found that at present the ERF mechanism is only making minimal contributions to resilience and disaster preparedness, due to the demand for more traditional emergency responses and the relatively small size of ERFs in general.

2. PROCESSES AND INPUTS

While current approval procedures are necessary to ensure probity, they are generally not seen as sufficiently rapid, by NGOs in particular. Approval mechanisms and especially the way most Review Boards function were seen as inadequate to ensure congruity among projects and thus promote a stronger level of coordination. In addition, several findings address the adequacy of resources to administer the ERFs. At the HQ level, resources appear to be sufficient, although their better integration is necessary to improve timeliness and quality control. At the field level, with the possible exception of Ethiopia, ERFs are underfunded in comparison to the level of responsibilities that are required for liaison and coordination, cluster engagement, outreach, quality control, and management of the Advisory and Review Boards.

3. OUTCOMES

A major finding affirms that the ERF mechanism has filled selective gaps and has contributed to the overall attainment of humanitarian outcomes. A second finding, however, tempers it by indicating that outcome attainment in many instances is affected by the quality of OCHA leadership in the country in question.
4. OPERATIONAL EFFECTS AND IMPACTS

Generally, the ERFs have made positive contributions to the effectiveness of humanitarian programming and leadership of the humanitarian response at the country level, albeit constrained by the small size of ERF interventions. The ERF mechanism is much faster than other UN instruments and most bilateral ones. It has, however, not been able to achieve its objective of being a catalytic instrument to mobilize resources, in part due to its relatively small size and project-by-project basis.

5. PARTNERSHIPS

While OCHA is seen as a “good partner”, the absence of a definition of good partnership has resulted in an ambiguity as to what is seen as positive. While there is an implicit understanding of what constitutes good partnership (fairly self-evident characteristics like trust, openness, accountability, communications, etc.), there is no clear articulation of what good partnership means in the context of pooled funds, in particular where the realm of partnering actively engages civil society.

6. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Former approaches to audit of ERF-funded projects were seen as a major irritant. New approaches are only beginning to take effect and remedy this long-standing concern. The project-based nature of the ERF mechanism has made it difficult to go beyond output reporting and address questions related to the impact of ERF activities. With very few exceptions, the country-based ERF mechanism has not undertaken evaluations to a sufficient degree, although several examples indicate that such country-level, project-based evaluations can be conducted if sufficient resources are allocated. Finally, the absence of overall standards for quality of the management of the ERF process at the country level impedes OCHA’s ability to manage the mechanism efficiently and effectively.

7. CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS

A number of cross-cutting findings, highly strategic in nature, were identified in the Inception Report as likely to have an impact on not only the evaluation but on how the ERF functions and is perceived to function:

- There is ambiguity about where ERFs fit within the totality of the humanitarian response.
- There is debate over ERF mandate in relation to resilience building and DRR considerations.
- There is ambiguity as to degree to which OCHA itself views ERFs as a priority instrument.
- Many ERFs do not possess a sufficient critical mass to make more than a nominal contribution to the attainment of their specified goals.
- The demand-driven nature of ERFs blurs their country level strategic role.
- Issues related to disability or age are not being taken into account in design or approval of ERF projects. While the Gender Marker has been formally introduced, there is concern regarding whether it is influencing the design and delivery of programs or whether it is seen as a compliance-related element of application.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

ERFs play a valued, albeit limited role, in supporting civil society to respond to unforeseen gaps in the overall humanitarian response. The ERF is a specialized tool that is best used when a sufficient critical mass of donor support is brought to bear in conditions of on-going or chronic emergency, combining both natural disasters and conflict causes, in rapidly developing or protracted situations. It appears to be less effective when used in prolonged crisis situations.

The ERF process has made a limited but noticeable contribution to strengthening coordination and leadership. Strengthening humanitarian leadership, improving coordination and reinforcing OCHA at the country level are among the anticipated outcomes of the ERF mechanism. However, the ERF alone cannot be
expected to make more than a modest contribution to humanitarian leadership and, as was pointed out, requires sufficient cash to influence some partners. This conclusion is supported by findings related to the impact of the small size of the ERF mechanism, issues about its focus, and the extent to which the desired impact on leadership might be contingent on the vitality of the cluster system in a particular locale.

**ERF is relevant to its NGO and UN partners, and government stakeholders alike.**

The ERF fills an organizational gap in that it is one of the few UN mechanisms that can rapidly respond to NGO requests. Strong support for ERFs is tempered at an operational level by (what are considered by most non-UN stakeholders to be) a lengthy and complex granting system. Rapidity in the context of an ERF, however, does not mean being there first few days/a week after a crisis. The ERF cannot, nor should be seen as a true first responder. The very fact that it is designed to “fill gaps” and “unforeseen needs” implies the existence of a prior plan. Its role as a mechanism to strengthen leadership and coordination also implies that OCHA cannot simply respond outside the parameters of an overall UN response. NGOs and governments to some extent recognize this fundamental characteristic of the ERF mechanism.

**New ERF Guidelines are making a difference in improving the ERF processes but require further clarifications.**

The new ERF Guidelines are likely to improve accuracy and timeliness of ERF processes. However, the effort to standardize brings with it the risk of over simplification in some instances or the reduction of necessary flexibility in others, and therefore a fully standardized approach may weaken the overall effectiveness of ERFs. A ‘one size fits all’ approach, for example, could be construed to encourage more advanced or larger ERFs to adopt a mechanism for project approval that might be designed to fit the needs of smaller ones, and thus reduce transparency. What is needed instead is a basic set of core conditions augmented by recognition of the need to adapt to the situation at hand.

**The role of ERFs and whether they are seen as a priority by OCHA is unclear.**

There is ambiguity about whether the ERF mechanism is a priority for OCHA. The level of support provided to the ERF process by OCHA and lack of clarity in its strategic focus point to the conclusion that the mechanism is presently not well-understood. This is not to attempt to globally centralize the ERF mechanism and thus to detract from the benefits of a country-based paradigm but rather to provide clarity about the fundamental nature of the ERF process.

**ERF faces funding challenges in most instances.**

Many ERFs are either underfunded, or have lost the perception that they are relevant and thus have faced successive donor reductions. This speaks to the present situation where for the most part, the ERF mechanism in a given locale is required to mobilize its own resources with only limited help from OCHA Headquarters.

**There is a need to increase the rapidity of the ERF granting process and in parallel to increase quality control and managerial accountability.**

While the Guidelines are beginning to make a procedural difference, additional measures could be taken to streamline them and to increase quality control and management accountability, especially in relation to the decision-making processes at the country level. Findings show that some HQ functions could be better integrated to reduce the timeframe for grant approval.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Report presents 15 Recommendations. They are presented in three broad categories: Strategic, Operational and Performance Management. All these recommendations have a relatively short timeframe, a maximum of two years, so as to ensure implementation before the next global evaluation, which is anticipated in three years. They are described in full in the Final Report.
1) Strategic Recommendations

Recommendation 1. OCHA needs to clarify whether the ERF mechanism is a global priority; if so, OCHA should more clearly articulate how it relates to CERF and clusters and should allocate additional resources at the country level. The evaluation highlights the lack of awareness and even misunderstanding about where the ERF mechanism fits in the humanitarian architecture at both the global level and country levels. This lack of clarity is sufficiently widespread to pose a considerable strategic risk for OCHA. The degree to which the ERF mechanism can be used to strengthen the humanitarian system would need to be reexamined if OCHA determines that it is part of its core business. Also, the level of resources provided to manage ERFs at the country level would need to be increased, given that the required tasks vastly exceed simple grant administration and include resource intensive liaison and coordination functions.

Recommendation 2. OCHA should clarify the focus of the ERF mechanism (where the ERF “fits”): an emergency response mechanism versus a tool to promote longer-term resilience building. This Recommendation refers to ambiguity related to the focus of the ERF mechanism. It is also directly related to the tug and pull between the strategic objective of filling gaps in an emergency through supporting life and livelihood saving activities in a direct sense; versus the support of preventive resilience building and DRR measures (some of which, by implication, would be undertaken in the absence of an immediate emergency as part of a longer term recovery process, and some possibly in advance of a crisis situation).

Recommendation 3. OCHA should issue policy guidance on the strategic rationale that may underpin the opening of an ERF and its subsequent closure, and review viability and relevance of all current ERFs. The new ERF Guidelines have made major strides in clarifying the operational/financial considerations regarding the establishment of an ERF and its subsequent closure. To that end, it should be noted that several existing ERFs, on the basis of these criteria, would be candidates for immediate closure! OCHA senior management should more clearly address the policy and strategic conditions by which an ERF should be established or closed.

Recommendation 4. OCHA HQ should seek additional donors for ERFs and strongly encourage Heads of Office and HCs to do so at the country level. Several findings demonstrate that a number of ERFs are significantly under-resourced. Also, some are pulled between support for emergencies and resilience building, with resource limitations making this equation more sensitive in the local context. OCHA faces an additional challenge due to uncertainty that can arise with respect to ERF funding. This poses a realistic risk at the country level where continuity from year to year can be called into question if donors only make annual commitments.

2) Operational Recommendations

Recommendation 5. OCHA should consolidate in New York all ERF-related functions including the HQ review and approval of grant applications, but excluding the fiscal responsibility for disbursement. An analysis of ERF processes shows that the decisions taken after the submission of a grant application by the HC are largely procedural. In the spirit of improving risk management and attempting to streamline the ERF mechanism, OCHA should consolidate in New York all ERF-related functions including the HQ review and approval of grant applications, now located in Geneva, but excluding the fiscal responsibility for disbursement.

Recommendation 6. More work needs to be done to improve the clarity of criteria for project selection vis a vis longer term remedial and recovery initiatives, and to enable ERFs to adapt approval/review processes to local conditions.
Specific areas for improvement should include alternative approaches to workflow that would enable larger ERFs to be more transparent.

While there is a general belief among stakeholders that the ERF mechanism has been directed toward life and livelihood saving situations, there is a growing voice that argues that it should be part of a more proactive and preventative stream, or at least favor remedial resilience building following a disaster. The Guidelines need to address this dichotomy in detail. Also, the Guidelines include a standardized workflow and timeline predicated on an ERF which does not have a significant number of annual grants. Most present ERFs, with the exception of Ethiopia, would fall within this paradigm. However, it is reasonable to conclude that in the future, another ERF or a new ERF could generate the volume so as to warrant a more transparent and interactive process, two highly positive characteristics of the Ethiopian process.

**Recommendation 7.** More work needs to be done to strengthen the roles of Review and Advisory Boards.

While the new Guidelines articulate roles and responsibilities for both these Boards, the reality of most of the present ERFs is that the Advisory Board is only tangentially engaged and many of the Review Boards use a process of assumed consent via email. Several Findings illustrate that the absence of actively engaged and working bodies has weakened effectiveness and resulted in perceptions about the lack of relevance of ERFs in some environments. The role of both these bodies as country level mechanisms to examine performance is virtually non-existent.

**Recommendation 8.** OCHA should review the adequacy of resources provided to the ERF mechanism at the country level, by means of a country level needs assessment. Moreover, OCHA should stipulate that the performance of the ERF will be explicitly considered in the annual performance assessment of the Head of Office.

The impact of limited resources on performance of ERFs has been a recurring issue in the findings. At the strategic level, this is addressed by recommending that OCHA make a clear decision as to the priority of the ERF mechanism. This specific recommendation suggests an operational bottom-up approach to determining the actual needs of an ERF, as opposed to the arbitrary and top down approach recommended by a recent audit.

**Recommendation 9.** At the country level, OCHA should allocate more resources to orient/coach applicants, especially NNGOs, to the requirements of the ERF process.

The ERF process does not explicitly involve capacity building for NGOs as an end in itself. However, testimony from NGOs shows that many, especially the less established, need a degree of guidance in the application process and to some extent, possibly in delivery activities. This recommendation recognizes that for the ERF to attain its goal of increasing partnership and building capacity, some degree of support needs to be provided at the country level.

**Recommendation 10.** OCHA should strengthen the Head of Office’s management responsibility for the ERF.

It is reasonable to begin to explore whether the HC has a role as an administrator (exercising management responsibility) or whether the HC’s role with respect to the ERF is more tangentially linked to high level matters. In that context, and if ERF is to be managed by OCHA and OCHA is to be held accountable for ERF, it would seem logical that the management responsibility for in-country project approval be OCHA’s Head of Office. More importantly, transferring the management responsibility from the HC to the HOO would set lines of managerial accountability within OCHA and enable OCHA’s senior management to more directly link the ERF process with overall OCHA priorities.

**Recommendation 11.** OCHA needs to specifically earmark funds for communications-related activities in order to improve awareness and transparency. Specifically, the ERF Guidelines should be translated into French and Arabic.

An examination of records shows a common tendency of multiple projects, year after year, being approved for the same NGOs. The staff of several ERFs pointed out that while they had had plans for
more broad outreach and communications activities, recent budget cuts along with restricting monitoring missions eliminated outreach activities to a degree. NNGOs in several environments pointed out that they felt somewhat discriminated against or at least out of the communications loop. The absence of French and Arabic language documentation, given the degree of the usage of French in Africa and the likelihood of ERFs being called upon in the future to address chronic disaster situations in French and Arabic-speaking African countries, is a major limitation of the ERF process.

3) Performance Management Recommendations

Four recommendations relate to improvements in performance management and planning. All are derived from specific findings that show that present country level and centralized mechanisms of performance management, while adequate to ensure fiscal and programmatic stewardship, are incapable of demonstrating the impact of the ERF process. They also refer to improvements in country level monitoring that are needed so as to strengthen quality control and improve risk management.

Recommendation 12. OCHA should set performance standards for project monitoring that would over a three year period rise to 100% compliance.

The current monitoring levels, of around 60 percent, are inadequate. Heads of Office should develop country-specific monitoring plans that might include ERF staff, peer monitoring and cluster team members, so as to increase the rate to full compliance before the next cyclical Global Evaluation. Monitoring considerations should be specifically included in the country-based needs assessment recommended above.

Recommendation 13. OCHA, as part of the revision of the ERF Guidelines in 2013, should more explicitly indicate that project monitoring must include assessment of the number/type of beneficiaries affected by/impacted by the project; and that end of project reports explicitly require the same data.

ERF project documentation contains numerous gaps with respect to probably the most important consideration that can affect an ERF – who did it actually benefit. While it is unreasonable with the duration and size of the ERF project model to attempt to attribute long-term impacts, it is quite possible to begin to articulate projects more in terms of their beneficiaries and less in terms of specific project outputs. Given that this Recommendation would require ERF country level staff to orient potential applicant organizations, it is likely that it could be implemented a year after the promulgation of the 2013 revision of the Guidelines.

Recommendation 14. The current three year cycle of evaluation of the ERF process needs to be maintained as the basis of a more “learning based” approach to evaluation.

This global evaluation is the first of its kind in relation to the ERF mechanism, replacing a prior disaggregated approach of individual country-based evaluations. There would be considerable benefit, especially given many of the challenges that face the ERF mechanism, in maintaining a triennial cycle which allows for a greater possibility for sustained organizational learning and improvement.

Recommendation 15. EGS should mount exploratory sectorial evaluations at the global level to begin a process of developing the ability to report on results/impacts and also to promote organizational learning.

The present inability to go beyond verifiable output reporting and only tangentially reliable testimony about outcomes is a major gap in the ERF performance measurement architecture. The individual project basis of the ERF mechanism makes it impossible within the realm of any reasonable costs to conduct individual evaluations of the beneficiary impact of separate projects. However, ERF project portfolio globally shows a high degree of commonality of work. Therefore, it is possible to conduct a portfolio evaluation of, for example, a selected number of nutrition projects in four or five ERFs. In this way, the “drill down” could begin to reach toward the assessment of beneficiary impact. Moreover, this kind of selective portfolio approach would enable OCHA to better assess the degree of interconnectivity between its work and the work of others, thereby better analyzing “common success factors” and reducing risk.
## Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AO</td>
<td>Administrative Office</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Consolidated Appeal Process</td>
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<td>CAR</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
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<td>CERF</td>
<td>Central Emergency Response Fund</td>
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<td>CHF</td>
<td>Common Humanitarian Fund</td>
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<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<td>DfID</td>
<td>Department for International Development, UK</td>
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<td>DRR</td>
<td>Disaster Risk and Reduction</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<td>EGS</td>
<td>Evaluation and Guidance Section</td>
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<td>ERF</td>
<td>Emergency Response Fund</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FCS</td>
<td>Funding and Coordination Section</td>
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<td>FTS</td>
<td>Financial Tracking System</td>
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<td>GHD</td>
<td>Good Humanitarian Donorship</td>
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<td>HC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Coordinator</td>
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<td>Humanitarian Country Team</td>
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<td>HRF</td>
<td>Humanitarian Response Fund</td>
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<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NNGO</td>
<td>National Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>OCHA</td>
<td>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>OIOS</td>
<td>Office of Internal Oversight Services (United Nations)</td>
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<td>oPt</td>
<td>Occupied Palestinian Territories</td>
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<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Regional Coordinator</td>
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<td>TOR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<td>UMG</td>
<td>Universalia Management Group</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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Introduction

RATIONALE

Although established in 1997, this is the first truly global evaluation of the ERF mechanism. Prior evaluations and audits were of individual ERFs and were country level evaluations, or compilations of country cases (2006/07 review). In response to an overall audit of the ERF which occurred in 2010, it was determined that there would be benefits to conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the ERF mechanism on the basis of a triennial cycle. This evaluation was also occasioned by requests from donors to look more broadly at the ERF mechanism in general as opposed to looking at it from a disaggregated country approach.

This evaluation will generate specific, actionable recommendations whose purpose is twofold:

- To better situate the ERF mechanism among the range of humanitarian response instruments; and
- To inform the review of ERF Guidelines in 2013 and the development of policy in relevant areas.

OBJECTIVES AND KEY ISSUES

In a protracted process such as this which began in July 2012, there is a clear benefit to beginning the formal Report of the Global Evaluation by reprising the heart and soul of the exercise as a whole, namely the Objectives and Key Areas of the evaluation. Therefore, as per the TOR, the Objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Provide an independent assessment of the contribution of ERFs to the humanitarian community’s ability to address critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner;
- Examine the contribution of ERFs to strengthening the leadership of Humanitarian Coordinators, coordination role of the cluster system, and building partnerships (in particular with national and local NGOs);
- Examine the role of the elements of OCHA that plan, administer and report on ERFs, map the progress made since 2009 in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of ERFs, and identify the areas of internal strengths and weaknesses.

The TOR laid out a set of Key Areas to be examined. They were subsequently amended slightly in the Inception Report. They are:

- The success of ERFs in meeting their goal to support early action and response to critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner;
- The performance, ‘value added’, and cost effectiveness of ERFs in the context of the overall humanitarian architecture and humanitarian reform process (e.g. RC/HC strengthening, cluster approach, development of effective partnership between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors, including local and national NGOs);
- The level and nature of accountability between ERF recipients to RC/HC, donors, beneficiaries, and others;
- The strategic, managerial and operational aspects of ERFs, including structure and focus, the efficiency and effectiveness of administration, fundraising, needs assessment, criteria for allocation of funds, monitoring and reporting, and connectedness with other funding sources;
- Internal (e.g. staffing capacity, management arrangements) and external (e.g. contextual and political) factors which affect ability of ERFs to deliver on their objectives;

TIMEFRAME

The evaluation began with the letting of the contract on July 20, 2012; followed by initial meetings and interviews spanning the month of August. As specified, an Inception Report and Workplan (including drafts of all surveys and instruments) were submitted within 30 days. It was examined by the Evaluation Reference Group, subsequently revised and submitted in final format by mid-September 2012. It should
be noted that the Inception Report and Workplan modified to some degree the evaluation questions and key issues that were laid out in the earlier Terms of Reference. Field missions, desktop studies, interviews and document review occurred between early October and early November, 2012. An informal Interim Report not specifically required in the Terms of Reference was submitted in mid-November and was the subject of a workshop on November 21, 2012. A full draft Final Report was submitted on December 7, including required annexes. It was the subject of workshops and briefings held December 11 and 12 in New York with the Reference Group, OCHA staff and interested donors. Given the holiday season, it was decided that the Reference Group and interested stakeholders would be given until January 18, 2013 to provide detailed comments. These comments were reviewed at a two-day workshop on January 24 and 25 in New York, with revised versions being submitted on February 1, 2013. The Report and its appendices were subsequently revised and submitted on March 1, 2013.
Methodology

This Global Evaluation utilized a wide range of methods combined with wide outreach to stakeholders. Traditional methods such as document review, key stakeholder interviews and small group meetings were undertaken at both the global and country level. Two electronic surveys were mounted. The first was directed at OCHA Headquarters managers and the staff and management of OCHA country offices where an ERF is in operation. The second was an external survey of nearly 1,000 NGO representatives, primarily at the country level, who had received an ERF grant over the last three years, combined with key global NGO and UN partner stakeholders. The response rate to the internal survey was approximately 41%; while the external survey generated a response rate of approximately of 28%, both being within a range so as to be useful and so as to be able to be disaggregated to some degree. The evaluation was based on the existing ERF Results Framework, augmented by a provisional Theory of Change. Both are described in the Methodology Appendix of this Volume.

Five country case studies were conducted: Afghanistan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Indonesia and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Inception Report presented a detailed selection methodology that resulted in these choices. A review was done of selected audits and evaluations of the ERF mechanism conducted over the last three years. A desktop review was undertaken for all presently active ERFs (excluding by choice, Syria). The evaluation process was supported by an advisory body consisting of the key external and internal stakeholders of the ERF, which has reviewed and approved all tools and methods utilized.

REVISED RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND PROVISIONAL THEORY OF CHANGE

The Evaluation Matrix contained in the approved Inception Report (see Volume II) is based on primary evaluation questions listed in the Terms of Reference, which were derived from the ERF Results Framework presented below.
The ERF Results Framework is based on CHF Results Framework developed by a consortium of actors several years ago. It adequately describes the expectations laid down at that time and in the accompanying documentation suggests indicators for the key elements above. However, this Results Framework, given its nature as a mechanism for performance assessments, does not adequately capture the hierarchy of anticipated outcomes and the linkages between outcomes, risks, external factors and some of the program logic assumptions that are central to this evaluation.

Accordingly, as part of the Inception process, the above Results Framework was adapted into a draft of a provisional Theory of Change model presented below.

In this model, the various levels are identified by the stars and the accompanying letters. Each star reflects either a part of the existing Framework or assumptions, etc., which were articulated in the Framework’s accompanying documentation.

**Level A** reflects what are generally seen to be inputs. The accompanying assumptions and risks transpose the lowest line of the Results Framework into Theory of Change elements. It is important to note that for each successive hierarchical level, this provisional Theory of Change did not develop any additional performance indicators other than those which were identified in the CHF Framework Paper.

**Level B** articulates what was described in the Framework as “Initial and Bridge Funding Provided”.

**Level C** expands upon the Framework by adding in a set of short-term outcomes which are directly related to the three elements of the Framework.

**Level D** rearticulates the three medium-term outcomes laid out in the Framework. Their achievement is amplified in the accompanying set of assumptions, risks, and indicators which were drawn from the 2nd to top line of the Framework.

**Level E** directly parallels the highest level of the Framework and has been articulated as a long-term outcome with accompanying assumptions and risks.

In short, the provisional Theory of Change has re-positioned the elements of the existing Framework for the purposes of this Global Evaluation. It is designed to accompany the Framework and to enable the evaluation to better assess the logical assumptions and levels of risk which may be inherent in the attainment of the previously articulated hierarchy of Results.

This draft of a provisional Theory of Change model was discussed in some detail during the field missions. There was a general agreement that it was a useful complement to the existing Results Framework in that it better illustrated the connectivity between elements and made it easier to see an upward process of aggregation of objectives. While specific indicators were only suggested in this model at this time, given the work done to develop the prior Results Framework, many of the proposed indicators could be transferred should OCHA decide to more fully develop what is, at this time, an admittedly draft instrument.

An overview of all the methods and tools used for this evaluation can be found at Appendix V
ERF Simple Theory of Change (Provisional)

**Inputs**
- Applications/ERF resources/needs assessments/CAP

**Outputs**
- ERF supported projects delivered primarily by NGOs

**Short Term Outcomes**
- New alliances forged
- New skills are acquired for humanitarian intervention by OCHA and partners

**Medium Term Outcome**
- Leadership and Coordination Strengthened
- Partnerships Strengthened

**Long Term Outcome**
- Critical and Unforeseen Humanitarian Needs Addressed

**Assumptions**
- Sufficient coverage and scope (critical mass) to produce outcomes
- Sufficient timely to do so
- High degree of relevance to long-term needs

**Risks**
- Lack of above
- Need may have changed/evolved

**Indicators** (see below)

**External Factors**
- Disruption

**Assumptions**
- Projects have scope and mass to achieve outcomes
- Timeliness
- New skills have been translated into on-going capacity
- Needs have not changed (desired outcomes remain the same)

**Risks**
- Lack of above

**Indicators** (see below)

**External Factors**
- Overlap with others
- External factors change need over time

**Assumptions**
- Efficient transparent selection
- Timely allocation and distribution
- Sensitive to real need and priorities

**Risks**
- Loss of timely delivery:
  - Insensitive selection process
  - Inadequate delivery capacity
  - Lack of resources to meet needs

**Indicators** (See CHF Framework paper)
Context

A GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF THE ERF MECHANISM

The first Emergency Response Fund was established in Angola in 1997. Others have been established since then, in conditions of critical humanitarian need and willingness of one or more donors to commit assistance. In several instances, varying nomenclature has been used; however, the basic characteristics of such a pooled fund have remained the same.

The 2011 OCHA Annual Report sets out a concise definition of an ERF:

ERFs are country-level pooled funds managed under OCHA auspices. The HC is the overall custodian of ERFs where grants are allocated to NGOs, UN agencies, the International Organization for Migration and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement for response to rapidly evolving needs. The funds are un-earmarked, and decisions for fund allocations are made at the country level in a timely, flexible and coordinated manner.

The ERF Guidelines approved in October 2012 amplify on this general notion.

“The following features are typical of an ERF:

• Operates under the HC’s overall management and oversight.
• Provides recipient organizations with a rapid and flexible in-country funding mechanism.
• Provides funding to unforeseen or new developments.
• May provide funding to life-saving activities with critical gaps in the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and bridge funding to meet short-term emergency needs.
• Is relatively small in size.

ERFs operate under different names in different countries, including Humanitarian Response Funds (HRFs). However, [in recent years], all new funds follow the standard name: Emergency Response Fund”.

TWO KEY CONCEPTUAL ISSUES FOR THIS EVALUATION

A major reservation with respect to the relevance and effectiveness of the ERF mechanism lies in perceptions about its timeliness and responsiveness. Some of these perceptions appear to be valid while many appear to be based on erroneous assumptions about the very nature of the ERF mechanism itself.

The ERF, notwithstanding the fact that it is considerably faster than any other UN mechanism or virtually all bilateral mechanisms with one exception (see below), is not designed to be a true first responder in the sense of being active in the first days and weeks of a crisis. The very nature of the ERF implies that it fills gaps and responds to unforeseen needs in plans that have been developed. Therefore, an overall cluster-based or equivalent sectorial approach to a situation must in fact exist. This implies that the ERF mechanism cannot be a sort of UN humanitarian fire brigade. But, it does imply that the ERF needs to be there as fast as possible after a gap or an unforeseen need has been identified - a rapid follow on capacity.

In this context timeliness is calculated in two contexts; the time to actually process a grant from receipt of an application to the release of the first cheque; and the additional preparatory time that may be required to ensure that a grant application in itself is well-founded and linked to the broader humanitarian response.

The second conceptual issue that affected this Evaluation and also affects its Findings and subsequent Recommendations speaks to perceptions about its purpose. While the TOR very clearly implies a global process, as opposed to an aggregation of case studies, and fairly strategic approach to the articulation of Findings and Recommendations, throughout the evaluation there was a degree of misunderstanding about this basic direction. Many stakeholders at the country level and some donors appeared to be

Two Determining Concepts

- The ERF is a rapid follow on tool and not a first responder in the sense of being there in the first days and weeks
- The Global Evaluation is a forward looking synthesis and not an aggregation of judgmental case studies

In this context timeliness is calculated in two contexts; the time to actually process a grant from receipt of an application to the release of the first cheque; and the additional preparatory time that may be required to ensure that a grant application in itself is well-founded and linked to the broader humanitarian response.

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seeking a compilation of five country case studies with only a minimal level of connectivity or synthesis, combined with a retrospective of the implementation of prior evaluations.

**A GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF THE ERF MECHANISM**

Generally, ERFs are relatively small in size (less than $4 million in disbursements per year), provide small to medium sized grants (many less than US $500,000), and predominantly fund NGOs, thus focusing them from the outset firmly at the country level. The evolution of ERFs, especially since 2009, has been one of balancing the recommendations of earlier evaluations with the need to maintain the level of flexibility and responsiveness at the country level. The establishment of the FCS as a sub-unit of the CERF Secretariat in 2009 gave OCHA a policy and programmatic coordination tool. Likewise, the establishment within the Administrative Office (AO) of a dedicated financial officer clearly responds to earlier perceptions that ERF documentation was getting lost in the midst of the totality of OCHA.

As of July 2012 there were 13 ERFs in operation: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar, oPt, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen and Zimbabwe. Three more ERFs, namely Iraq, Nepal and Uganda were closed by the end of 2011. Syria, which was established in early 2012, was deemed to be beyond the scope of this global evaluation.

The Ethiopia HRF is continuously the largest fund since the creation of ERFs (although Haiti and Pakistan both received more funds in 2010). At its current level, it is nearly as large as all the other HRF/ERFs combined. It is also unique in that it operates in a country with no CAP, where it is the only humanitarian financing mechanism. Indeed, in some ways the ERF in Ethiopia can be seen as a sort of semi CHF, given its size and other characteristics. The implications of the size of the Ethiopia ERF for this evaluation are numerous. First, unlike all other current ERFs, Ethiopia is not significantly understaffed, a Finding of this evaluation that echoes that of OIOS audits. Second, the critical mass and number of transactions in Ethiopia results in a different approach to governance and consultation, one which relies to a far greater extent on active processes. Third, the critical mass of projects has resulted in a more engaged population of INGOs (national law currently preventing NNGO access). These factors imply that some of the very positive best practices of the Ethiopia ERF may only be of partial or limited relevance to most of the other current ERFs which are simply not of the same order of magnitude or sophistication. However, should another ERF grow in size, Ethiopian examples of best practices might be highly beneficial.

The Haiti ERF, with the largest annual portfolio in the history of the mechanism, has received a total of approximately US $85 million in donations from at least 42 different donors since August 2008 (majority of the funding was triggered by the 2010 Earthquake, with US $50 million coming from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on a one time basis).

The funding for ERFs decreased dramatically in 2011 (by 50 per cent) due to the fact that the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods accounted for 75 per cent of the funding in 2010 - an unexpected spike.

The US $73 million contributed in 2011 was critical in meeting new developments, including the Horn of Africa crisis. Ethiopia and Kenya, in comparison with 2010, received triple the amount of funding in 2011 due to the drought situation. The total ERF expenditure in 2011 was US $99 million, of which the largest amount went to water and sanitation and nutrition sectors. NGOs received 73% of the total allocations for 2011.

The following exhibit shows the level of donations for the focus years of the evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERF Start Dates</th>
<th>Donations 2009</th>
<th>Donations 2010</th>
<th>Donations 2011</th>
<th>Total 2009 to 2011 (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$3,450,250</td>
<td>$2,829,261</td>
<td>$4,800,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$1,425,274</td>
<td>$2,130,836</td>
<td>$2,410,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Exhibit 1 Emergency Response Funds active during the period from 2009 to 2011*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ERF Start Dates</th>
<th>Donations 2009</th>
<th>Donations 2010</th>
<th>Donations 2011</th>
<th>Total 2009 to 2011 (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$45,631,278</td>
<td>$15,471,870</td>
<td>$42,952,693</td>
<td>$104,055,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$81,833,084</td>
<td>$471,647</td>
<td>$82,304,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$2,986,650</td>
<td>$728,200</td>
<td>$2,340,450</td>
<td>$6,055,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$2,592,709</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$3,751,651</td>
<td>$6,344,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$1,988,271</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$2,199,674</td>
<td>$4,187,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oPt</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$7,551,379</td>
<td>$5,313,378</td>
<td>$2,432,646</td>
<td>$15,297,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$36,655,292</td>
<td>$1,951,726</td>
<td>$38,607,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$2,510,023</td>
<td>$6,499,960</td>
<td>$9,009,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$3,883,495</td>
<td>$717,538</td>
<td>$888,415</td>
<td>$5,489,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>2008 - 2011</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>2009 - 2011</td>
<td>$313,972</td>
<td>$618,687</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$932,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>2007 - 2010</td>
<td>$621,012</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$621,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2009 – 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$290,952,671</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ERFs operate across a range of humanitarian challenges, which are arrayed by ‘sector of activity/ clusters’. The following exhibit shows ERF allocations by cluster.

**Exhibit 2   ERF Allocations by Cluster**

![ERF Allocations by Cluster](image)

The following exhibit shows the degree of concentration of the EU donors of ERFs, with exceptions of one-time contributions of Saudi Arabia for Haiti and India for Pakistan.
Finally, the breakdown of ERF resources in terms of the nature of the partner organizations demonstrates how the ERF mechanism is used and what constitutes the range of benefits to recipient organizations. The exhibit below shows a preponderance of support for INGOs and NNGOs; however, UNICEF has been the largest single recipient of ERF support.

It is important to briefly place the level of funding for ERFs in the context of the totality of humanitarian findings. For example, CERF in 2011 allocated some $426 million, over four times that of the ERFs. Likewise, the total amount of support from all sources for humanitarian assistance in 2011 was in the range of $6 billion, some 66% of the estimated requirement of $9 billion. The most recent OCHA Annual Report points out that CERF provided support in 2011 to 45 different countries. By contrast, ERFs currently exist in only 13 environments.

Therefore, the ERF mechanism is a small tool that is used to provide a rapid response capacity on one hand and, as several stakeholders indicated, pragmatically to give an HC a limited pool of funds to lever, synergize and coordinate.
Synthesis of Desk Top Reviews

The evaluation was initially to cover all fifteen ERFs in operation during the period from 2009 to 2011 through either desk reviews or field visits. During the inception phase, it became apparent that it would not be cost efficient to do a desk review of the three ERFs that closed in 2011, as there was relatively scant data available. Given its very recent establishment and the sensitivities involved, it was also decided that the ERF in Syria would not be subject to the current evaluation.

Appendix V contains overview summaries of each of the seven desk reviews undertaken. This process of desk review was not so much an attempt to drill down to explore individual complexities or to conduct a qualitative examination of the seven locales, but rather to provide context on which to build a global assessment.

One of the assumptions underpinning the ERF mechanism is the degree to which it responds to unique national conditions and thus, is largely country-based and country-driven as well as demand-driven, due to the application process. This however, may not actually be the case. There appears to be a much higher degree of commonality among ERFs than possibly was anticipated.

Several Funds operate in environments where conflict and natural disasters intersect, resulting in highly complex and sensitive situations. Colombia and Yemen are two good examples of this kind of interaction. With the exception of Haiti and Pakistan, a strong majority of current ERF funding is being directed toward INGO or NNGO recipients, with a steady growth in the NNGO category.

Notwithstanding that the ERF mechanism can in principle provide grants up to US $700,000, a strong majority of projects are relatively small, in the US $100,000 – US $200,000 range. Some basic characteristics of the grants are also very common. Support for capacity building and training has not been provided, in light of the specific provisions of the ERF mechanism that would appear to restrict such funding. In general, the Review Board process in these locales appears to be very mechanistic, utilizing email and an assumed consent principle on which to base discussions.

Many of the ERFs deal with IDPs from conflict situations, natural disasters or combinations of both. Such is the case in Myanmar, Pakistan, Yemen, Colombia, and to some extent, Kenya. This IDP consideration appears not to be well understood or to be afforded a sufficient level of prominence, given the degree to which several of the most significant donors to the ERF mechanism have placed a strategic priority in their overall development assistance policies on IDP-related programming.

While there appears to be some degree of ambiguity about the role of the ERF mechanism in resilience building and in relation to DRR matters in general, very little actual programming support has been directed to these subject areas. For the most part, ERFs have dealt with more classic early stage emergency responses.

In the context of the desktop review, again there was a degree of commonality among the seven Funds with respect to the amount of time from the formal receipt of the application to the issuance of the first payment. All these ERFs averaged, over the period under review, between 45 and 70 days.

Quality control issues, primarily within the context of monitoring, show commonly uneven practices. The majority of the desktop locales do not have a monitoring strategy and have only monitored spasmodically and largely within the context of financial compliance. Although the Gender Marker has only been introduced, there is very little evidence to show that monitoring has taken into account gender considerations.

In terms of organizational performance, the desktop review of these seven ERF mechanisms showed similar approaches to the articulation of results and logic models. In short, indicators were largely based on output performance with very little efforts to address the assessment of outcome, although most models made a theoretical effort to do so. This reinforces the evidence drawn from the country case studies that the current approach to logical frameworks is more an exercise in upfront compliance and less one truly related to the management of performance.

Synthesis of Country Case Study Findings

The Inception Report (presented in Volume II) outlined the rationale behind the selection of Colombia, oPt, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Indonesia for field visits. All five case studies are consolidated in Volume
III of this evaluation. This selection brings together the largest ERF mechanism, Ethiopia, with one of the smallest, Indonesia. It includes three ERFs where the combination of natural disasters and armed conflict results in highly complex humanitarian situations. It includes two ERFs which would appear to be candidates for closure, given the set of criteria in the new ERF Guidelines. The diversity of this set of locales enabled the evaluation to “drill down” to explore why certain practices were occurring and what the consequences of certain behaviors were both in a managerial sense and implicitly, in beneficiary impact.

In many respects, this process showed an unexpected pattern of commonality in four locations. One ERF, that in Ethiopia, was markedly different, in large part due to the fact that it constituted a sufficient critical mass in comparison to other humanitarian interventions so as to warrant more active consideration by cluster partners and conversely, a much more active capacity to influence clusters.

All five ERFs reviewed were deemed to be valuable to varying degrees, although most made only a limited contribution to the overall humanitarian response. They filled gaps and to the extent possible, promoted increased coordination.

**Common Strengths**
- Fills real gaps
- Faster than other UN mechanisms
- Responsive to NGOs
- Contributes to improved coordination

Timeliness of the ERF process was identified as a potential irritant worldwide, with NGO and donor stakeholders alike perceiving the ERF mechanism as excessively time consuming. It is important to remember that the ERF is not the UN first responder, but a gap filling mechanism. That said, most ERF-supported projects in the five locales visited were commenced weeks if not months after the onset of either a rapid emergency, or the recognition that a slow onset emergency had evolved to such a degree to warrant intervention. In examining the timeliness of the ERF process from date of formal submission to date of the issuance of the first payment, all five ERFs demonstrated a common pattern of general reductions in the timeframe, which coincided with the augmentation of central management in New York and Geneva.

Staff size also has been identified as a global issue. The current level of staffing in all ERFs visited with the exception of Ethiopia is inadequate to respond to even a limited flow of projects. Levels of monitoring are insufficient to ensure either quality control or learning. Resources to better engage Review Boards and Advisory Boards are lacking. Feedback mechanisms with applicants are few if any in a number of instances.

Again excluding Ethiopia, there is an ongoing debate about the focus of the mechanism and whether higher priority should be given to resilience building measures or those related to DRR matters generally. Turning to the issues of funding, four of the five ERFs have faced or are facing problematic situations with respect to donors.

The funding base of three ERFs is narrow, and puts their viability at risk. One of these, in Afghanistan, had reached a level of virtual bankruptcy and had not made a project decision for nearly a year. New management has revitalized this ERF, brought in new donors, renewed old ones at higher levels and is actively courting additional donors who have seldom participated in the ERF mechanism anywhere in the world. New project directions are rapidly emerging which appear to be increasing the overall relevance of the ERF in Afghanistan.

**KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST EVALUATIONS**

The evaluation reviewed some 20 prior evaluations and audits conducted between 2006 and 2011 (listed in Appendix VI). It is not surprising that many of the themes discussed in these prior exercises are echoed in this evaluation, and it is important to emphasize them.
TIMELINESS
There has been ongoing debate as to the timeliness of the ERF mechanism. Issues about unevenness in processing time at both the Headquarters and field level were being raised as early as 2007. In 2010, the Global OIOS Audit underscored the need to establish common guidelines for processing and to provide sufficient personnel at the Headquarters level, the genesis in many respects of the current FCS, the new Guidelines, and the augmentation of the Administrative Office (AO). Debates on timeliness generally focus on internal processing time. The actual full range of time and the timeliness of the Fund itself in the context of its position in the architecture of a response are not dealt with to any degree in the prior exercises.

GOVERNANCE
The evaluations and audits over the last five years have witnessed the growth and evolution of the governance mechanisms of the ERFs, most specifically, Review Boards and Advisory Boards. While both have been generally categorized as examples of good partnership, country level evaluations point to the differences in effectiveness of these elements and infer a relationship between well-functioning governance elements and the overall effectiveness of the ERF mechanism. The clusters were also reviewed in terms of their relationship to the ERF as a coordination and advisory mechanism. The Global 2010 Audit pointed out gaps in the approach to the clusters at the country level, unevenness in the awareness of the ERF mechanism and more tellingly, unevenness in the awareness that the cluster mechanism should play a leading role in the overall selection process.

VARIANCES
Earlier audits and evaluations found that the country-based approach to the issuance of guidelines led to considerable variances in the ERF in terms not only of procedure but also of access. For example, different rules applied regarding the size of an initial payment between UN and non-UN recipients. Likewise, different levels of access to the Fund, differences in understanding its global role, all resulted in not so much a country specific model, but in nearly independent mechanisms.

RESOURCE LEVELS
The issue of the adequacy of the resources at the country level has also been raised previously. Earlier evaluations noted that, in some instances, there was not even a single dedicated staff person, a situation which has been rectified in most instances. Lack of funds and staff has limited the ability of the ERF mechanism to be an instrument for sharing and organizational learning. Several evaluations pointed out that the ERF mechanism at the country level has few tools at its disposal to promote the sharing of information, to provide feedback or even to provide basic information on the Fund itself. This led to broadly-based conclusions that the benefits of the ERF are not well understood and that considerably more could be done to promote information sharing and network building.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION
This issue has been consistently raised over the past five years. Key issues have included an apparent inability by Country Offices to use monitoring data to identify trends, and other reasons for success of various types of projects. Cross comparison of projects was noted as infrequent at best. Monitoring in particular was seen as being limited to fiscal compliance. From a broader perspective, these prior reports highlighted a theme with respect to evaluation that remains contemporary; namely, the continuous desire, by donors especially, to move beyond the input/output relationship and begin to explore the beneficiary impact of the ERF mechanism.

RELEVANCE AND VALUE ADDED
Notwithstanding these gaps, all prior reviews indicated that the ERF mechanism at both a country and global level was highly relevant and that, for the most part, was an effective instrument to fill gaps or meet
unforeseen needs within the overall context of the CAP. While there were some concerns about the ability of the ERF to be catalytic and the short-term nature of projects, virtually all the Funds reviewed were seen to be relevant within the country context in question. Moreover, several of these reviews discussed the relevance of the ERF to donors and especially donors who may not have a humanitarian response capacity in the locales where an ERF is located. The ability of the ERF mechanism to coordinate and consolidate individual donor contributions into a pooled fund and to have the means to assess a need in relation to a sectorial approach was seen as a highly useful mechanism for many donors.
Specific Findings

The following Findings respond to the questions contained in the approved evaluation matrix (see Appendix for a matrix or evaluation questions with corresponding findings and recommendations).

It should be noted that, on a number of occasions, the matrix demonstrates how a factor like timeliness or project size can have repercussions at various levels of the results chain. While it would be possible to group, for example, all the timeliness considerations together, doing so might obscure how something as seemingly operational as timeframes can have multiple levels of repercussions.

Thirty-seven specific Findings are presented in evaluation. Before laying them out however, it is very important to stress that notwithstanding some of the issues that are raised with respect to specific issues, the ERF mechanism has, and is, making a valuable albeit limited contribution to the attainment of its strategic objectives.

It is important to underscore this positive overarching Conclusion:

**The ERF mechanism works; however, like any process, is in need of continual adaptation and evolution so that it can remain relevant.**

The above general conclusion points to the overall positive value of the ERF mechanism. In addition, it is beneficial to preface the specific Findings that follow with a consolidated list of some of the Best Practices that were observed.

- Active participation of some Review Boards in the selection process by having regular meetings where feasible as opposed to passive consent models.
- Active participation by some Heads of Office in the ERF process and especially in relation to the mobilization of Advisory Boards and relevant clusters.
- At least by biennial Advisory Board meetings so as to improve the level of coordination and provide strategic direction and feedback.
- Encouragement for the Humanitarian Coordinator to play an active role in Advisory Boards and inter-agency coordination moving beyond the simple approval of project proposals.
- Promotion of peer-to-peer monitoring wherever possible.
- Circulation of client feedback surveys and their findings.
- Active formal or informal engagement with relevant government agencies and senior managers so as to ensure coordination and congruity.
- Frequent site visits by ERF staff both for formal monitoring and informal coaching/feedback.
- Ensuring NGO participation in the Review Board process.
- Ensuring active consideration of gender and disadvantaged factors.
- Encouraging (if possible) cross-project evaluations, recognizing fiscal limits that may exist.
- Promoting active outreach to NGOs by means of orientation sessions or workshops and not relying on passive systems of information distribution.
- Encouraging NNGOs wherever possible to make submissions or encouraging INGOs to use NNGOs as sub-contractors.
- Active outreach to the donor community by means of information sharing, meetings, briefing sessions.
- Use of an on-line and real-time database to plan and subsequently monitor projects.
- Maintaining a small cash reserve so as to have availability for truly urgent projects before annual donor allocations may arrive.
- Review Boards consisting of small panels of subject experts. Their comments and inputs are directly integrated in an ERF online management tool that supports the development, monitoring and follow up of each proposal.

FUNDING AND PROJECT ISSUES

The Findings related to the above topic are linked to some of the basic inputs and policies that guide the overall ERF mechanism. They in essence are the foundation stones on which the ERF mechanism has evolved and has been rolled out world-wide. It should be noted that issues related to resilience and disaster preparedness were included in this category, as they did not “fit” with any subsequent category of
issues. It also should be highlighted that the selection of categories of Findings directly mirrors the
categorization initially laid down in the Terms of Reference (which were subject to extensive consultation)
and which were subsequently amended as part of the Inception Report process.

**Finding 1. Lack of ability to fund capacity building leads to uneven quality of applications and
negatively impacts the timeliness of ERF projects.**

The ERF mechanism does not fund training or capacity building programming directly. It can fund training
in a particular skill related to implementation, for example, the training of health workers as part of a
project, but it cannot directly fund capacity building activities for applicants. While this concern has been
consistently raised by NGOs, the philosophical design behind the ERF mechanism is the support of
organizations which can “get the job done”. Most of the NGOs who raised this issue sought coaching or
orientation sessions into the intricacies of the ERF
mechanism. The inability to support capacity building,
especially with NNGOs, has resulted in unevenness in the
quality of applications and thus, more time spent by OCHA
staff to help an applicant submit a complete application (or to
rectify errors or omissions).

Therefore, the timeliness of the ERF process, again in the
context of the amount of time from the initial receipt of an application to its submission to HQ, is impacted
by the ERF process not directly providing capacity building.

**Finding 2. Use of performance measurement tools in the ERF proposals is mostly procedural, as
the approval processes consider money, whether the applicant can do the job and
whether the need remains; this limits the ability of review bodies to consider planned
initiatives in terms of their longer term consequences or linkages to broader
strategies.**

While ERF applications require the completion of a basic logical framework, how the framework and
proposed indicators are used is somewhat problematic. The approval process for an ERF application, and
especially if it is based on internet circulation with an assumed consent, tends to focus on money,
whether the applicant can do the job and whether the need as identified remains significant enough to
warrant ERF intervention. There is very little if any evidence to show that an ERF application is examined
by a Review Board within the context of performance measurement characteristics. In short, the
mandatory logical framework becomes little more than a process milestone.

**Finding 3. ERFs are only beginning to make contributions to disaster preparedness and
resilience building and may not have sufficient critical mass to make viable
contributions.**

At present, DRR considerations and project support for DRR or resilience building is fairly localized and
does not constitute a significant percentage of overall ERF activity. The questions relating to this assume
that the range of DRR-related activities is to be considered de facto as areas that could be supported by
the ERF mechanism. This assumption is ambiguous at best given the clear implications of the design of
the ERF mechanism toward support for the more traditional sense of emergency response. There is an
admitted debate as to the relevance of DRR activity in what is essentially a mechanism designed to fill
gaps or address unforeseen needs. Moreover, the level of funding provided for most ERFs combined
with the level of demand in most locales for a more traditional emergency response, leaves very little
room to consider alternate or experimental types of support.
Internal Survey

PROCESSES AND INPUTS

This set of Findings addresses many of the issues relating to the day-to-day workings of the ERF mechanism highlighted by its donors, OCHA staff and recipients. In that light, it is essential to understand the role that the new Guidelines have begun to play in the management and administration of the ERF process at both the country level and at Headquarters. It is also important to underscore that OCHA’s response to administrative and procedural concerns identified by prior evaluations and audits became operational in early 2009 with the establishment of the FCS unit in New York and the augmentation of ASB in Geneva. These two measures have had a demonstrable effect. For example, the degree of incomplete project data in early 2010 in terms of transaction times is fairly considerable and generally exists across the board. Later in 2010 and 2011, the degree of accuracy of this basic data increased substantially to now a state of virtual full compliance.

The approved workflow diagram of the ERF mechanism contained in the new Guidelines is presented below.

Exhibit 5  Approved Workflow Diagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Review</th>
<th>Approval</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>MR &amp; close-out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency trigger</td>
<td>(FMI) ERF screening meets criteria?(\exists \text{ cluster 0}^1)</td>
<td>As fast as possible</td>
<td>Project starts</td>
<td>ERF monitoring: (review of reports + field visits) and reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Assessment</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>FMI requests external audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response need?</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Should be fixed well in advance to start next cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant develops proposal(\exists \text{ cluster 0}^1)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>AID review and processes due final disbursement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>AID review and processes due final disbursement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>AID review and processes due final disbursement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Strongly Disagree, 2, 3, 4, 5. Strongly Agree, Do Not Know.
Finding 4. The timeframe of the ERF process, four to eight weeks from the identification of the problem to project approval, compromises its ability to be a rapid follow-on mechanism.

It is important to underscore that in the vast number of instances the ERF mechanism is designed to provide a rapid follow on capacity. In filling a gap or responding to an unforeseen development, the humanitarian response has to have been sufficiently rolled out to identify the gap, or the new development in the first place, and how the CAP relates to the situation. Necessity of working within clusters further places the ERF mechanism into what could be called a follow on response, clearly addressing the amelioration of an emergency situation and clearly not a developmental initiative.

That said, the ERF mechanism itself is somewhat complex as is obvious from the above schemata. A subsequent Finding explores the exact division of time involved in a variety of the steps of this process, utilizing project data for the last several years. At this point, it is important to emphasize that the most expeditious timeframes seem to be 21-25 days in total from the receipt of an application to the disbursement of a first payment of 80% of the project value.

This duration, while steadily improving over the last several years, is generally seen to not be sufficiently timely once the gap has been identified and the formal application process launched. Earlier and subsequent Findings show that several appear to have been developed based on assumptions of practices (the multiple role of the HC) that may not be relevant.

Finding 5. The dual step process of cluster review followed by the Review Board may be time consuming and its effectiveness is highly reliant on active engagement of these bodies.

The review of an ERF application starts with the clusters examining a proposed project to ensure congruity with cluster strategies and to determine whether the project in fact is filling a gap. Next, the ERF mechanism requires that the Review Board, which is composed of participants chosen by OCHA (select UN partners and NGOs), further examine the project, possibly in a more technical fashion. ERF managers point out that the relative value of one or both of these review processes is in large part determined by the level of engagement of the participants involved. This is especially so with respect to the cluster review, which should go beyond merely the approval by the cluster lead. However, evidence collected at the field level indicates that the cluster engagement can be time consuming, is uneven in quality, and is dependent on the functioning of the clusters themselves.

The effectiveness and timeliness of the Review Boards appear to be superior to the cluster system in many, but not all instances. However, the assumed consent model (the use of emails to circulate proposals with an assumed consent - no response is taken as approval), widely used given the low volume of applications in most ERFs, leads to an ambiguity as to the actual quality of the review. As most Review Boards are seldom asked to come together to explore issues such as the nature or the collective consequences of their reviews, there is very little reliable information about how reviewers actually transact and the degree to which they view projects as part of a broader whole, as opposed to simply checking whether an individual project meets minimum technical standards.

Finding 6. Current quality control mechanisms, located primarily within the project approval processes, are unevenly applied.

Quality control and risk management at the operational level is primarily located in the review processes and monitoring (discussed later). Cluster and Review Board consideration are designed to ensure thematic and technical quality. Sign-off, at the country level, is designed to ensure the adequacy of an application from procedural and stewardship considerations.

Data indicates applications in some ERFs are being internally approved at the country level in a mere handful of days and yet appear to take considerably longer to be approved at Headquarters. This may be the effect of staff capacity and size, combined with the impact of complex procedures. In some ERFs, it was the stated goal of staff members to “turn around” an application in only a few days. It should be noted that the quality control mechanism and risk management at the country level contains an anomaly in that the ERF manager is an OCHA employee but submits applications to the HC, who is not the direct supervisor of the ERF manager - that role being fulfilled by the OCHA Head of Office. This results in broken lines of managerial accountability and responsibility and leaves authority for both quality control
over project selection and overall risk management ambiguous. The question remains whether any real quality control was being exercised by the HC.

Finding 7. **Demand-driven, project-by-project approval processes disaggregate decision-making, and detract from strategic considerations of need.**

The current project review processes, with the exception of one or two ERFs, disaggregate the review and assumes informed consent. The electronic models which most ERFs use, combined with the fact that Review Boards seldom convene to explore the collective consequences of their decisions, hinder the strategic or holistic considerations of how the ERF is fitting into and contributing to the overall humanitarian response. This limitation is exacerbated in locales where clusters are not fully operational or the ERF fully integrated into them. In many respects, the effectiveness of the ERF mechanism to begin to identify synergies and to go beyond project-by-project assessment lies in the capacity of the cluster system and in the willingness of cluster leaders to take an active part in the assessment of ERF projects. Indeed, in oPT, the cluster mechanism has assumed the principle decision-making role over that of the Review Board.

Finding 8. **Most Review Boards, by using an assumed consent approach to project approval, are limited in their effectiveness to assess projects against a broader understanding of need.**

There is a general pattern of infrequent meetings of the ERF Review Boards, or in several instances, never having been constituted in the first place; these dysfunctional situations occurred in three of the five case study locales. The assumed consent model of Review Board decision-making exacerbates the lack of a more strategic overview by further disaggregating decision-making and promoting “one shot” approaches.

While it is difficult to precisely pinpoint the causes for such dysfunction in what should be the strategic driver of the ERF mechanism at a country level, a number of factors have been identified.

### Issue to Consider

**Animate Review Boards by asking for written comments and not just passive email assumed approval**

Smaller sized ERFs simply seem to be ignored as “something OCHA does”. The willingness of the HCs to take a leadership role in the promotion of the ERF mechanism, and to some degree of the OCHA Head of Office to lobby on behalf of ERFs have been shown to have an impact on the effectiveness of Review Boards. Overall weakness of clusters in particular locales was another contributing factor (Indonesia, Afghanistan).

There are however, factors that were unstated but began to emerge upon closer analysis. One of them relates to the degree to which ERFs are generally understaffed, and also to the observation that the ERF staff at the country level are very junior and thus may not have the capacity required to mobilize an effective Review Board. Another implicit factor relates to the degree to which the ERF is seen as a priority by OCHA itself in-country and globally. In two instances, OCHA staff indicated that when necessary overall budget cuts were being considered, funds for the ERF to engage in communications and liaison were eliminated.

Finding 9. **Timeliness of a project is not fully captured by the current data systems, as they seldom take into account the time for informal work with applicants before formal submission of a project proposal.**

Current data systems do not track the degree of liaison and coordination time that ERF staff spends with potential applicants to refine proposed projects. This dynamic is explored in more detail in the five country case studies. In virtually all instances, OCHA staff indicated that a considerable percentage of their time was spent working with potential applicants in advance of formal project submission. In several instances, this also involved horizontal liaison with cluster partners so as to better situate a potential project.

It is difficult to determine with any precision how much time this kind of advance liaison and coaching takes. Anecdotal evidence collected at the field level along with some fragmentary data tends to show that up to several weeks may transpire between the time a project proposal is first broached with OCHA.
and the date of formal application. ERF managers and staff pointed out that one of their more difficult to measure responsibilities was eliminating clearly deficient projects before they were formally submitted.

The implication of this Finding, along with the recognition that the ERF is not a first responder, is that the timeliness of a project is probably somewhat longer than current data systems can track or could be expected to track, given that much of this upfront liaison is informal.

**Finding 10. The standards for timeliness set by the new Guidelines may not reflect the complexity of ERFs in differing locales.**

The Table below shows three characteristics of timelines for partial 2010, 2011 and 2012 data for currently operational ERFs. The table is derived from data secured from ASB, and it is likely that there are some variances with data that has been provided by various country offices. However, it is important to stress that there were ambiguities at the country level about when a project actually started. Moreover, there were divergences in country versus Headquarters data in matters as basic as the date an agreement was sent to Headquarters for review. As this is a global evaluation, it was decided to utilize the Headquarters data, recognizing that it, as well, contained gaps.

The data presented in the middle column, the amount of time taken by Headquarters to review an ERF grant application that has been submitted by an HC, tends to show that about two and a half work weeks are required on average for this crucial process of feedback with HQ. More recent data for 2012 shows the positive impact of the initial implementation of the Guidelines, with this phase falling in most instances to less than two weeks and in many instances, to about a calendar week. This may imply that country offices are submitting more complete applications.

The right hand column reflects the average amount of time between the formal receipt of an application (Date Agreement Received) to the first payment. As was discussed previously, this data does not take into account the upfront informal time required to get an application ready, which may be why the averages are well below what the perceptions (of NGOs in particular) are about how long it takes.

The column to the left presents somewhat ambiguous data in that nearly all ERFs would appear to be transacting the step between receiving an application and securing the HC approval in a mere handful of days. Such is not the case, and based on country level data, it is more likely that a week or two can transpire.

It appears that many ERF country offices, while reviewing applications, only enter them into the formal data system after consent has been secured at the cluster and Review levels. This hypothesis is borne out, for example, in Ethiopia where local statistics show a week to 10 days to process an application through Ethiopia’s highly transparent meeting-based system of approval. Yet, on average, statistics from Ethiopia for the current year show an overall processing time of less than a calendar month.

**Exhibit 6  Timeliness Characteristics for the 2010 - 2012 Period**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>AVERAGE #DAYS FROM (Date of Proposal Received by ERF) to (Date Agreement Cleared by HC)</th>
<th>AVERAGE #DAYS FROM (Date Agreement Cleared by HC) to Date Request for 1st Installment Received from Country)</th>
<th>OVERALL AVERAGE #DAYS FROM (Date of Agreement Received by ERF) to (1st Installment Date Paid to Recipient)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>27.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>25.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>32.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>19.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>9.57</td>
<td>22.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>11.31</td>
<td>23.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lessons Learned**

The active Review Board model used in Ethiopia provides greater accountability and transparency and can be used in other future high volume venues.
The new ERF Guidelines might reduce the overall formal processing to an average of about 15-20 days. However, they include standardized workflows based on assumptions about optimal behavior at the cluster and Review levels and use of the assumed consent model. This results in a degree of risk as to whether there has been an objective assessment or merely a passive, “no comment” approach to consent.

The Guidelines approach the workflow and the suggested time intervals from a very much one size fit all model and implicitly promotes the questionable “assumed consent” model. If an ERF were to evolve to the size of Ethiopia, as may be possible in the future, or were to attract for a period of time more than one or two applications a week, the model laid down in the Guidelines, if rigorously applied, would result in less, not more transparency and the potential for decision-making being undertaken on a completely ad hoc basis.

Finding 11. Opportunities for engaging ERF partners and obtaining their feedback have not been explored by the new Guidelines.

The new Guidelines are generally clear with respect to administering the ERF mechanism at the country level. There is however a gap with respect to feedback mechanisms, which include only references to the Advisory Board and an annual client satisfaction survey.

The ERF mechanism and its application at the country level do not appear to have taken advantage of the fact that its work is generating an untapped network of partners who can provide advice and also feedback and thus improve relevance - the NGO recipients. For example, in Indonesia, the ERF manager convened a meeting of a dozen NGO partners who had participated in the response to the Mt. Merapi eruption. When asked, these stakeholders indicated that this was the first time that they had had an opportunity to meet, virtually in the shadow of Mt. Merapi itself. The ERF manager in question indicated that this lack of resources made convening such sessions impractical and that recent budget cuts had further reduced the ability to conduct planned information sessions.

Only the ERF in Ethiopia has conducted the mandated annual client satisfaction survey. And even in Ethiopia there is no evidence of planned active feedback processes (meetings, workshops, debriefs) aside from the Annual Report and email updates. Similar observations can be made with respect to virtually all other ERFs.

Finding 12. OCHA appears to have sufficient HQ resources (Geneva and New York) to administer and disburse.

It is important to underscore that the ERF process had no central liaison and coordination capacity before 2009/10. As such, considerable risks existed regarding variances in procedures and even in direction, as demonstrated by prior audits and evaluations and confirmed by the Internal Survey.
The adequacy of the staff resources available at Headquarters is largely based on perceptual evidence. There is general agreement that the FCS unit in New York has made major strides in attempting to regularize the ERF process, albeit with a degree of reservation about the repercussions of some of the Guidelines it has developed. There is less certainty about the adequacy or effectiveness of resources available in Geneva to review ERF agreements and to promulgate contracts. The process is largely identified with one individual although it is evident that others participate as well. In examining recent transaction data involving the processing of the application for payment, a clear and growing rapidity is evident. Transaction times for this most important step have fallen now to the range of only a few calendar days.

Finding 13. OCHA country offices generally have insufficient resources dedicated to the ERFs, which lowers efficiency as well as ability to undertake functions like outreach, communications and improved performance management.

The vast majority of ERFs at the country level are functioning with less than the equivalent of two person years. Many are administered by only one person who is responsible not only for the application processes but also for the bulk of monitoring and all liaison activity. External stakeholders agree that this minimal level of human resources, combined with progressive reductions in discretionary administrative budgets, is weakening the ERFs and calls into question the degree of priority that OCHA gives the mechanism. Argument that a small ERF, which may transact less than 20 projects a year and many times much less than that, does not require more than one person year ignores the “back office” and liaison/coordination functions, which are essential to both the relevance and effectiveness of the ERF mechanism. The Internal Survey tended to confirm these observations.
Prior audits have suggested staffing models for various sizes of ERFs (small, medium and large). Among internal OCHA stakeholders, there was general agreement that these suggestions were unrealistic given the size of many OCHA offices. That said, the current resource levels are universally acknowledged to be inadequate. More importantly, there seem to have been no attempts on the part of Heads of Office to assess the needs in this regard.

Several of the key evaluation questions spoke to the issue of indirect program support costs. Throughout the evaluation however, this issue became moot, due to the degree to which, at the country level, ERFs are simply underfunded in comparison to the nature of the work required even in some of the smallest ERFs. It is also important to note that, based on OCHA overall financial rules, the indirect program support costs are transferred from the donor contribution to OCHA’s central budget and thus, there is no direct correlation between the level of funding provided to OCHA by this mechanism and the level of funding provided to individual ERFs.

OUTCOMES

The issues related to the category of Outcomes are primarily focused at questions related to the ability of the ERFs to fulfill short to medium term programmatic outcomes at the country level. To that end, they relate largely to the strategic consideration of whether the ERF mechanism fills gaps or unforeseen needs in the humanitarian response.

Finding 14. ERF granting has filled selective gaps and thus has contributed, to a limited degree, to the attainment of humanitarian outcomes.

Virtually all sources of data confirmed that to some degree, the ERF mechanism had achieved its strategic objective of filling gaps in the humanitarian response. Survey data, as illustrated below, indicates the degree of support for this contention from both internal and external stakeholders.
For example, among external respondents some 57% support or strongly support the contention of filling unforeseen needs; while some 77% responded positively to filling gaps. This Survey data is complemented by project analysis, extensive interviews and small group meetings. In these fora, it became evident that the ERF mechanism indeed was filling unforeseen gaps and was doing so in a way that other UN system instruments could not.

**Finding 15. The outcomes of ERFs at the country level are dependent on the quality of the leadership in that environment.**

Leadership can relate to the performance of specifically OCHA personnel, namely the Head of Office or the ERF Manager. These two types of personnel are the direct responsibility of OCHA and are directly accountable to OCHA. By contrast, the HC, while crucial in the architecture of the ERF mechanism, as in essence the lynchpin in country, is not directly accountable to OCHA. Therefore, there is to some degree an ambiguity in the ERF architecture and in the lines of managerial responsibility.

The country case studies demonstrated variations in this leadership consideration and a link between leadership and outcomes. In one or more instances, OCHA Heads of Office past or present, did not seem to fully value the ERF mechanism, and placed their justifications for some degree of inaction on others, or
on other conditions such as “the clusters here are not fully functional” or “we have had budget cuts”. In other instances, OCHA Heads of Office past and present were far more engaged and saw, for example, weaknesses in the clusters as not an explanation for inaction but something to be actively addressed.

The same sort of dynamic occurred with respect to HCs.

This Finding is controversial as it highlights the variances in how personnel in the field view the utility of the ERF. It should be noted that there is not a direct link between the size of the ERF and the leadership quotient described above.

Put very directly, direction from senior management as to the priority which should be afforded to the ERF instrument - one of the few tools that OCHA possesses to actually distribute resources - has not been sufficient.

OPERATIONAL EFFECTS AND IMPACTS

This category of Findings is the most strategic in nature and for the most part, is directed to the longer term consequences (impacts) of the ERF mechanism at both the country and global level. The text box at right illustrates the breadth and scope of the issues related to these longer term impacts. In many respects these Findings lead to a set of profound and highly important Conclusions that have influenced the direction of the overall evaluation away from being heavily focused on technical or operational issues. Rather, the focus is more balanced and recognizes that challenges in the fundamental design of the ERF mechanism will require OCHA, as the custodian of the country pooled funds, to take strategic decisions to maximize the impact at both country and global levels of this unique humanitarian response tool.

Finding 16. While ERF granting has contributed to the overall operational effectiveness of humanitarian support, that contribution is moderated by limited resources available.

The ERF mechanism has filled critical gaps across a broad range of activities. It is important, however, to stress that the vast majority of ERF-supported projects over the last several years have dealt with gaps in classical humanitarian areas such as WASH, nutrition, health and shelter.

A second issue is whether the gaps are in fact unforeseen. In this context, “unforeseen by the CAP” can largely be defined as gaps in the overall humanitarian response that have not been addressed by other actors. The timeliness factor here is not as relevant as whether another cluster or non-cluster partner has or is in the process of responding to the humanitarian challenge in question. Based on interviews, surveys, and data analysis at the country level and especially discussions with project recipients and ERF staff, the ERF projects are responding to these unforeseen circumstances.
This Finding however, is tempered in some respects by the size of the ERF intervention. For example, in Colombia, it is very apparent that unforeseen humanitarian gaps are being filled as would be expected. However, the size of the ERF in relation to the gaps is generally seen as inadequate, with overall size of the gaps estimated at two or three times the level of support. The same can be said for virtually every other ERF. It is interesting to note that the question of the size of the ERF and its ability to contribute to gap filling has led to the apparent successful restart of the ERF in Afghanistan wherein the immediate support provided in the third and fourth quarters of 2012 has exceeded that of the previous two years and has resulted in new donors and in the likelihood of considerable levels of support ensuing over the next few years.

Finding 17. ERF granting is flexible in terms of size and type of interventions as well as accessibility.

The Survey data presented below confirms the assertion that the ERF is a flexible response mechanism.

This Finding of flexibility relates to more than perception. The ERF “window” in a given locale offers NGOs a one-stop where they can bring funding requests for small to medium size activities, and in many instances, ones that might not fit within the parameters of another project. For example, emergency
nutrition projects in Colombia and in Ethiopia frequently combine education and awareness raising with the actual distribution of nutrition related products. Similarly, some shelter projects in Afghanistan and in Ethiopia combine the provision of shelter in an emergency context with some aspects of land restoration, especially counter-flooding activities.

Flexibility is also seen in the context of how comparatively easy it is for an NGO to apply to the ERF. Here, notwithstanding a number of minor irritants described earlier, there is unanimous support among NGO stakeholders for the proposition that the ERF is more accessible than other mechanisms with respect to the kind and size of grants. This notion of accessibility relates not only to whether ERF staff in various locales provide advice and assistance and in effect, coach applicants, but also to the perception that the ERF application form is less complex than others and notwithstanding some limitations, is more intuitive for applicants. Flexibility during project delivery however is limited to some degree by elements of the Guidelines that limit transfer across budget lines to 15%.

**Finding 18. Timeliness of the ERF process is vastly superior to virtually all other humanitarian financing mechanisms.**

In comparison to other well-known humanitarian funds such as ECHO or in most instances, OFDA, the ERF’s processing time from an application being accepted by country ERF staff to the disbursement of funds is vastly superior. For example, NGO and UN stakeholders pointed out that the ECHO mechanism, due to its centralization and proceduralism, could take four to five months to generate a positive answer and the first disbursement of funds.

Likewise, the same stakeholders noted that OFDA could take several months for the same process to ensue, except in selected instances where the OFDA had identified a large NGO partner, namely INGOs, and had established in advance a draw down approach. While it should be noted that other donors including DfID are beginning to experiment with this kind of pre-authorization, there are relatively few of these rapid mechanisms in place. Therefore, the ERF process, notwithstanding limitations described earlier is clearly effective in terms of timeliness in relation to other mechanisms.

**Finding 19. The ERF mechanism has raised the visibility of OCHA by providing it, in selected locales, an active granting function.**

The ERF mechanism has provided OCHA, in selected locales, an active granting function. This has raised the visibility of OCHA among partners in these locales, and especially civil society partners as

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**Best Practices**

- Multidimensional projects that combine for example nutrition and health related matters, or shelter and land restoration
represented by NGOs. This is clearly a potential benefit for OCHA and, and one which can have spin-off benefits such as improvement of coordination as a whole, OCHA’s prime function as exemplified in its motto “Coordination Saves Lives”. On the other hand, that increased visibility can call into question, to some degree, the overall value of OCHA’s role when an ERF is poorly functioning. The evaluation witnessed this in at least one of the five locales and possibly a second in relation to prior practices.

Finding 20. The size and duration of the funded projects positions the ERF mechanism as a short-term instrument well suited to life and livelihood saving activities and gap filling.

The vast majority of ERF-supported projects are relatively small in size, in the range of several hundreds of thousands of dollars; in only one or two locations, an ERF can provide grants in excess of USD 500,000. As the primary goal of an ERF is to fulfill an unforeseen and relatively small-scale gap in the humanitarian response, the size of grants appears appropriate. Interview data in the five case study countries highlighted that the size of the ERF was particularly suited to smaller NNGOs, who might not have the administrative capacity to manage projects so as to ensure the delivery of needed service to beneficiaries.

Common to all ERFs is also a maximum six-month timeframe (excluding the possibility of no cost extensions). This places the ERF firmly in the context of a short term instrument, one of its unwritten, but primary characteristics. In the context of being a short term measure, the current size of individual ERF projects lend themselves to rapidity of action, suited to life and livelihood saving activities and gap filling. The size of the ERF does not truly lend itself to more substantive processes of resilience building or building long term DRR-related capacity.

Finding 21. The demand-driven and individual project basis limits the ability of clusters and Review Boards to prioritize and respond to what may be the most pressing needs (gap filling).

This Finding is largely based on qualitative assessment of the effectiveness of the selection processes in identifying critical needs and thus establishing a degree of prioritization.

More effective selection processes such as that in Colombia, or Palestine, even though based on the electronic circulation of project information, demonstrate a higher degree of harmony among projects and to some extent, a higher degree of active prioritization to meet local needs. The uneven processes of cluster review leads to a situation where the necessary role of the cluster as a coordinating mechanism is detracted. The Ethiopian model with its very transparent and nearly weekly meetings, probably exemplifies the most consistent approach to what clusters have identified as the most important needs. Likewise, weaknesses in the Review Board mechanism, evident in many ERFs, increase the risk of not having a broader picture of the contribution that an ERF is making and whether the most important gaps or unforeseen needs are being filled.

There is however, a systemic problem with the ERF mechanism as a whole in the degree to which it must attempt to respond to unforeseen situations, and therefore be demand-driven, versus the lack of predictability of ERF funding. Several ERF managers and staff were candid in saying that they faced a near existential challenge in addressing projects in the early part of the calendar year, so as to ensure that there would be “gas left in the tank” in the event of a large number of projects coming forward later in the year. This challenge is exacerbated in instances where, in pursuit of transparency and accountability, the ERF communicates its remaining balances to its partners, thus showing them how much funding is left and by implication, how much they may be able to draw upon.

Finding 22. ERFs generally have not played a catalytic role in mobilizing ‘follow-on’ support or additional funding and are not well suited as an instrument to do so.

While it is broadly recognized that the ERF mechanism is not well suited to play a catalytic role in either mobilizing other partners to provide “follow-on” support or more specifically to be a mechanism to promote additional funding, such is implicitly expected of the ERF. The project-by-project nature of the ERF and the degree to which many ERFs are under-funded, combined with the growing lack of clarity about their strategic focus, makes it difficult for the staff of OCHA and/or the HC to engage in outreach or promotional activities so as to seek additional support. Put very directly, small sized ERFs do not appear
to be on the radar screen, especially when the overall approach to fundraising with donors is generally disaggregated to the country level.

**Finding 23. The benefits of ERF granting are in large part dependent on national conditions and the strength and effectiveness of the cluster system.**

The overall relevance and effectiveness of ERFs varies and is dependent on national conditions, and particularly strength of the clusters. It is important to note that OCHA is not the sole actor with respect to strengthening clusters. Therefore, it is implicit that improvement in clusters as a factor in strengthening the effectiveness of the ERF requires more than simply an OCHA response.

**Finding 24. NGO partners have gained the most from the ERF mechanism in terms of strengthening capacity.**

In any strategic evaluation there is always an implicit question: “who in the end benefits the most?” In line with the obvious humanitarian interest, individual recipients of the support provided through ERF grants are and should be the main beneficiaries.

That said, the question still stands but slightly rephrased. Who among the interveners has benefited the most? Based on a gestalt of all the lines of evidence, the consistent organizational beneficiaries of the ERF process are the national and international NGO recipients of ERF grants. The NGOs, especially those at the national or local level, have gained a degree of new capacity. They have in some instances begun to work together in networks so as to strengthen partnerships, albeit somewhat narrowly given the size of most ERFs. They have become more engaged in the cluster process and have had, with varying levels of results, more opportunity to work with other partners to thus improve the overall quality of the humanitarian response. Their closer connection to individual communities has made them more sensitive to community needs, and thus, to the extent possible given the size of ERF support, improved the quality and effectiveness of the humanitarian response.

**PARTNERSHIP**

**Finding 25. The impact of ERFs on the quality of partnerships with NGOs is dependent on individual circumstances and not systemic factors.**

The perceptions of partnerships in general and whether the ERF mechanism improved partnerships with NGOs were positive in both the Internal and External Surveys, with overall support approaching 70% levels.
This level of positive support, however, is not backed by the interviews conducted at either the global or field level. In these instances, respondents noted that any improvement in partnerships was not so much caused by the ERF mechanism as by the staff members of OCHA who were administering it.

Unlike some other UN agencies, OCHA does not appear to have a uniform understanding of what constitutes good humanitarian partnership. While there is an implicit understanding of what constitutes good partnership (fairly self-evident characteristics like trust, openness, accountability, communications, etc.), there is no clear articulation of what good partnership means in the context of pooled funds, in particular where the realm of partnering actively engages civil society.

Second, OCHA, in the context of partnership, does not appear to have availed itself, as part of regular training or as part of the annual ERF retreat, the various capacity building initiatives which other humanitarian bodies like WFP and UNICEF have done. There is a number of training and capacity building initiatives available which have the dual objectives of identifying systemic organizational barriers to good partnership on one hand and their amelioration on the other. There is also a considerable body of evidence to show that the practice of good partnership is not merely civility combined with common sense. Rather, organizations like the Partnership Initiative of Cambridge University have clearly demonstrated that partnership is a kind of managerial behavior and that the exercise of the principles of good partnership can directly impact on the attainment of corporate objectives.

Finding 26. Generally OCHA in the context of the ERF is seen as a good partner.

Notwithstanding the above ambiguity as to whether the ERF process has contributed to strengthening humanitarian partnerships in general, there was a strong degree of support for OCHA as a good partner in its own right.

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These positive feelings toward OCHA as a good partner could be built upon to better strengthen the ability of the ERF process to contribute to overall strengthening of the humanitarian partnership as a whole.

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Finding 27. Prior audit processes resulted in excessive delays in final disbursement and had negative impact on recipients, especially NNGOs.

One of the most persistent irritants that was identified in prior audits and evaluations and was raised in virtually every field mission and in interview with NGOs at the global level was the negative impact of prior approaches to audit which, in some instances, have resulted in delays in final payments of up to two
years. The prior approach to individual audit contracts has however been superseded by one which allows for vastly more efficient contracting of the audit function and which already is eliminating backlog. Therefore, while this Finding reflects a prior condition and clearly has resulted in negative perceptions of OCHA’s managerial capacity which exist to this day, it is likely that by the time of the next global evaluation the timeliness of audits will no longer be a flash point.

**Finding 28. Currently there are no standards on which to assess the quality of the management of ERFs.**

A key element of management is the establishment of standards on which to assess the qualitative performance of an organization or a program. While the new Guidelines may result in the establishment of some standards for time and motion, there are no parallel standards with respect to the assessment of quality. There do not appear to be any standards about accuracy and the quality of proposals submitted by ERFs with HC approval for Headquarters review. Benchmarks do not exist relative to the timeliness of HQ processing in the instances of an ERF application not requiring revision. The degree to which an application requires amendment (number of times of revision and the time involved) is not being tracked. Indeed, while the new Guidelines, which have been informally applied for some time now, require an annual feedback from stakeholders via a questionnaire, few ERFs save for Ethiopia have done so.

In the absence of standardized approaches to either quality control or timeliness, the performance of an ERF as a whole in any given country and by extension, the performance of the staff, is in large part a function of the perception of the degree of compliance with established procedures and the relative rate of project dispersal. More qualitative issues related to the promotion of the intangible ERF goals such as improved partnerships or improvements in leadership and coordination are not being measured. This limits the ability of OCHA to assess the relative effectiveness of an ERF mechanism in a given locale.

**Finding 29. Current reporting tools, while providing sufficient information on basic stewardship, are insufficient to promote on-going learning at the project, country, or global level.**

The evaluation assessed the use of ERF planning and reporting tools as means to promote transparency, stewardship and results. These included project applications as well as monitoring, project, audit and annual reports from all 12 ERFs under consideration.

The data shows that recent (post 2010) improvements in the ERF application process allowed for better articulation of financial expenditures and their link with project outputs. Therefore, the ability of ERF planning and reporting mechanisms to provide accurate and now timely information about expenditure and output is relatively strong.

These mechanisms however are largely limited to classic fiscal and programmatic stewardship.

**Finding 30. Monitoring and evaluation tools are incomplete and still driven by a compliance–based approach.**

The ERF process as laid out in the new Guidelines is highly detailed with respect to monitoring considerations. This level of detail however, is not translated to evaluations, save for the disclaimer that there will be a series of tri-annual global evaluations. Analysis of prior country evaluations of ERFs shows that they focused on the input/output level of results and to a large degree addressed how ERFs functioned. They contained examples of “success stories”, but were not able to sustain any real assessment of beneficiary impact.

The new Guidelines have eliminated the small levels of expenditure that had been set aside in the past for so-called project evaluations, in large part due to the ineffectiveness and infrequent use of these tools. The Guidelines also specify that donor-based requests for country level evaluations would require donors to provide the funds and would not be commissioned by OCHA itself. The cumulative effect of these provisions would tend to relegate evaluation as a management and learning instrument to a secondary if not tertiary level of importance while elevating more the traditional assessment of fiscal and output stewardship.

Thus, considerable opportunities to learn “what works” and “what may have more benefit” are being passed over. During the evaluation process, it became clear that many stakeholders were seeking qualitatively different performance information, assuming that fiscal and output performance should be in
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place as a sort of prerequisite on which to build a more sensitive approach to reporting. These stakeholders wanted to know “what difference has an ERF project made?” In terms of the consequences of not being able to demonstrate impact, OCHA is at a disadvantage in its ability to tell the positive story of the ERF process beyond the kind of traditional “good news” anecdotes. The systemic benefits of evaluation as a mechanism to encourage broadly-based organizational learning and in some respects to promote capacity building are also being downplayed at a time when it is apparent that major donors and others are seeking exactly this kind of more qualitative information on which to base their decisions.

Finding 31. Opportunities for the strengthening of evaluation at the country and global levels have not been taken, thus limiting OCHA’s ability to more dynamically report on performance of the ERFs.

The evaluation was asked to explore the usability and feasibility of evaluation techniques as means to improve overall performance management and broaden the capacity for organizational learning.

First, prior country-based evaluations, either under the auspices of OCHA or donors, tended to be largely procedural in nature. They did not address the more salient issues of what difference an ERF and its projects have made. The fact that these evaluations were generally uncoordinated and in some instances overlapped further reduced their utility.

Setting aside for a moment the provisions of the new Guidelines which would tend to downplay country level evaluation, the largest of the ERFs, Ethiopia, has recently shown that country level evaluation of projects can occur, and can constitute a mechanism for promoting organizational learning as well as beginning to promote assessment of beneficiary impact. The 2011 Water Trucking Review explored a select number of water trucking projects, which are often used in Ethiopia to address chronic drought situations. It was a horizontal and thematic assessment. This Ethiopian example demonstrates the versatility and creativity that exists among some staff members of OCHA.

The findings and conclusions of the Water Trucking Review are not germane to this Global Evaluation. However, this process in Ethiopia, which in large part could be categorized as a country level portfolio evaluation, demonstrated that it is possible to conduct evaluation at the project level, with the proviso that it be undertaken on a thematic as opposed to an individual project basis. Conceptually, there is nothing that would bar the replication of this kind of country level portfolio process in any other ERF where a critical mass of at least five or six generally similar projects was to exist. The barrier to doing so however, lies in the lack of funding for evaluation as a whole and for country level evaluation in particular.

The evaluation questions asked whether a commitment to evaluation should be a requirement for project approval. This question is not as simple as it may seem, as the notion of conducting individual evaluations of individual projects is clearly not cost effective and likely would not produce sufficient results notwithstanding costs. However, the requirement in an application for an organization to be willing to participate in evaluation of its work would be beneficial in that it would signal to NGOs the emerging requirement to go beyond output reporting.

All of the benefits that can be accrued from a more fulsome approach to evaluation at the country level are contingent on OCHA giving the ERF mechanism sufficient recognition as a priority and for OCHA and donors to increase the level of set asides and specifically require allocation for country level evaluation.

Finding 32. Current key indicators in the approved ERF Results Framework are largely process-based and do not lend themselves to the assessment of results beyond outputs.

The Framework, which was the product of a protracted process of consultation and drafting within the context of CERF and CHF and then translated to the ERF process, may, in many respects, reflect a traditional compliance approach to the integration of measurable indicators with objectives such as strengthening partnership or improving coordination which are somewhat obtuse in nature. The current performance indicator set tends to be more explicit with respect to lower level activities related to the measurement of input, output and procedural activities. They are less relevant with respect to higher level functions.
Cross Cutting Findings

The Inception Report introduced a series of what were called Emerging Issues, which cut across the categorization of the evaluation matrix. While these issues were clearly central to many stakeholders, they did not “fit” within the matrix and tended to be more operational than strategic in general direction.

As global and country data collection emphasized the centrality of some of these issues to the evaluation, they now serve as capstones to the more specific evaluation Findings. Several of the issues identified as “emerging” during the Inception Phase, proved to be less relevant to the entire evaluation. The most notable of these related to the Transformative Agenda which, notwithstanding some observations to the contrary, was not seen as either related to the ERF mechanism; or something that the ERF mechanism had any relationship with, save for the most tangential contribution in that it is seen to some degree to be a mechanism supporting greater levels of coordination.

WHERE DO ERFs FIT?

Finding 33. There is widespread ambiguity about where ERFs fit in the totality of the humanitarian response.

The Finding is based on a mixture of interview and survey data, with the survey data being somewhat more positive. The interview data was drawn from global level interviews with donors, NGOs and UN partner organizations. Similar questions were asked at the country level to analogous groups.

This Finding reflects a general lack of understanding about where ERFs fit in the broader picture. While there is an awareness that they support, for the most part, NGOs in gap filling, divergences grow when stakeholders are asked how the ERF mechanism contributes to broader humanitarian responses and in particular, is there anything other than “gap filling” that constitutes the niche for the ERFs. The strategic objectives of building partnerships, increasing humanitarian coordination and strengthening leadership are not well understood. Likewise, in certain circumstances, stakeholders did not seem to understand the difference between an ERF and a CHF.

Finding 34. There is ambiguity as to degree to which OCHA itself views ERFs as a priority instrument.

This Finding speaks to concerns again raised at the country and global level about whether OCHA itself views the ERF mechanism as a priority instrument, and whether it is providing sufficient resources at the country level to ensure its effective delivery. At the country level, with only one exception among the five case studies, stakeholders external to OCHA were quite direct in indicating that the level of staffing provided to the ERF mechanism was not only insufficient, it was incapable of responding to the variety of tasks that were required. In a similar vein, in two of five instances, external stakeholders questioned OCHA’s decision to leave an ERF in place when it had fallen to what the external stakeholders viewed as merely a nominal status. Some global level stakeholders had similar views, questioning whether the ERF process as a whole was being in any way strategically managed by OCHA.

While the ERF mechanism was designed from the outset to be largely country-driven, this does not mean that OCHA as a whole does not have a responsibility to strategically manage them as a global network. In this light, however, it needs to be emphasized that FCS, the unit established in 2010, to better support the ERF mechanism from a procedural and operational standpoint, has been required to focus the bulk of its attention on the development of the new Guidelines and on operational level, “fire fighting”.

THE CRITICAL MASS OF ERFs

Finding 35. Many ERFs do not possess a sufficient critical mass to make more than a nominal contribution to the attainment of their specified goals.

An examination of the current set of ERFs, excluding Syria, shows that on the basis of the criteria set out in the new Guidelines several ERFs are so poorly supported by donors that they become natural candidates for being closed within the next year. These include Indonesia, Myanmar, Zimbabwe,
Democratic Republic of Congo, and until the very recent revitalization, Afghanistan. This constitutes one third of all ERFs excluding Syria.

Among the remainder, in one of the country case studies, Colombia, there was widespread belief from internal and external stakeholders that while the current ERF was making a valuable contribution, it was considerably underfunded. In Haiti and Pakistan, ERFs are operating on carried-over resources from the prior massive and one-time contributions of Saudi Arabia and India respectively, with more recent flow of donorship being nominal. The implication of the underfunding of a significant majority of ERFs is a strategic consideration and again echoes the strategic conclusions laid out in Findings 1 and 2 above.

Finding 36. The demand-driven nature of ERFs blurs their country level strategic role.

As noted above, the fundamental design of the ERF mechanism is based on assumptions that it will be country-based and by implication, country-specific in focus. The ERF mechanism was also designed to be a demand-driven and largely bottom up process where OCHA plays primarily a passive role as the assessor of proposals within the context of the CAP made to it by bodies that are eligible to do so. Given size and resource issues noted above, few ERFs have been able to strengthen OCHA’s coordination and leadership role at the country level.

ERF mechanism therefore does not play a major contributing role in the development of national response strategies implicit in the higher level ERF objectives of strengthening leadership/coordination and partnership. It is somewhat set aside as a kind of limited response fund. Indeed, some UN stakeholders both at the global level and at the country level pointed out their perceptions that the ERF process was simply not as well integrated as was implicitly expected in the past and now more explicitly laid out in the new Guidelines and that it supported, in some instances, inadequate or disconnected projects.

MANDATE CREEP

Finding 37. There is a global debate over the mandate of ERFs in relation to resilience building and DRR considerations.

The issue of the role of the ERF process in support of activities other than emergency gap filling was frequently raised at both global and country level. There was widespread disagreement among internal and external stakeholders alike as to the appropriateness of the use of the ERF mechanism to support preparedness and resilience building even after the fact, as a recovery-based activity. Globally, UN system partners were concerned about what appeared to be a type of mandate creep without any formal mandate having been authorized. As well, the adequacy of OCHA ERF resources to support these kinds of activities was called into question. At the country level, the debate in some ways grew sharper, with the question of OCHA’s adequacy raised especially in instances of underfunded ERFs.

GENDER AND DISADVANTAGED PERSONS CONSIDERATIONS

Finding 38. Issues related to disability or age are not being taken into account in project design or approval. While the Gender Marker has been formally introduced, there is global concern regarding whether it is influencing the design and delivery of programs or whether it is seen as a compliance-related element of application.

The recent formal introduction of the Gender Marker into the ERF application process has improved the upfront articulation of gender in the applications. While survey data show the view that gender related matters have been better addressed, low rates of overall monitoring, monitoring for output compliance and fiscal stewardship and lack of peer-to-peer and gender specific monitoring has resulted in questions regarding whether the Gender Marker is in fact influencing the design and delivery of programs or whether it is seen as a compliance-related element of application forms.
Based on existing tools, it is not possible to measure whether the Gender Marker is producing discernible change for the better.

Turing to other disadvantaged groups, there was very little if any concrete evidence to show that issues related to disability or age were being taken into account in project design, and more importantly, project approval.
Overall Conclusions

The above 38 Findings arrayed across the approved categories present a relatively positive picture of the ERF mechanism. However, as is the case with individual Findings, a disaggregated approach can lead to development of Recommendations that focus on “fixing” individual challenges while overlooking systemic and cross-cutting issues.

The set of general Conclusions below amplify the primary and positive message which commenced the detailed analysis of this evaluation. It is probably valuable to repeat that Overarching Conclusion at this point.

The ERF mechanism works; however, like any process, is in need of continual adaptation and evolution so that it can remain relevant.

When taken together, these Conclusions form the basis for the Recommendations that follow:

ERFs play a valued, albeit limited role by supporting civil society to respond to unforeseen gaps in the overall humanitarian response to crises.

The ERF mechanism has played a discernible and positive role, especially when it has been used to support NGOs. The ERF is a somewhat specialized tool that is best used when a sufficient critical mass of donor support is brought to bear in circumstances where there are on-going or chronic emergency situations, combining both natural disasters and conflict causes in rapidly developing or protracted situations. The ERF mechanism appears to be less effective or relevant when used in prolonged situations where there is not a high-level emergency or chronic level of emergencies present.

The ERF process has made a limited but noticeable contribution to strengthen coordination and leadership.

Strengthening humanitarian leadership and coordination and, by inference, strengthening OCHA’s capacity at the country level is one of the chief anticipated outcomes of the ERF mechanism. The evidence on this is mixed, with the results of internal OCHA perceptions being more positive than indicated by the interview data at the global and country level. This general conclusion of a limited contribution is supported by the Findings related to the impact of the small size of the ERF mechanism, issues about its focus, and the extent to which the desired impact on leadership might be contingent on the overall vitality of the cluster system in a particular locale. In short, the ERF mechanism alone cannot be expected to make more than a modest contribution to humanitarian leadership and as some NGO partners candidly pointed out, requires sufficient cash in hand so as to better influence some partners.

ERF is relevant to its NGO and UN partners and government stakeholders alike.

Nearly all stakeholders remarked that the ERF fills an organizational gap in that it is one of the few UN mechanisms that can rapidly respond to NGO requests. Rapidity in the context of an ERF does not mean being the immediate first responder (first few days/week after a crisis). NGOs and governments to some extent recognize this fundamental characteristic of the ERF mechanism, although most would call for more rapidity in the granting function. Overall, there is a high degree of general support for the ERF mechanism, tempered in some respects at an operational level by what are considered by most non-UN stakeholders to be a lengthy and complex granting system.

The new ERF Guidelines are making a difference in improving the processes of ERFs but require clarification so as to improve relevance and effectiveness.

The new ERF Guidelines, promulgated in October 2012, are likely to improve accuracy and timeliness of ERF operational processes. However a fully standardized approach may in fact weaken the overall effectiveness of the ERF process, as the effort to standardize brings with it the risk of over simplification in some instances or the reduction of necessary flexibility in others.

The role of ERFs and whether they are seen as a priority by OCHA is unclear.

There is ambiguity about whether the ERF mechanism is a priority for OCHA as a whole. Positive words notwithstanding, the level of support provided to the ERF process and the degree of lack of clarity in its strategic focus point to the conclusion that the mechanism is presently not well-understood. The fairly persistent debate about the strategic focus of ERF and specifically, issues related to resilience building, also demonstrates that it would also need to be better situated and better targeted. This is not to attempt to globally centralize the ERF mechanism and thus to detract from the benefits of a country-based
paradigm. Rather, it is to provide clarity about the fundamental nature of the ERF process and about the practical degree of OCHA’s support for it.

**In most instances, the ERF process faces funding challenges.**
Many of the current ERFs are either significantly underfunded or have lost the perception that they are relevant and thus have faced successive donor reductions, either through direct withdrawal of donors or their scaling back. This speaks to the present situation where for the most part, the ERF mechanism in a given locale is required to mobilize its own resources with only limited help from central OCHA sources. There is little evidence to show centralized resource mobilization for the ERF mechanism. This has led, in some instances, to anomalies in the focus at the country level caused by supply side funding. It has also led to the perception among some that the ERF is not a significant element within the humanitarian architecture and that it is not considered by OCHA to be a priority as such.

**There is a need to take measures to increase the rapidity of the ERF granting process and in parallel to increase quality control and managerial accountability.**
While the Guidelines are beginning to make a procedural difference, additional measures could be taken to streamline them and to increase quality control and management accountability, especially in relation to the decision-making processes at the country level. Other Findings show that some Headquarters functions in relation to grant approval could be better integrated so as to reduce the timeframe, and improve HQ managerial oversight.
Recommendations

These Recommendations are not designed to be narrowly prescriptive, but rather to promote “going further”. That said, there is a tug and pull between the strategic and operational recommendations, and in that context, we have divided the set of Recommendations into three broad categories: Strategic, Operational and Performance Measurement. The recommendations provide practical advice but do not go into details of the “how to”, which fall within the responsibility of OCHA staff and managers in consultation with their stakeholders.

The TOR for this assignment also called for a Table that linked Recommendations and Findings. The Recommendation Matrix which follows immediately does so and goes beyond by including the evaluation questions and sub-questions along with the Findings and Recommendations. As well, for each Recommendation below a notation of the most relevant Findings is included.

In a subsequent sub element, we will introduce a mechanism that prioritizes recommendations and suggests responsible entities for their implementation.

Strategic Recommendations

**Findings 9, 22**

**Recommendation 1: OCHA needs to clarify whether the ERF mechanism is a global priority; if so, OCHA should more clearly articulate how it relates to CERF and clusters and should allocate additional resources at the country level.**

The degree to which the ERF can be used to strengthen the Humanitarian system needs to be reexamined the same context, as does the level of resources provide to manage ERFs at the country level, given that the required task vastly exceed simple grant administration and include resource intensive liaison and coordination functions.

The evaluation highlights the lack of awareness and even misunderstanding about where the ERF mechanism fits in the humanitarian architecture at both the global level and country levels. This lack of clarity is sufficiently widespread to pose a considerable strategic risk for OCHA. While the new Guidelines for the most part clarify many of the operational issues raised in prior audits and evaluations, this operational focus does not address the strategic issue of the lack of clarity of the overall place of the ERF mechanism.

Most importantly, given the number of Findings that have identified resource constraints as major or contributing factors to performance challenges, if OCHA determines that the ERF is “part of its core business”; it is recommend that:

The ERF mechanism be allocated additional resources either by internal re-profiling or by seeing from donors an increase the administrative overhead so as to specifically improve the ERF mechanism as a whole.

Subsequent recommendations outline a pathway to identify the level of new resources that are required.

**Finding 34**

**Recommendation 2: OCHA should clarify the focus of the ERF mechanism (where the ERF “fits”): an emergency response mechanism versus a tool to promote longer-term resilience building.**

This Recommendation speaks to an ambiguity related to the focus of the ERF mechanism. It is also directly related to the tug and pull between the strategic objective of filling gaps in an emergency though supporting life and livelihood saving activities in a direct sense; versus the support of preventive resilience building and DRR measures (some of which, by implication, would be undertaken in the absence of an immediate emergency as part of a longer term recovery process and some possibly in advance of a crisis situation).
This need for clarity of programmatic focus is not merely a question of semantics. In a more practical sense, there is relatively widespread concern that OCHA has not identified priorities or a focus for the ERF mechanism, or attempted to even rank several priorities. In some instances as described in country case studies, individual ERFs have gone considerably down the route of resilience building well after the occurrence of an emergency. In others including the largest ERF within the network, Ethiopia, the demands to respond to chronic emergency situations have resulted in an ERF nearly exclusively focused on emergency response.

While some might argue that differences such as these could be seen as strong points of the ERF mechanism in terms of flexibility, it is equally reasonable to argue that this lack of programmatic focus may be hindering the ability of some ERFs to meet actual emergency needs.

As part of the clarification of both “where the ERF fits” and its programmatic priorities, OCHA needs to address the issues related to the timeliness of the ERF response. Several Findings have shown that the response is not in any way capable of being characterized as the “first responder” as some - especially NGOs - advocate it to be. The new Guidelines in some respects clarify the nature of the ERF more towards an immediate follow-up instrument.

Moving toward a much more proactive “first responder” capacity would necessarily result in OCHA having the authority to take decisions on its own, outside of the processes of cluster cooperation. The new Guidelines, while considerably streamlining the timeframe in one context, do not reduce the consultative and coordinative steps, which would be needed if the objective of being a true first responder is to be achieved. The degree to which even the current Guidelines operate within a very low tolerance of risk tends to indicate that at this time, the ERF mechanism is seen as that second, but still vital follow-up tool for particular types of circumstances.

Finding 20

Recommendation 3: OCHA should issue policy guidance on the strategic rationale that may underpin the opening of an ERF and its subsequent closure, and review viability and relevance of all current ERFs.

The new Guidelines have made major strides in clarifying the operational/financial considerations regarding the establishment of an ERF and its subsequent closure. To that end, and in anticipation of subsequent operational recommendations, it should be noted that several existing ERFs, on the basis of these criteria, would be candidates for immediate closure!

However, there also is a need for senior management to more clearly address the policy and strategic conditions by which an ERF should be established.

These go beyond the practical such as whether there will be more than one donor and whether a critical mass of funds will exist over a set period of time. More strategic consideration of the overall placement of the mechanism within existing or emerging country humanitarian architecture needs to be considered. In terms of the strategic issue immediately above, namely focus, care would need to be taken to ascertain the balance between two competing strategic foci in the country in question and also, if the balance were to be tipped toward resilience building, whether the ERF mechanism would be the most appropriate tool.

Looking towards closure, guidance such as this or a more strategic consideration of an individual proposal to establish an ERF would need to assess whether the emergency was that – a short term emergency that required a gap filling mechanism but which would be likely to be resolved with a relatively short time frame, or whether the locale in question was subject to chronic emergencies, implying a longer term commitment.

Findings 12, 13

Recommendation 4: OCHA HQ should seek additional donors for ERFs and strongly encourage Heads of Office and HCs to do so at the country level.

Several Findings demonstrated the degree to which a number of ERFs are under-resourced. Equally, some are pulled between support for emergencies and resilience building, with limitations of resources making this equation more sensitive in the local context. Along with the recommendations set down in the new Guidelines for the level of funding potentially necessary to launch a new ERF, OCHA strategically
faces a challenge relative to the degree of uncertainty that can arise with respect to ERF funding. This poses a realistic risk at the country level where continuity from year to year can be called into question if donors only chose to, or can only make annual commitments.

This poses a realistic risk at the country level where continuity from year to year can be called into question if donors only chose to, or can only make annual commitments. In large part, this situation may be caused by a lack of understanding between OCHA and the donors about what can and cannot be financed over a duration of time.

Clearly, a donor cannot make a binding multi-year commitment if their national budgetary architecture does not allow it. However, that does not mean that a donor, while only able to formally commit for one fiscal period, cannot provide OCHA at either the country or preferably the Headquarters level with at least an understanding in principle as to a predictable and multi-year level of support. This level of engagement however, would probably require OCHA Headquarters intervention with the headquarters of donors so as to impress upon them the growing need for some degree of predictability. Doing so would eliminate another country level risk, namely, the difficulty in response toward the end of the fiscal year in the absence of some level of awareness of future funding directions.

This Recommendation also speaks to OCHA taking a more proactive role in overall donor mobilization. While the country-based approach may have been adequate during the early stages, the level of competition for humanitarian funding is ever increasing. The country-based approach, which puts the onus on relatively junior OCHA personnel in the field, even the Head of Office, disaggregates fund raising and increases an unmanaged fiscal risk to the ERF mechanism in whole and in part.

Operational Recommendations

**Finding 5**

**Recommendation 5:** OCHA should consolidate in New York all ERF-related functions including the HQ review and approval of grant applications, but excluding the fiscal responsibility for disbursement.

It should be noted that the management of the ERF mechanism has been in a state of evolution for the last four to five years with the present structures in New York and Geneva only in place for the last two years.

An analysis of the ERF process shows that the decisions that are taken after the submission of a grant application by the HC are largely procedural. In the spirit of improving risk management and attempting to streamline the ERF mechanism, OCHA should consolidate in New York all ERF-related functions including the HQ review and approval of grant applications, now located in Geneva, but excluding the fiscal responsibility for disbursement.

As well, it should be noted that the policy-making and day-to-day advice to country level ERF staff is in large part provided by the FCS team based in New York as opposed to the AO personnel based in Geneva.

In the spirit of improving risk management and attempting to streamline the ERF mechanism, OCHA senior management should consolidate in New York all ERF-related functions including the HQ review and approval of grant applications, now located in Geneva, but excluding the fiscal responsibility for disbursement. In this way, more timely decisions are likely to occur and a more direct line of managerial accountability put into place.

**Finding 2**

**Recommendation 6:** More work needs to be done to improve the clarity of criteria for project selection vis a vis longer term remedial and recovery initiatives, and to enable ERFs to adapt approval/review processes to local conditions. Specific areas for improvement should include alternative approaches to workflow that would enable larger ERFs to be more transparent.
The new Guidelines have made major strides in establishing the basis for a consistent approach to the management of the ERF mechanism. They provide a necessary starting point on which the ERFs globally and at a country level can evolve.

While there is a general belief among stakeholders that the ERF mechanism has been directed toward life and livelihood saving situations, there is a growing voice that argues that the ERF mechanism should be part of a more proactive and preventative stream or at least favor remedial resilience building following a disaster. The Guidelines need to address this issue in detail. As well, they contemplate a workflow and timeline that appears to be predicated on an ERF which does not have a significant number of annual grants. Most present ERFs, with the exception of Ethiopia, would fall within this paradigm. However, it is not reasonable to conclude that in the future, another ERF or a new ERF could generate the volume so as to warrant a more transparent and interactive process, two highly positive characteristics of the Ethiopian process.

There are two possible approaches to addressing this issue within an operational context with both being dependent on policy guidance from OCHA senior management (see above).

First, the Guidelines as a whole could attempt to set a global approach to this dynamic question and encourage all ERFs to adhere to in essence one paradigm with respect to the focus of programming.

Second, the Guidelines could set out broad direction as to the focus of the ERF but require the Advisory Board of each ERF to articulate for the locale in question the local meaning of this broad guidance on an annual basis.

The current Guidelines contemplate a workflow and timeline that appears to be predicated on an ERF which does not have a significant number of annual grants and which does not have a consistent flow of grants in any significant critical mass. Most present ERFs, with the exception of Ethiopia, would fall within this paradigm. However, it is not reasonable to conclude that in the future and possibly in the immediate future, another ERF or a new ERF could generate sufficient volume so as to warrant a more transparent and interactive process, two highly positive aspects of engaged decision-making observed in Ethiopia. Data analysis of Haiti and Somalia shows that there would have been sufficient volume in those locales to warrant a highly interactive physical process so as to guard against the fragmentation of an ERF, which can ensue in instances of project-by-project decision-making. There are other areas where a greater degree of flexibility to meet local situations would be beneficial. For example, smaller ERFs where the level of expenditure per project is only a fraction of that in a larger one could benefit from some greater degree of flexibility in the application process and somewhat more simplified project proposal template.

As was noted at the start of the Recommendations section, this evaluation will provide practical advice but it will not go beyond and specifically provide administrative details of the “how to”. That is the responsibility of OCHA staff and managers in consultation with their stakeholders.

Finding 5

Recommendation 7: More work needs to be done to strengthen the roles of Review and Advisory Boards.

While the new Guidelines articulate roles and responsibilities for both these Boards, the reality of most of the present ERFs is that the Advisory Board is only tangentially engaged and many of the Review Boards conduct their business via the internet through a process of assumed consent via emails. Several Findings illustrated that the absence of actively engaged and working bodies has weakened effectiveness and has resulted in perceptions about its lack of relevance in some environments. As well, the role of both these bodies as country level mechanisms to examine performance related issues is virtually non-existent.

The vitality of the ERF is dependent upon the degree of active communication and partnership so as to galvanize partners and mobilize resources. In many cases, this is simply not occurring.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the Guidelines be amended to require the convening of the Advisory Board at least twice a year.

Equally, it is specifically recommended that, notwithstanding whether a Review Board conducts its review of projects electronically through an assumed consent model or whether it physically meets to do so, the
Review Board should be brought together at least twice a year to discuss project selection issues, strategic direction for the ERF, emerging challenges and other such issues which may influence their eventual project selection choices. Given that the Advisory Board is also being asked to meet on a regular basis, there might be some benefit in considering mounting both sessions, separately but at the same time, so as to in effect have a bi-annual ERF workshop and retreat.

**Recommendation 8:** OCHA should review the adequacy of resources provided to the ERF mechanism at the country level, by means of a country level needs assessment. Moreover, OCHA should stipulate that the performance of the ERF will be explicitly considered in the annual performance assessment of the Head of Office.

Throughout the Findings, there has been a thread of the impact of limited resources on ERFs. These Findings are first addressed at the strategic level by recommending that OCHA make a clear decision as to the priority of the ERF mechanism. This specific recommendation provides an operational bottom-up approach to determining the actual needs of an ERF as opposed to the arbitrary and top down approach which a recent audit recommended.

Key current gaps such as monitoring, evaluation, liaison with cluster partners, and management of Advisory/Review Boards should figure largely in any such assessment.

This is a fundamentally bottom up approach to determining the actual needs of an ERF as opposed to the top down approach in which a recent audit recommended somewhat arbitrary resource allocations for “small, medium and large” ERFs.

The key to this Recommendation is not so much the needs assessment as it is a very clear series of strategic level directions being communicated to Heads of Office about the importance of the ERF mechanism.

**Recommendation 9:** At the country level, OCHA should allocate more resources to orient /coach applicants, especially NGOs, to the requirements of the ERF process.

The ERF process does not explicitly involve capacity building for NGOs as an end in itself. However, testimony from NGOs shows that many, especially the less established, need a degree of guidance in the application process and to some extent, possibly in delivery activities. This Recommendation recognizes that for the ERF to attain its goal of increasing partnership and building capacity, some degree of support needs to be provided at the country level.

This Recommendation recognizes that for the ERF to attain its goal of increasing partnership and building capacity, some degree of support needs to be provided at the country level to better orient potential applicants and to work with them to improve their understanding of the application process and therefore indirectly increase their capacity.

This Recommendation therefore, is an expansion of the earlier Recommendation proposing a bottom up needs assessment. This issue warrants separate consideration given the degree to which was raised by stakeholders.

**Recommendation 10:** OCHA should strengthen the Head of Office’s management responsibility for the ERF.

It is reasonable to begin to explore whether the HC has a role as an administrator (exercising management responsibility) or whether the HC’s role with respect to the ERF is more tangentially linked to high level matters. In that context, and if ERF is to be managed by OCHA and OCHA is to be held accountable for ERF, it would seem logical that the management responsibility for in-country project approval be OCHA’s Head of Office. More importantly, transferring the management responsibility from the HC to the HOO would set lines of managerial accountability within OCHA and enable OCHA’s senior management to more directly link the ERF process with overall OCHA priorities.

In principle, OCHA only manages the ERF mechanism on behalf of donors and for the entire UN system, on a country basis. However, the growing reality of the ERF being a mechanism to support NGOs, as
opposed to an ancillary mechanism to “top up” UN agencies, points toward a recognition that OCHA and its managers are responsible and accountable for the ERF process.

In that light, it is reasonable to begin to explore whether the HC has a role as an administrator (exercising management responsibility) or whether the HC’s role with respect to the ERF is more tangential. In that context, and if ERF is to be managed by OCHA and OCHA is to be held accountable for the ERF process, it would seem logical that the management responsibility for in-country project approval be OCHA’s Head of Office. In this way, some improvement in timeliness and quality of applications might be possible, given the evidence that the HC approval process is not as speedy as is anticipated, nor does it appear to contain an active quality control function. More importantly, transferring the management responsibility from the HC to the HoO would more clearly set lines of managerial accountability within OCHA and enable OCHA’s senior management to more directly link the ERF process with overall OCHA priorities.

This approach does not alter the continuum of multiple levels of approval within OCHA, a continuum which would still have an in-country senior management review, now by the HoO. Therefore, the architecture of accountability set down in the Guidelines would remain. Also, Headquarters final approval would continue.

It is impossible to say with any certainty whether this new accountability chain would improve the quality of proposals and thereby reduce the time required for their internal revision, frequently spent at Headquarters. However, one thing is clear. It would more clearly place management accountability and performance measurement for the ERF process in the hands of the most senior OCHA manager in country. It would seem logical in that context, that Heads of Office would wish to submit as accurate a set of proposals as possible, assuming that their overall performance might in part be assessed on a factor related to the accuracy of ERF.

Recommendation 11: OCHA needs to specifically earmark funds for communications-related activities in order to improve awareness and transparency. Specifically, the ERF Guidelines should be translated into French and Arabic.

An examination of records shows a common tendency of multiple projects, year after year, being approved for the same NGOs. NGOs in several environments pointed out that they felt somewhat discriminated against or at least out of the communications loop. The staff of several ERFs pointed out that while they had had plans for more broad outreach and communications activities, recent budget cuts along with restricting monitoring missions eliminated outreach activities to a degree. The absence of French and Arabic language documentation, given the degree of the usage of French in Africa and the likelihood of ERFs being called upon in the future to address chronic disaster situations in French and Arabic-speaking African countries, is a major limitation of the ERF process.

It is understandable in times of budget restraint to eliminate what are seen as extraneous activities. However, if one of the strategic goals of ERF is to build new partnerships and strengthen the humanitarian network as a whole, then reducing opportunities for outreach and engagement and by implication the possibility of diversifying the applicant pool would seem to be running directly counter to this goal.

In exploring the needs assessment for an ERF at the country level, OCHA staff need to be more aware of the impact of their presently unilingual documentation – English. If one of the objectives of the ERF is to strengthen NGO capacity at the national and local level so they can become more effective partners, OCHA’s unilingualism was identified by stakeholders world-wide as an irritant and as a barrier. Some indicated that this English-only approach led to delays due to some partners lacking English language skills and thus presenting inadequate proposals. As well, OCHA staff remarked that they had to spend time coaching applicants and in some instances, nearly “ghost writing” applications due to the absence of language capacity.

The absence of French and Arabic language documentation, given the degree of the usage of French in Africa and the likelihood of ERFs being called upon in the future to address chronic disaster situations in French and Arabic-speaking African countries, is a considerable impediment to the ERF process potentially being responsive.
Performance Management Recommendations

Recommendation 12: OCHA should set performance standards for project monitoring that would over a three year period rise to 100% compliance.

Earlier Findings showed that resource limitations were hampering the level of project monitoring, in some instances with monitoring levels in the range of 60%. Clearly, this level of quality control is inadequate. The reasons for low rates vary. In some instances, there are clearly security or access considerations. However, in the Case Studies for this exercise it became evident that resource limitations were the predominate cause of less than complete rates of monitoring.

As part of the country-based needs assessment that has been recommended above, it is essential to include considerations relative to moving the rate of monitoring to as close to 100% as is possible over several years. It is not reasonable to recommend immediate full compliance, possibly adding 30-40% monitoring workload over a year. Rather, it is more reasonable as part of the needs assessment for Heads of Office to develop a country-specific monitoring plan that might combine ERF staff and where appropriate peer monitoring and cluster team members so as to increase the rate before the next cyclical Global Evaluation.

In addition, Heads of Office, over the space of several years, should be directed to prepare a monitoring compliance report on an annual basis which identifies the reasons why individual projects were not monitored and lays out remedial action to do so.

Recommendation 13: OCHA, as part of the revision of the ERF Guidelines in 2013, should more explicitly indicate that project monitoring must include assessment of the number/type of beneficiaries affected by/impacted by the project; and that end of project reports explicitly require the same data.

As part of the documentary review for this evaluation and as noted in the Findings, project documentation contains numerous gaps with respect to probably the most important consideration that can affect an ERF – who did it actually benefit. While it is unreasonable with the duration and size of the ERF project model to attempt to attribute long-term impacts, it is quite possible to begin to articulate projects more in terms of their beneficiaries and less in terms of specific project outputs – the things delivered or done.

Given that this Recommendation would require ERF country level staff to orient potential applicant organizations into new paradigms, it is more likely that this Recommendation could be implemented a year after the promulgation of the 2013 revision of the Guidelines.

Recommendation 14: The current three year cycle of strategic evaluation of the ERF process needs to be maintained as the basis of a more “learning based” approach to evaluation.

This present Global Evaluation is the first of its kind in relation to the ERF mechanism, replacing a prior disaggregated approach of individual country-based evaluations. While this individual approach may have been useful as a formative technique to identify strengths and weaknesses on an individual country basis, as an evaluation mechanism it did not lead to a gestalt that was able to assess the worth of the ERF process in both the global and country dimensions.

Therefore, there would be considerable benefit, especially given the higher level of many of the challenges that face the ERF mechanism, in maintaining a triennial cycle which allows for a degree of immediacy, better access to stakeholders and thus a greater possibility for sustained organizational learning.

Recommendation 15: EGS should mount exploratory sectorial evaluations at the global level to begin a process of developing the ability to report on results/impacts and also to promote organizational learning.

While a triennial cycle recommended above constitutes a holistic approach to overall evaluation and performance assessment for the ERF mechanism, as noted in the Findings above, the present inability to
go beyond verifiable output reporting and only tangentially reliable testimony about outcomes is a major gap in the performance measurement architecture related to ERF.

The individual project basis of the ERF mechanism makes it impossible within the realm of any reasonable costs to conduct individual evaluations of the beneficiary impact of separate projects. However, an overall analysis of the ERF project portfolio on a global basis shows a high degree of commonality of work. For example, ERFs in several locales appear to conduct very similar types of programming in key areas such as restoration of shelter, nutrition, and WASH or the response to IDP situations. Therefore, conducting a kind of portfolio evaluation of, for example, a selected number of nutrition projects in possibly four or five ERFs is possible. In this way, the “drill down” could begin to reach toward the assessment of beneficiary impact. Moreover, this kind of selective portfolio approach would enable OCHA to better assess the degree of interconnectivity between its work and the work of others, thereby better analyzing “common success factors” and thus reducing risk.

It should be noted that at the country level in Ethiopia such a process was undertaken in relation to the highly contentious activity of support for water trucking. Therefore, it can be done and does not need to “wait” until a formally developed Theory of Change for the ERF process is developed. What is more important is to begin the process of seeking “results” and strengthening organizational learning.

The choice of EGS to conduct these kinds of portfolio evaluations is fairly obvious. While they could in theory be conducted by other elements of OCHA’s Headquarters, the independence provided by EGS would give donors and other interested stakeholders a higher degree of confidence in such portfolio reviews and especially in the first few where the mechanism would necessarily evolve - learning by doing.

**SETTING PRIORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Report presents three broad categories of recommendations: Strategic, Operational and Performance Management.

In addition, they have also been categorized on the basis of the degree of their urgency, utilizing the principles that contemporary approaches to strategic planning. Three categories related to urgency are presented below along with the identification of responsibility and overall timeliness. These three categories are:

- **Urgent to implement** – recommendations which are central to the strategic direction of the ERF mechanism as a whole and which underpin all subsequent recommendations.

- **Important to implement** – recommendations that are largely operational in nature and constitute a range of activities that can be implemented by OCHA and whose implementation is highly important to improving the day-to-day operations of the ERF mechanism and strengthening its contribution to the overall humanitarian architecture and response.

- **Desirable to implement** – recommendations, for the most part operational in nature, that are contingent on resource availability and are not immediately crucial. However, they constitute desirable adaptations and improvements.

All these recommendations have a relatively short timeframe, a maximum of two years, so as to ensure implementation before the next global evaluation, which is anticipated in three years. As well in line with the TOR, responsibilities for implementation are suggested.
## Recommendation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urgent to implement</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timeliness</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation 1.</td>
<td>OCHA needs to clarify whether the ERF is a global priority and if it is to be one more clearly articulate it in terms of the relation with CERF and clusters.</td>
<td>OCHA Senior Management (all four) CPD</td>
<td>Rapid - within six months (all four)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 2.</td>
<td>OCHA should clarify the focus of the ERF mechanism (where the ERF “fits”) in relation to being an emergency response mechanism versus a tool to promote longer term reliance building activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 3.</td>
<td>OCHA should issue policy guidance about the strategic rationale that may underpin the opening of an ERF and its subsequent closure and review the viability of all current ERFs and flow this up with a viability and relevance review of all current ERFs.</td>
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<td>OCHA should strengthen the Head of Office’s management responsibility for the ERF.</td>
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<td>Important to implement</td>
<td>Recommendation 5.</td>
<td>OCHA should consolidate in New York all ERF-related functions including the HQ review and approval of grant applications, now located in Geneva, but excluding the fiscal responsibility for disbursement</td>
<td>Donors and SMT, CPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation 6.</td>
<td>More work needs to be done to improve the clarity of the criteria for project selection vis a vis longer term remedial and recovery initiatives and to enable ERFs to adapt approval/review processes to local conditions. Specific areas should include alternative approaches to workflow that would enable larger ERFs to be more transparent.</td>
<td>FCS</td>
<td>Within 1 year</td>
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<td>Recommendation 8.</td>
<td>OCHA should review the adequacy of resources provided at the country level by means of a country level needs assessment. Moreover, OCHA should stipulate that the performance of the ERF mechanism will be explicitly considered part of the annual performance assessment of the Head of Office.</td>
<td>CPD, FCS, Heads of Office</td>
<td>Within 6 months to commence, within 1 year to complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 14.</td>
<td>The current three year cycle of evaluation of the ERF process needs to be maintained as the basis of a more learning based&quot; approach to evaluation</td>
<td>EGS, CPD</td>
<td>Within 1 year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 15.</td>
<td>EGS should mount exploratory sectorial evaluations at the global level to begin a process of developing the ability to report on results/impacts and also to promote organizational learning</td>
<td>EGS</td>
<td>Within 1 year to commence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 12.</td>
<td>OCHA should set performance standards for project monitoring that would over a three year period rise to 100% compliance.</td>
<td>ASB, FCS</td>
<td>Within 1 year to establish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation 13.</td>
<td>OCHA as part of the revision of the Guidelines in 2013 should more explicitly indicate that project monitoring must include assessment of the number/type of beneficiaries affected by/impacted by the project in question; and that end of project reports explicitly require the same data.</td>
<td>FCS, ASB</td>
<td>Within 1 year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desirable to implement</td>
<td>Recommendation 4.</td>
<td>OCHA centrally should pursue additional donors for ERF and at the country level, strongly encourage Heads of Office and HCs to do so.</td>
<td>CPD, ERSMB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation</td>
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<td>Timeliness</td>
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<td>Recommendation 7. More work needs to be done to strengthen the role of Review/Advisory Boards.</td>
<td>FCS, CRD, Heads of Office</td>
<td>Within 2 years</td>
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<td>Recommendation 9. At the country level, OCHA should allocate more resources to orient/coach applicants, especially NGOs, to the requirements of the ERF process.</td>
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<td>Within 2 years</td>
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<td>Recommendation 11. OCHA needs to specifically earmark funds for communications-related activities so as to improve awareness and transparency. Specifically, the Guidelines should be translated into French and Arabic.</td>
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<td>Within 1 year</td>
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## Appendix I  Matrix of Evaluation Issues/Questions; and Findings and Related Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/Theme</th>
<th>Major Evaluation Questions/Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Example of Sub-Questions</th>
<th>Related Findings</th>
<th>Related Recommendations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding and project issues</td>
<td>How effective are approaches to ensure that the recipient agencies have a comparative advantage (such as capacity to implement within the timeframe of the grant, past performance, speed of distribution and absorptive capacity)?</td>
<td>What mechanisms are used to assess the organizational capacity of recipients? Are remedial/inter agency capacity building activities permitted?</td>
<td>Finding 1 – Lack of ability to fund capacity building leads to uneven quality of applications and negatively impacts the timeliness of ERF projects</td>
<td>Recommendation 6 – More work needs to be done to improve the clarity of the criteria for project selection vis a vis longer term remedial and recovery initiatives and to enable ERFs to adapt approval/review processes to local conditions. Specific areas should include alternative approaches to workflow that would enable larger ERFs to be more transparent.</td>
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<td>Complementarity – Addonitiy – Quality – Appropriateness</td>
<td>How is success/failure of projects funded by ERFs measured?</td>
<td>Do projects have theories of change / logical frameworks built in and if so how are they assessed? Has OCHA developed a selection criteria protocol/paradigm; and if so what constitutes it? What does OCHA consider to be “high quality”? Does it vary as to context?</td>
<td>Finding 2 - Use of performance measurement tools in the ERF proposals is mostly procedural, as the approval processes consider money, whether the applicant can do the job and whether the need remains; this limits the ability of review bodies to consider planned initiatives in terms of their longer term consequences or linkages to broader strategies</td>
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<td>Are there firm or flexible pattern of project monitoring; and if they are flexible what constitutes the “flexibility”? How do country level advisory level (including civil society) and stakeholder groups contribute to selection decisions?</td>
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<td>How effective is OCHA in identifying risks (in implementation, financial, accountability, reputational) and mitigating them?</td>
<td>Do OCHA have a risk management strategy re: ERFs? If so how is it used?</td>
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<td>Issue/Theme</td>
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<td>To what extent do ERF-funded projects take into consideration needs of vulnerable groups and cross-cutting issues such as gender, age, and environment? Are those issues a factor in the selection of individual projects?</td>
<td>Does OCHA have formal selection criteria that address such horizontal priorities? If so how does it use them? Are civil society groups representing these vulnerable groups included in OCHA decision-making/advisory mechanisms?</td>
<td>Finding 38 – Issues related to disability or age are not being taken into account in project design or approval. While the Gender Marker has been formally introduced, there is global concern regarding whether it is influencing the design and delivery of programs or whether it is seen as a compliance-related element of application</td>
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<td>To what extent has the ERF contributed to local capacity building and made linkages to disaster risk reduction, recovery and longer term development programmes?</td>
<td>What factors hinder or strengthen capacity enhancement? What specific evidence exists of contributions by ERF to longer term goals? How are ERF measures re: DRM integrated / coordinated with the DRM work of others? Is there any evidence of overlap between development partners?</td>
<td>Finding 3 - ERFs are only beginning to make contributions to disaster preparedness and resilience building and may not have sufficient critical mass to make viable contributions</td>
<td>Recommendation 9 – At the country level, OCHA should allocate more resources to orient/coach applicants, especially NGOs, to the requirements of the ERF process</td>
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<td>Processes and Inputs</td>
<td>How effective/efficient/ timely are ERFs in providing initial and bridge funding to address critical unforeseen humanitarian needs?</td>
<td>Do any have quality/services standards? Do any have timeliness standards?</td>
<td>Finding 4 – The timeframe of the ERF process, four to eight weeks from the identification of the problem to project approval, compromises its ability to be a rapid follow-on mechanism. Finding 6 - Current quality control mechanisms, located primarily within the project approval processes, are unevenly applied. Finding 7 – Demand-driven, project-by-project approval processes disaggregate decision-making, and detract from strategic considerations of need. Finding 8 – Most Review Boards, by using an assumed</td>
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<td>Issue/Theme</td>
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<td>Are both headquarters and country level stakeholders receiving all necessary and relevant information?</td>
<td>How and on what frequency are various groups of stakeholders engaged? What are the perceptions of these various groups of HQ and country level stakeholders about the scope, quality and timelines of the information they receive?</td>
<td>Finding 11 – Opportunities for engaging ERF partners and obtaining their feedback have not been explored by the new Guidelines</td>
<td>Recommendation 11 – OCHA needs to specifically earmark funds for communications-related activities so as to improve awareness and transparency. Specifically, the Guidelines should be translated into French and Arabic.</td>
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<td>How adequate is OCHA's capacity to administer and manage ERFs, and to what extent is it dependent on the operating context?</td>
<td>What level of resources is available at HQ and at the country level to manage ERFs? Are there trends in these levels? Are there any benchmarks/standards that regulate or guide the allocation of resources to ERFs at both HQ and at the country level? Are there wide disparities at the country level and if so why? What are the perceptions of internal stakeholders re: adequacy? What are the perceptions of external stakeholders re: adequacy?</td>
<td>Finding 12 – OCHA appears to have sufficient HQ resources (Geneva and New York) to administer and disburse Finding 13 – OCHA country offices generally have insufficient resources dedicated to the ERFs, which lowers efficiency as well as ability to undertake functions like outreach, communications and improved performance</td>
<td>Recommendation 4 – OCHA centrally should pursue additional donors for ERF and at the country level, strongly encourage Heads of Office and HCs to do so. Recommendation 8 – OCHA should review the adequacy of resources provided at the country level by means of a country level needs assessment. Moreover, OCHA</td>
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<td>Are the indirect programme support costs charged by OCHA appropriate and how do they compare to other funding mechanisms?</td>
<td>What is the average level of support costs? What constitutes such costs? If there are large variance (+/- 10%), why? Has there been any change in the patterns/level of these costs over the lifetime of the ERF programme? How does the level of costs compare with other OCHA activities and with other grant programmes of humanitarian partners?</td>
<td>Finding 5 – The dual step process of cluster review followed by the Review Board may be time consuming and its effectiveness is highly reliant on active engagement of these bodies</td>
<td>Recommendation 5 – OCHA should consolidate in New York all ERF-related functions including the HQ review and approval of grant applications, now located in Geneva, but excluding the fiscal responsibility for disbursement. Recommendation 7 – More work needs to be done to strengthen the role of Review/Advisory Boards Recommendation 10 – OCHA should strengthen the Head of Office’s management responsibility for the ERF.</td>
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<td>How clear are roles and responsibilities of FCS and other administrative units within OCHA, HCs, in-country ERF Advisory Boards and clusters?</td>
<td>Are roles and responsibilities formally set out? Are there any overlaps or ambiguities (perceived or actual)? Do external stakeholders perceive clarity? Do stakeholders internal to OCHA perceive clarity?</td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Critical gaps filled - Leadership and coordination</td>
<td>To what extent has the availability of initial and bridge funding and un-earmarked nature of the funds allowed better targeting and contributed to filling critical gaps in the response?</td>
<td>Finding 14 – ERF granting has filled selective gaps and thus has contributed, to a limited degree, to the attainment of humanitarian outcomes Finding 15 – The outcomes of ERFs at the country level are dependent on the quality of the leadership in that environment</td>
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<td>Operational Effects</td>
<td>To what extent has the use of ERF funds improved operational effects of the humanitarian response, in particular relevance/appropriateness, flexibility, timeliness and coverage?</td>
<td>What specific features of ERFs have contributed to these improvements?</td>
<td>Finding 20 – The size and duration of the funded projects positions the ERF mechanism as a short-term instrument well suited to life and livelihood saving activities and gap filling</td>
<td>Recommendation 3 – OCHA should issue policy guidance about the strategic rationale that may underpin the opening of an ERF and its subsequent closure and review the viability of all current ERFs and flow this up with a viability and relevance review of all current ERFs</td>
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<td>How relevant/appropriate are the objectives the ERF mechanism and the portfolio of projects financed to humanitarian needs in respective countries?</td>
<td>Has ERF funding been directed to the highest priority areas (geographical, thematic, and sectoral) within the response?</td>
<td>Finding 21 – The demand-driven and individual project basis limits the ability of clusters and Review Boards to prioritize and respond to what may be the most</td>
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<td>How adaptive is the ERF mechanism to changing needs? How flexible is ERF funding?</td>
<td>What specific mechanisms differentiate ERFs from other common funds re: adaptation and flexibility? What instances of their use are there in meeting “changing needs”? What are the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders re: flexibility and adaptation?</td>
<td>Finding 17 – ERF granting is flexible in terms of size and type of interventions as well as accessibility</td>
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<td>To what extent has the availability/use of ERF funds improved the timeliness of the response?</td>
<td>What specific mechanisms differentiate ERFs from other common funds re: timeliness? What instances of their use are there in improving timeliness? What are the perceptions of internal and external stakeholders re: ERF as a mechanism to improve the timeliness of response?</td>
<td>Finding 18 – Timeliness of the ERF process is vastly superior to virtually all other humanitarian financing mechanisms</td>
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<td>How do ERFs link with other humanitarian pooled funds - namely CERF, and other MDTFs?</td>
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<td>Finding 19 – The ERF mechanism has raised the visibility of OCHA by providing it, in selected locales, an active granting function</td>
<td>Recommendation 1 – OCHA needs to clarify whether the ERF is a global priority and if it is to be one more clearly articulate it in terms of the relation with CERF and clusters.</td>
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<td>How does the size of ERFs impact their added value, in particular where other pooled funds are present?</td>
<td>How does the operating environment impact the effectiveness and value-added of ERFs? What is the percentage of the ERF in regard to the overall humanitarian response and financing?</td>
<td>Finding 16 – While ERF granting has contributed to the overall operational effectiveness of humanitarian support, that contribution is moderated by limited resources available Finding 23 – The benefits of ERF granting are in large part dependent on national conditions and the strength and effectiveness of the cluster system Finding 35 – Many ERFs do not possess a sufficient critical mass to make more than a nominal contribution to the attainment of their specified goals</td>
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<td>What progress has been made since the inception of ERFs (how were shortcomings identified by previous evaluations/audits addressed; what are the lessons learned from implementing these recommendations)?</td>
<td>What recommendations were made by evaluations and audits? What was the rate of positive managerial response? What has been the level/rate of execution? What are the perceptions about the usefulness of these changes?</td>
<td>Finding 33 – There is widespread ambiguity about where ERFs fit in the totality of the humanitarian response. Finding 36 – The demand-driven nature of ERFs blurs their country level strategic role Finding 37 – There is a global debate over the mandate of ERFs in relation to resilience building and DRR considerations</td>
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<td>Operational Impact</td>
<td>Critical unforeseen humanitarian needs addressed</td>
<td>How, and to what extent has ERF mechanism contributed to the humanitarian community’s ability to address critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner?</td>
<td>What specific features of the ERF lend themselves to improving the humanitarian response? What are the views of recipients and national governments regarding the overall operational impact of the ERFs? What are the views of other development partners donors other UN etc.)?</td>
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<td>What has the performance and ‘value added’ of the ERF mechanism been in the context of the overall humanitarian architecture and humanitarian reform process (e.g. RC/HC strengthening, cluster approach, development of effective partnership between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors, humanitarian financing)?</td>
<td>How has the RC/HC function been affected? Is there evidence of increased cluster cooperation? What are the specific “value added” elements? Has the ERF produced synergies or catalyzed additional funding?</td>
<td>Finding 34 – There is ambiguity as to degree to which OCHA itself views ERFs as a priority instrument</td>
<td>Recommendation 2 – OCHA should clarify the focus of the ERF mechanism (where the ERF “fits”) in relation to being an emergency response mechanism versus a tool to promote longer term reliance building activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>How, and to what extent has the ERF mechanism contributed to enhancing partnerships, in particular with the NGO community (international and national)?</td>
<td>Does OCHA have a policy about relations with NGOs in the context of ERF/CERF activities? Does OCHA have any specific performance measurement techniques to assess “enhancing partnerships”? How does OCHA secure feedback from its NGO partners, from all manner of partners? What are the perception of OCHA NGO partners and other partners such as donors about “enhanced partnership” and if positive what specific examples can be shown?</td>
<td>Finding 24 – NGO partners have gained the most from the ERF mechanism in terms of strengthening capacity Finding 25 – The impact of ERFs on the quality of partnerships with NGOs is dependent on individual circumstances and not systemic factors</td>
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<td>To what extent is OCHA seen as a “good partner” in the context of ERFs?</td>
<td>What are the perceptions of OCHA ERF partners about the quality of the partnership relationship? Are there differing perceptions based on differing kinds of partners? What are the perceived strengths and challenges of the OCHA ERF national Advisory Group mechanism?</td>
<td>Finding 26 – Generally OCHA in the context of the ERF is seen as a good partner</td>
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<td>Performance Measurement</td>
<td>Do existing monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems provide relevant and timely information to the right audience? How is the information provided used? What are the barriers (and opportunities) to strengthening impact/outcome results</td>
<td>What systems/procedures/policies currently exist? What is their frequency? Who are the audiences? What are seen as current strengths; and what are seen as current limitations? To what degree is impact/outcome reporting re: beneficiary impact being undertaken? What barriers exist? How could this be improved?</td>
<td>Finding 27 – Prior audit processes resulted in excessive delays in final disbursement and had negative impact on recipients, especially NGOs Finding 28 – Currently there are no standards on which to assess the quality of the management of ERFs</td>
<td>Recommendation 12 – OCHA should set performance standards for project monitoring that would over a three year period rise to 100% compliance.</td>
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<td>Reporting</td>
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<td>Finding 29 – Current reporting tools, while providing sufficient information on basic stewardship, are insufficient to promote on-going learning at the project, country, or global level</td>
<td>Recommendation 13 – OCHA as part of the revision of the Guidelines in 2013 should more explicitly indicate that project monitoring must include assessment of the number/type of beneficiaries affected by/impacted by the project in question; and that end of project reports explicitly require the same data.</td>
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<td>What key indicators are used for measuring the success of ERFs and how can data collection processes be strengthened?</td>
<td>What are current key indicators; and is there agreement on commonality? To what degree has data collection harmonization been undertaken? What are seen as current strengths; and what are seen as current limitations re: key indicators?</td>
<td>Finding 31 – Opportunities for the strengthening of evaluation at the country and global levels have not been taken, thus limiting OCHA’s ability to more dynamically report on performance of the ERFs Finding 32 – Current key indicators in the approved ERF Results Framework are largely process-based and do not lend themselves to the assessment of results beyond outputs</td>
<td>Recommendation 14 – The current three year cycle of strategic evaluation of the ERF process needs to be maintained as the basis of a more “learning based” approach to evaluation. Recommendation 15 - EGS should mount exploratory sectorial evaluations at the global level to begin a process of developing the ability to report on results/impacts and also to promote organizational learning.</td>
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<td>What evaluation methodology might be best applied to ERF grants, given their average size and the fact that they often provide only partial funding for projects?</td>
<td>What methodologies have been used in the past if any by OCHA to assess small sized activities? What methodologies are used by other humanitarian partners? What are the costs versus benefits of evaluation at the scale of ERF grants?</td>
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<td>Should commitment to evaluation be included as a criterion for future funding decisions?</td>
<td>What is the experience of other humanitarian partners in the assessment of medium sized granting programmes such as ERFs? What are the costs versus benefits of evaluation at the scale of ERFs and ERF individual grants?</td>
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Appendix II : Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE

GLOBAL EVALUATION

OF THE

EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUNDS (ERFS)
RATIONALE AND USE OF THE EVALUATION

In 2011, in consultation with donors, OCHA instituted an evaluation policy to conduct triennial global evaluations of country-based pooled funds. As such, a global evaluation of the Emergency Response Funds (ERFs) will be conducted in 2012, replacing individual ERF evaluations periodically undertaken in the past. This evaluation meets the requirements of the Country-Based Pooled Funds evaluation policy by providing an independent assessment of the contribution of ERFs to the humanitarian community’s ability to address critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner.

The evaluation will identify strengths and weaknesses of the ERF mechanism and provide specific recommendations regarding areas that need to be strengthened, as well information on progress made since the creation of OCHA Funding and Coordination Section in 2009. The evaluation will also explore how the mechanism has contributed to humanitarian reform and response, and will take into account, to the extent possible, the implications of the ongoing IASC Transformative Agenda. The results of the evaluation will at the global level inform the review of ERF Guidelines in 2013 and development of policy in relevant areas; at the country level, the evaluation is expected to lead to improvements in ERF management, processes and operations. The recommendations of the evaluation will be addressed through the Management Response Plan as per OCHA Evaluation Policy.

Overview of the Emergency Response Funds (ERFs)

The name Emergency Response Fund (ERF) is an umbrella term covering a broad range of country-based pooled funds in use since 1997. The main objective of ERFs is to provide Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies with rapid and flexible in-country funding to address unforeseen humanitarian needs. ERFs provide governments and the private sector with an opportunity to pool their contributions to a specific country to enable timely and coordinated humanitarian assistance in response to emergencies. The aim of ERFs is to provide initial funding, fill critical gaps and bridge funding to enable humanitarian partners to meet the short-term emergency needs of vulnerable communities without delay. They are usually established to meet unforeseen needs not included in the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) or similar coordination mechanism, but in line with Common Humanitarian Plan (CHAP) objectives and identified priorities. ERFs are not intended to provide core funding to projects or programmes in protracted crises, although some ERFs, especially when they are sizeable, may fund critical gaps in the CAP (Consolidated Appeals Process). OCHA created a Funding and Coordination Section (FCS) in 2009 to oversee funding mechanisms such as ERFs and to provide technical advice and support to OCHA at the country level in the development of policy and procedure relating to funding mechanisms.

As of March 2012 there are 12 ERFs in operation: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe. Three ERFs, namely Iraq, Nepal and Uganda, have closed at end of 2011. Generally, ERFs are relatively small in size (less than $10 million), provide small to medium sized grants (less than $500,000), and predominantly fund NGOs. The first ERF, established in Angola in 1997 to respond to increasing humanitarian needs caused by years of conflict, had received US$24.5 million from eight donors until its closing in 2004. The Ethiopia HRF is continuously the largest fund since the creation of ERFs and is unique as it operates in a country with no CAP and where it is the only

1 ERFs are also known as Humanitarian Response Funds (HRFs), Emergency Response and Reconciliation Fund (ERRF), Humanitarian Multi-Stakeholder Fund (HMSF)

2 The list of ERFs active during the period of 2009 to 2011, together with the dates of their creation and annual and total contribution, is presented in Annex to this ToR
humanitarian financing mechanism. The Haiti ERF, with the largest annual portfolio in the history of the mechanism, has received a total of approximately $82 million in donations from at least 42 different donors since August 2008 (majority of the funding was triggered by the 2010 Earthquake).

An ERF is under the overall management and oversight of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) with day-to-day management and financial administration performed by OCHA. In response to emerging humanitarian needs, partners submit proposals for ERF funding to OCHA, and the HC, supported by a technical Review Board and by sector/cluster groups, makes decisions on grants. An Advisory Board, comprised of donor, UN and NGO representatives, advises the HC on policy issues and strategic direction of the fund. The specifics of the individual funds reflect the country contexts in which they have been established and therefore differ to varying degrees in purpose, approach and practice.
Previous Evaluations and Reviews

A number of evaluations and studies since the Humanitarian Reform in 2005 have looked at humanitarian pooled funding mechanisms managed by OCHA. Two evaluations of Common Humanitarian Funds (CHF) were commissioned[^3], and three of Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)[^4]. The 2007 Review of OCHA Emergency Response Funds[^5] emphasized their contribution to humanitarian response, particularly with respect to improved ability to quickly respond to sudden emergencies, fill gaps in humanitarian response, and scale up. Also noted, however, was the need to further refine and strengthen ERF processes, connectedness to other funds, and institutional relations. Two evaluations of individual ERFs were conducted in 2011, that of the Haiti Emergency Relief and Response Fund (ERRF) and of Pakistan ERF. In addition to these evaluations, there were some critical audits of the country-based pooled funds: Sudan CHF in 2010, Ethiopia and Somalia HRFs in 2010 and Haiti ERRF in 2011. This evaluation will consider relevant findings and recommendations made in previous evaluations and audits and follow-up actions taken.

A number of significant changes occurred in the humanitarian financing arena since the Review of OCHA Emergency Response Funds was conducted in 2007, making this evaluation particularly timely. These include the adoption of humanitarian financing by OCHA senior management as a core function, establishment of OCHA FCS in New York and a dedicated unit in OCHA Administrative Services Branch to support ERFs, and the creation of an IASC Sub-Working Group on Humanitarian Financing. In addition, seven new ERFs were established during this period.

Evaluation Objectives, Scope, and Purpose

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Provide an independent assessment of the contribution of ERFs to the humanitarian community’s ability to address critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner;
- Examine the contribution of ERFs to strengthening the leadership of Humanitarian Coordinators, coordination role of the cluster system, and building partnerships (in particular with national and local NGOs);
- Review the accountability and governance structure of ERFs;
- Examine the role of the FCS, Coordination and Response Division (CRD), Donor Relations Section (DRS) and Administrative Service Branch (ASB) as well as the role of Head of Country Office and the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), map the progress made since 2009 in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of ERFs, and identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses.

The evaluation will examine the processes, outcomes, effects and operational impact of ERFs as outlined in the Results Framework depicted in the section VI of this TOR. It will cover all ERFs in operation during the period from 2009 to 2011, with five currently active ERFs to be selected for field visit.

While the evaluation does not cover countries where ERFs operated and were subsequently merged into CHFs, it will consider both the closed funds and the ones incorporated in CHFs to provide insight into: (a) issues of ERF closure; (b) overall usefulness of ERFs for the HC; (c) integration of policy and management of ERFs with other humanitarian funds; and (d) policy and operational issues of ERF support to NGOs and UN agencies.

[^5]: Review of OCHA Emergency Response Funds, Development Initiatives, 2007
The evaluation will generate specific, actionable recommendations whose purpose is twofold: at the global level, to inform the review of ERF Guidelines in 2013 and the development of policy in relevant areas, and at the country level, to lead to improvements in ERF management, processes and operations.

**ERF Result Framework and key areas of inquiry**

Key areas to be examined are:

The success of ERFs in meeting their goal to support early action and response to critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner;

The performance, ‘value added’, and cost effectiveness of ERFs in the context of the overall humanitarian architecture and humanitarian reform process (e.g. RC/HC strengthening, cluster approach, development of effective partnership between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors, including local and national NGOs);

The level and nature of accountability between ERF-recipients to RC/HC, donors, beneficiaries, and others;

The strategic, managerial and operational aspects of ERFs, including structure and focus, the efficiency and effectiveness of administration, fundraising, needs assessment, criteria for allocation of funds, monitoring and reporting, and connectedness with other funding sources;

Internal (e.g. staffing capacity, management arrangements) and external (e.g. contextual and political) factors which affect ability of ERFs to deliver on their objectives;

The accountability and risk management systems in place.

The analysis should be structured around the ERF Results Framework depicted in the figure below. The evaluation team should test the validity of the Framework and may suggest modifications to the Framework itself or to the proposed list of key questions in the inception phase of the evaluation.
### ERF Results Framework/Key Questions

#### Operational Impact

**Critical unforeseen humanitarian needs addressed**

How, and to what extent has ERF mechanism contributed to the humanitarian community’s ability to address critical unforeseen humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner?

What has the performance and ‘value added’ of the ERF mechanism been in the context of the overall humanitarian architecture and humanitarian reform process (e.g. RC/HC strengthening, cluster approach, development of effective partnership between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors, humanitarian financing)?

#### Operational Effects

**Relevance/Appropriateness - Flexibility – Timeliness - Coverage**

To what extent has the use of ERF funds improved operational effects of the humanitarian response, in particular relevance/appropriateness, flexibility, timeliness and coverage? What specific features of ERFs have contributed to these improvements?

How relevant/appropriate are the objectives the ERF mechanism and the portfolio of projects financed to humanitarian needs in respective countries? Has ERF funding been directed to the highest priority areas (geographical, thematic, and sectoral) within the response?

How adaptive is the ERF mechanism to changing needs? How flexible is ERF funding?

To what extent has the availability/use of ERF funds improved the timeliness of the response?

How do ERFs link with other humanitarian pooled funds - namely CERF, and other MDTFs? What is the value added of having ERFs as a complement to other funding streams? What is the effect of the presence of an ERF on the overall levels of humanitarian funding available for a crisis?

How does the size of ERFs impact their added value, in particular where other pooled funds are present?

How does the operating environment impact the effectiveness and value-added of ERFs?

#### Outcomes

**Critical gaps filled - Leadership and coordination -Partnerships**

To what extent has the availability of initial and bridge funding and un-earmarked nature of the funds allowed better targeting and contributed to filling critical gaps in the response?

To what extent has the ERF mechanism contributed to further strengthening the role of the RC/HC and the clusters? What opportunities does the IASC Transformative Agenda provide in terms of contribution of ERFs in strengthening the humanitarian response leadership?

To what extent has the ERF mechanism help improve prioritization discussions and decisions within and across clusters?

How, and to what extent has the ERF mechanism contributed to enhancing partnerships, in particular with the NGO community (international and national)?

#### Processes and Inputs

**Effective and transparent proposal review - Timely allocation and distribution - Collective prioritization of need - Reporting, monitoring, evaluation and audit**

How effective/efficient are ERFs in providing initial and bridge funding to address critical unforeseen humanitarian needs?

How timely are allocation, disbursement, and transfer of funds? How does timeliness of ERF funding
compare with other funding sources?

To what extent do the vetting and quality control mechanisms impact allocation and timely disbursement of funds to partners (particularly national NGOs)?

How transparent is management, allocation, and distribution of the funds?

To what extent are the prioritization and vetting processes inclusive, thorough and based on good-quality criteria? Do these processes represent due diligence?

Do existing monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems provide relevant and timely information to the right audience? How is the information provided used? What are the barriers (and opportunities) to strengthening impact/outcome results reporting?

Are both headquarters and country level stakeholders receiving all necessary and relevant information?

How effective, efficient and timely are quality control mechanisms in place for: 1) planning and design, 2) approval of projects, 3) fund disbursement; 4) monitoring, reporting and review; 5) auditing?

How adequate is OCHA’s capacity to administer and manage ERFs, and to what extent is it dependant on the operating context?

How well are the individual ERFs managed?

How effective are the structures established for governance and accountability, for individual funds and globally?

Are the indirect programme support costs charged by OCHA appropriate and how do they compare to other funding mechanisms?

How effective and efficient is FCS in overseeing ERFs and providing technical advice and support to OCHA at the country level in the development of relevant policy and procedures? How effective and efficient is the support from the CRD, DRS and ASB?

How is the role of ERC as a decision maker for establishment/closure of ERFs and administrator for OCHA’s trust funds (which are used as ERF channels) defined and executed? Have the appropriate measures to mitigate the risks associated with those roles been taken?

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How effective are approaches to ensure that the recipient agencies have a comparative advantage (such as capacity to implement within the timeframe of the grant, past performance, speed of distribution and absorptive capacity)? How clear and transparent are the criteria for eligibility of funding and selection of projects?

How is success/failure of projects funded by ERFs measured? Are the projects funded of demonstrated high quality?

How effective is OCHA in identifying risks (in implementation, financial, accountability, reputational) and mitigating them?

To what extent do ERF-funded projects take into consideration needs of vulnerable groups and cross-cutting issues such as gender, age, and environment? Are those issues a factor in the selection of individual projects?

To what extent has the ERF contributed to disaster preparedness, in particular contingency planning and pre-positioning of supplies?

How have ERFs affected the capacities of recipient agencies? To what extent has the ERF contributed to local capacity building and made linkages to disaster risk reduction, recovery and longer term development programmes?
Additional Areas of Investigation

A few areas of investigation outside the Result Framework are suggested below. Additional issues, if identified during the inception phase of the evaluation (either specific issues regarding individual ERFs or any other question that may arise during consultations) may be included in the analysis.

How clear are roles and responsibilities of FCS and other administrative units within OCHA, HCs, in-country ERF Advisory Boards and clusters?

What progress has been made since the inception of ERFs (how were shortcomings identified by previous evaluations/audits addressed; what are the lessons learned from implementing these recommendations)? How can ERFs continue to be strengthened and processes improved?

What key indicators are used for measuring the success of ERFs and how can data collection processes be strengthened?

What evaluation methodology might be best applied to ERF grants, given their average size and the fact that they often provide only partial funding for projects? Should commitment to evaluation be included as a criterion for future funding decisions?

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation will use mixed method analysis, employing the most appropriate qualitative and quantitative approaches and data types, and triangulating various data sources for validation. Data will be derived from primary and secondary sources, including, i.a., key informant interviews in headquarters and field, focus groups, surveys of stakeholder groups, direct observation in the field, in depth financial analysis and analysis of monitoring reports, disbursement time frames and processes, meeting minutes, previous evaluations and audits of humanitarian pooled funds, and evaluations of the use of funds or of the projects funded that might have been conducted by recipient agencies. All data, quantitative and qualitative, will be disaggregated by gender and age where applicable and possible.

The Evaluation Team will conduct field visits to five recipient countries and produce a short standalone report for each country’s ERF in addition to the main evaluation report. The country reports should identify any improvements that would help strengthen the functioning of the funds, and areas working particularly well which might be systematized and applied in other ERF contexts, as well as documenting areas where a flexible approach has benefited the country.

The evaluation team will propose the sampling criteria to identify a cross-section of ERF recipient countries for field missions. The final decision on the country selection will be made by the OCHA Evaluation and Guidance Section. The data collection tools and methods will be standardized across countries; fund-specific issues or questions may, however, be addressed in country reports should they arise during consultations or are requested by the ERF Advisory Boards. Selected projects funded by ERFs should be analyzed to provide insight into full project cycles and the impact that ERF funding had on particular projects.

Perspectives from all stakeholders should be solicited including: recipient organizations, the RC/HC, the HCT, advisory groups, clusters, OCHA, NGOs, government stakeholders in recipient and donor countries, civil society groups and members, and beneficiaries. Local and national NGO perceptions will be sought throughout the evaluation process.

The Evaluation Team will propose detailed methodology during the inception phase, which will include any revisions to the ERF Results Framework proposed below, a detailed description of indicators, tools, triangulation plan, gender/age analysis to be used, and validation strategy.

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6 Due to demand from the field and ERF donors, oPT and Columbia will be included in the list of countries selected for field missions; the two countries should be the first ones visited. As ERFs in Pakistan and Haiti have been evaluated within the past 2 years, those countries will not be selected for field missions.
The evaluation will employ the criteria for humanitarian evaluations\textsuperscript{7} recommended by ALNAP, namely: Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coverage, Appropriateness and Relevance, and Coordination. The evidence will be collected at all levels of the results hierarchy, including process/inputs, outcomes, effects and operational impact. The analysis will focus on ‘operational impact’, that is, the ‘impact’ of the ERFs on the humanitarian system to respond to sudden onset, unforeseen new developments and their role in the larger humanitarian response. While the impact at the beneficiary level is not the primary focus of this evaluation - the underlying assumption is that effective and principled financing will contribute to better humanitarian outcomes - the evaluation will address the issue to the extent possible.

**Management and Governance Arrangements**

**Evaluation Management**

The evaluation will be managed by OCHA’s Evaluation and Guidance Section (EGS). OCHA EGS will appoint an Evaluation Manager. Evaluation and Guidance Section in its position as managing entity will:

- Ensure the availability of funding for the evaluation;
- Manage the evaluation in accordance with agreed budget and timeline;
- Coordinate, convene and chair Reference Group;
- Draft and finalize the ToR, with input from the Reference Group;
- Advertise for, select and recruit the evaluation team;
- Facilitate the evaluation team’s access to key stakeholders and specific information or expertise needed to complete the evaluation;
- Help coordinate field research and workshops/presentations;
- Advise the evaluation team on strategic direction of the evaluation and provide guidance and input on methodology, content and recommendations;
- Provide assistance with technical standards;
- Serve as principal interlocutor between the Evaluation Team and Reference Group;
- Ensure all stakeholders are kept informed;
- Review, comment and approve all deliverables of the evaluation, including the final Evaluation Report; and
- Review and facilitate the follow up and a management response to the evaluation, ensuring that the evaluation findings conclusions and recommendations are correctly interpreted.

**Reference Group (Headquarters-Level)**

A headquarters-level Reference Group (RG) will be established to guide the evaluation and help ensure its relevance and transparency, as well as accuracy, credibility of findings, correspondence to the practical concerns of stakeholders and their ownership of the process. RG will be chaired by EGS, and comprised of primary external stakeholders of the evaluation and representatives from OCHA FCS and Administrative Services Branch (ASB). The primary external stakeholder groups identified are recipient agencies (UN and NGO) and donor countries. As such, FAO, UNICEF, and WFP (as the largest UN recipients of ERF funding); Oxfam, SCF, ICVA and Interaction (representing the NGOs); and Sweden, UK, and Netherlands (as the constant largest donor countries) will be invited to nominate representatives to the RG.

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Reference Group will serve in an advisory capacity without management responsibilities. Members will serve as focal points within their organizations, collecting and disseminating information (including any available monitoring and evaluation data on the use of ERF funds), organizing the follow-up to recommendations within their organizations, and may assist the Evaluation Manager with the coordination of field missions on behalf of the Evaluation Team. The RG members will be expected to review and provide appropriate and timely feedback on all evaluation products (i.e. ToR, Inception Report, Country Reports, and draft Report) and on the selection of the evaluation team.

An additional responsibility of a designated RG member will be to provide occasional updates to the two key coordination bodies related to humanitarian financing, e.g. the IASC Sub Working Group on Humanitarian Financing (IASC SWG HF) and the Pooled Fund Working Group (PFWG). Once the membership of the reference group is finalized one UN Agency will be asked to provide this function to the IASC SWG HF. DfID has agreed to act as a focal point for the evaluation with the PFWG, as well as to work on facilitating participation of emerging donors in the evaluation process.

The Reference Group will be the sole advisory body to the evaluation process. The IASC HF SWG and the PFWG will be kept informed during the process and should direct any type of communication through the respective RG member.

**OCHA Country Offices and country-level ERF Advisory Boards**

OCHA Country Offices (COs) will help facilitate evaluation team’s access to key informants and relevant documentation in the countries selected for field visits, and may propose additional issues specific to the ERF under consideration. The Humanitarian Coordinator/ERF Advisory Boards will be provided an opportunity to review and comment on the draft Country Reports and to suggest additional areas of enquiry; their input will be coordinated by OCHA COs.

**Timeline and Phases of the Evaluation**

The evaluation has been divided into four phases for which dates are estimated. Final dates for some components on the evaluation will be dependent upon the date of contracting the evaluation team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inception</td>
<td>July 2012- August 2012</td>
<td>Meetings with headquarters-based stakeholders (New York and Geneva) Key informants interviews and methodology development Draft and final Inception Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>August – October 2012</td>
<td>Field research Desk Review Country validation presentations Country reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>December 2012 – January 2013</td>
<td>Production of draft and final reports Presentation of findings (New York or Geneva)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
<td>Management Response Plan prepared</td>
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Deliverables and Reporting Requirements

The quality of the evaluation report will be assessed according to the UNEG Evaluation Standards and ALNAP Quality Proforma. All deliverables listed below will be written in good Standard English. If in the estimation of the Evaluation Manager the reports do not meet this required standard, the Evaluation Team will ensure at their own expense the editing needed to bring it to the required standard.

Inception Report

The Evaluation Team will produce an inception report not to exceed 4500 words, excluding annexes, setting out:

- The team’s understanding of the functioning of emergency response fund mechanism and OCHA’s mandate in managing ERFs;
- Stakeholder analysis and plan for their involvement in the evaluation process;
- The team’s initial understanding of the context(s) in which the ERFs operate Methodology, including any changes to the proposed results framework and key questions, comparative analysis, detailed triangulation strategy, approach to qualitative data analysis and gender analysis, and a strategy for addressing impact on beneficiary level given the constrains faced in measurement and attribution;
- Any suggested deviations from the ToR, including any additional issues raised during the initial consultations;
- An evaluation matrix showing, for each question, the indicators proposed and sources of information;
- Data collection plan;
- Detailed fieldwork plan, including sampling criteria and proposal of the countries for field visits;
- Remaining evaluability issues and how they will be addressed;
- Interview guides, survey instruments, and/or other tools to be employed for the evaluation;
- Draft dissemination strategy of the evaluation findings and recommendations; and
- Draft outline for the evaluation report and country level reports.

Evaluation Report

The Evaluation Team will produce a single report which is comprised of:

- Executive summary of no more than 2500 words;
- List of acronyms;
- Table of contents;
- Summary table of conclusions and recommendations, including where responsibility for follow up should lie;
- Analysis of context in which ERFs were implemented and operating (including individual country contexts as well as the humanitarian reform process and other financing tools);
- A desk review of previous evaluations and studies which relate to ERFs, and a summary explanation of how this evaluation is positioned among them;

Available via www.alnap.org/pdfs/QualityProforma05.pdf.
Overview of how the ERF is being used in each country: objectives, amounts to various categories of agency and types of activity, etc;

Methodology summary – a brief chapter, with a more detailed description provided in the annex;

Main body of the report, including findings in response to the evaluation questions, conclusions and recommendations;

Annexes will include: (1) ToR, (2) Detailed methodology, (3) Analysis of ERF funding flows from 2004 onwards, (4) List of persons met, (5) Details of all surveys undertaken, (6) Details of any quantitative analysis undertaken, (7) Team itinerary, (8) All evaluation tools employed, and (6) bibliography of documents (including web pages, etc.) relevant to the evaluation.

For accuracy and credibility, recommendations should be the logical implications of the findings and conclusions. Recommendations should:

Follow logically from the evaluation findings and conclusions;

Be relevant to the intervention and reflect the reality of the context within which ERF operates;

Be clearly stated and not broad or vague;

Be realistic and reflect an understanding of OCHA and potential constraints to follow-up;

Be prioritized with a timeframe for follow-up; and

Suggest where responsibility for follow-up should lie.

Country Reports

The Evaluation Team will produce a short report (aide-memoire) of no more than 10,000 words for each of the five Countries selected for the field visit. The country reports should present findings and conclusions relating to the particular ERF examined, identify any improvements that would help strengthen its functioning and identify areas working particularly well which might be systematized and applied in other ERF contexts. Country reports are expected to be drafted during the mission and serve as the basis for the in-country validation workshop. Minimal revisions should be concluded in the following week.

Reporting and dissemination strategy

The Evaluation Team will conduct the following presentations:

At the end of each field visit, the Team will conduct a validation presentation with an out-brief of main findings to primary stakeholders;

Upon completion of the draft evaluation report, validation workshops will be held in New York or Geneva;

Once the evaluation is completed, presentations of the main findings and recommendations will be made to various fora as decided by OCHA and the Reference Group. The Evaluation Team may be requested to assist with these presentations.

For recommendation relating to OCHA, Management Response Plan will be prepared and follow up actions tracked by OCHA Strategic Planning Unit, as per OCHA Evaluation Policy. Response to recommendations and follow-up plans will be made public, as will any follow up action taken.

In addition to the Evaluation Report and oral briefings, the evaluation findings and recommendations can be presented through alternative ways of dissemination, such as video. The Evaluation Team will consider possible ways to present the evaluation and include a dissemination strategy proposal in the Inception Report.
ANNEX 1 TO THE TOR

Emergency Response Funds active during the period from 2009 to 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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Appendix III  : List of Findings

Finding 1. Lack of ability to fund capacity building leads to uneven quality of applications and negatively impacts the timeliness of ERF projects

Finding 2. Use of performance measurement tools in the ERF proposals is mostly procedural, as the approval processes consider money, whether the applicant can do the job and whether the need remains; this limits the ability of review bodies to consider planned initiatives in terms of their longer term consequences or linkages to broader strategies

Finding 3. ERFs are only beginning to make contributions to disaster preparedness and resilience building and may not have sufficient critical mass to make viable contributions.

Finding 4. The timeframe of the ERF process, four to eight weeks from the identification of the problem to project approval, compromises its ability to be a rapid follow-on mechanism

Finding 5. The dual step process of cluster review followed by the Review Board may be time consuming and its effectiveness is highly reliant on active engagement of these bodies

Finding 6. Current quality control mechanisms, located primarily within the project approval processes, are unevenly applied

Finding 7. Demand-driven, project-by-project approval processes disaggregate decision-making, and detract from strategic considerations of need

Finding 8. Most Review Boards, by using an assumed consent approach to project approval, are limited in their effectiveness to assess projects against a broader understanding of need

Finding 9. Timeliness of a project is not fully captured by the current data systems, as they seldom take into account the time for informal work with applicants before formal submission of a project proposal

Finding 10. The standards for timeliness set by the new Guidelines may not reflect the complexity of ERFs in differing locales.

Finding 11. Opportunities for engaging ERF partners and obtaining their feedback have not been explored by the new Guidelines

Finding 12. OCHA appears to have sufficient HQ resources (Geneva and New York) to administer and disburse

Finding 13. OCHA country offices generally have insufficient resources dedicated to the ERFs, which lowers efficiency as well as ability to undertake functions like outreach, communications and improved performance management.

Finding 14. ERF granting has filled selective gaps and thus has contributed, to a limited degree, to the attainment of humanitarian outcomes

Finding 15. The outcomes of ERFs at the country level are dependent on the quality of the leadership in that environment

Finding 16. While ERF granting has contributed to the overall operational effectiveness of humanitarian support, that contribution is moderated by limited resources available

Finding 17. ERF granting is flexible in terms of size and type of interventions as well as accessibility

Finding 18. Timeliness of the ERF process is vastly superior to virtually all other humanitarian financing mechanisms

Finding 19. The ERF mechanism has raised the visibility of OCHA by providing it, in selected locales, an active granting function

Finding 20. The size and duration of the funded projects positions the ERF mechanism as a short-term instrument well suited to life and livelihood saving activities and gap filling

Finding 21. The demand-driven and individual project basis limits the ability of clusters and Review Boards to prioritize and respond to what may be the most pressing needs (gap filling)

Finding 22. ERFs generally have not played a catalytic role in mobilizing ‘follow-on’ support or additional funding and are not well suited as an instrument to do so

Finding 23. The benefits of ERF granting are in large part dependent on national conditions and the strength and effectiveness of the cluster system

Finding 24. NGO partners have gained the most from the ERF mechanism in terms of strengthening capacity

Finding 25. The impact of ERFs on the quality of partnerships with NGOs is dependent on individual circumstances and not systemic factors

Finding 26. Generally OCHA in the context of the ERF is seen as a good partner

Finding 27. Prior audit processes resulted in excessive delays in final disbursement and had negative impact on recipients, especially NGOs

Finding 28. Currently there are no standards on which to assess the quality of the management of ERFs

Finding 29. Current reporting tools, while providing sufficient information on basic stewardship, are insufficient to promote on-going learning at the project, country, or global level

Finding 30. Monitoring and evaluation tools are incomplete and still driven by a compliance–based approach
Finding 31. Opportunities for the strengthening of evaluation at the country and global levels have not been taken, thus limiting OCHA’s ability to more dynamically report on performance of the ERFs

Finding 32. Current key indicators in the approved ERF Results Framework are largely process-based and do not lend themselves to the assessment of results beyond outputs

Finding 33. There is widespread ambiguity about where ERFs fit in the totality of the humanitarian response

Finding 34. There is ambiguity as to degree to which OCHA itself views ERFs as a priority instrument

Finding 35. Many ERFs do not possess a sufficient critical mass to make more than a nominal contribution to the attainment of their specified goals

Finding 36. The demand-driven nature of ERFs blurs their country level strategic role

Finding 37. There is a global debate over the mandate of ERFs in relation to resilience building and DRR considerations

Finding 38. Issues related to disability or age are not being taken into account in project design or approval. While the Gender Marker has been formally introduced, there is global concern regarding whether it is influencing the design and delivery of programs or whether it is seen as a compliance-related element of application
Appendix IV : List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1. OCHA needs to clarify whether the ERF is a global priority and if it is to be one more clearly articulate it in terms of the relation with CERF and clusters.

Recommendation 2. OCHA should clarify the focus of the ERF mechanism (where the ERF “fits”) in relation to being an emergency response mechanism versus a tool to promote longer term reliance building activity.

Recommendation 3. OCHA should issue policy guidance about the strategic rationale that may underpin the opening of an ERF and its subsequent closure and review the viability of all current ERFs and flow this up with a viability and relevance review of all current ERFs.

Recommendation 4. OCHA centrally should pursue additional donors for ERF and at the country level, strongly encourage Heads of Office and HCs to do so.

Recommendation 5. OCHA should consolidate in New York all ERF-related functions including the HQ review and approval of grant applications, now located in Geneva, but excluding the fiscal responsibility for disbursement.

Recommendation 6. More work needs to be done to improve the clarity of the criteria for project selection vis a vis longer term remedial and recovery initiatives and to enable ERFs to adapt approval/review processes to local conditions. Specific areas should include alternative approaches to workflow that would enable larger ERFs to be more transparent.

Recommendation 7. More work needs to be done to strengthen the role of Review/Advisory Boards.

Recommendation 8. OCHA should review the adequacy of resources provided at the country level by means of a country level needs assessment. Moreover, OCHA should stipulate that the performance of the ERF mechanism will be explicitly considered part of the annual performance assessment of the Head of Office.

Recommendation 9. At the country level, OCHA should allocate more resources to orient/coach applicants, especially NNGOs, to the requirements of the ERF process.

Recommendation 10. OCHA should strengthen the Head of Office’s management responsibility for the ERF.

Recommendation 11. OCHA needs to specifically earmark funds for communications-related activities so as to improve awareness and transparency. Specifically, the Guidelines should be translated into French and Arabic.

Recommendation 12. OCHA should set performance standards for project monitoring that would over a three year period rise to 100% compliance.

Recommendation 13. OCHA as part of the revision of the Guidelines in 2013 should more explicitly indicate that project monitoring must include assessment of the number/type of beneficiaries affected by/impacted by the project in question; and that end of project reports explicitly require the same data.

Recommendation 14. The current three year cycle of evaluation of the ERF process needs to be maintained as the basis of a more “learning based” approach to evaluation.

Recommendation 15. EGS should mount exploratory sectorial evaluations at the global level to begin a process of developing the ability to report on results/impacts and also to promote organizational learning.
Appendix V : Summary of Methodology

All the evaluation tools and methodologies described below can be found in Volume II, the Inception Report. In addition, the survey results from both the Internal and External Surveys can be found in Volume IV of this draft Final Report.

Revised Results Framework and Provisional Theory of Change

The Evaluation Matrix contained in the approved Inception Report dated September 27, 2012 (see Volume II) was based on the primary evaluation questions listed in the Terms of Reference which were derived from the ERF Results Framework, which is presented here.

The above Results Framework which was developed by a consortium of actors several years ago, adequately describes the expectations which were laid down at that time and in the accompanying documentation laid out a set of relevant indicators for the key elements noted above. However, this Results Framework, given its nature as a mechanism to lay out performance assessments, may not adequately capture the hierarchy of anticipated outcomes and the linkages between outcomes, risks, external factors and some of the program logic assumptions that underpin the articulation of these outcomes that are central to this Global Evaluation.

Accordingly, so as to better visualize the ERF process, as part of the Inception process, the above Results Framework was adapted into a draft of a provisional Theory of Change model which is laid out below.

In this model, the various levels are identified by the stars and the accompanying letters.

Each star reflects either a part of the existing Framework or assumptions, etc., which were articulated in the Framework’s accompanying documentation.
Level A reflects what are generally seen to be inputs. The accompanying assumptions and risks transpose the lowest line of the Results Framework into Theory of Change elements. It is important to note that for each successive hierarchical level, this provisional Theory of Change did not develop any additional performance indicators other than those which were identified in the CHF Framework Paper.

Level B articulates what was described in the Framework as “Initial and Bridge Funding Provided”.

Level C expands upon the Framework by adding in a set of short-term outcomes which are directly related to the three elements of the Framework.

Level D rearticulates the three medium-term outcomes laid out in the Framework. Their achievement is amplified in the accompanying set of assumptions, risks, and indicators which were drawn from the 2nd to top line of the Framework.

Level E directly parallels the highest level of the Framework and has been articulated as a long-term outcome with accompanying assumptions and risks.

In short, the provisional Theory of Change below has re-positioned the elements of the existing Framework. It does not supplant the existing Framework. Rather, for the purposes of this Global Evaluation, it is designed to accompany it and to enable the evaluation to better assess the logical assumptions and levels of risk which may be inherent in the attainment of the hierarchy of Results which was previously articulated.
ERF Simple Theory of Change (Provisional)

**Inputs**
- Applications/ERF resources/needs assessments/CAP

**Outputs**
- ERF supported projects delivered primarily by NGOs

**Short Term Outcomes**
- New alliances forged

**Medium Term Outcome**
- Critical Gaps Filled

**Medium Term Outcome**
- Leadership and Coordination Strengthened

**Medium Term Outcome**
- Partnerships Strengthened

**Long Term Outcome**
- Critical and Unforeseen Humanitarian Needs Addressed

**Assumptions:**
- Sufficient coverage and scope (critical mass) to produce outcomes
- Sufficient timely to do so
- High degree of relevance to long-term needs

**Risks:**
- Lack of above
- Need may have changed/evolved

**Indicators:**
- See below

**External Factors:**
- Disruption
- Work of other partners also contributes

**Assumptions:**
- Projects have scope and mass to achieve outcomes
- Timeliness
- New skills have been translated into on-going capacity
- Needs have not changed (desired outcomes remain the same)

**Risks:**
- Lack of above

**Indicators:**
- See below

**External Factors:**
- Overlap with others
- External factors change need over time

**Assumptions:**
- Timely execution of projects
- Sufficient delivery capacity to do so
- Projects meet real needs

**Risks:**
- Capacity shortfalls
- Inadequate targeting of projects
- Delivery shortfalls/delays

**Indicators:**
- See below

**External Factors:**
- Delivery Disruption
- Overlap with other activities
- Need changes since inception

**Assumptions:**
- Efficient transparent selection
- Timely allocation and distribution
- Sensitive to real need and priorities

**Risks:**
- Loss of timely delivery:
- In insensitive selection process
- Inadequate delivery capacity
- Lack of resources to meet needs

**Indicators:**
- See CHF Framework paper
This draft of a provisional Theory of Change model was discussed in some detail during the field missions. There was general agreement that it was a useful complement to the existing Results Framework in that it better illustrated the connectivity between elements and made it easier to see an upward process of aggregation of objectives. While specific indicators were only suggested in this model at this time, given the work done to develop the prior Results Framework, many of the proposed indicators could be transferred should OCHA decide to more fully develop what is, at this time, an admittedly draft instrument.

CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

One of the implicit questions for this evaluation was that related to the degree to which the ERF mechanism was contributing to the overall improvement of the humanitarian response. Some stakeholders discussed this issue in the context of beneficiary impact, others spoke of it in terms of issues related to the “difference” that the ERF process made.

As will be noted in a subsequent section, this question grew in importance as the evaluation proceeded; and grew in complexity as the nature of the ERF mechanism became better understood. In the Inception Report and in the discussions with the Reference Group during the early stages of the evaluation, the principles of Contribution Analysis were introduced as one of a set of mechanisms which might be useful to better situate the evaluation and to better enable it to begin to identify the benefits that accrue from the ERF mechanism, the challenges that a mechanism such as the ERF faces, and the impact of the environment in which an ERF is located.

Contribution Analysis, which is a methodology developed by John Mayne, formerly of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, attempts to address the long standing issue of attribution by considering the degree to which observable changes were the result of the intervention of the program in question or were they that of other factors or a combination of the intervention of the program and other factors. Contribution Analysis therefore, addresses this question by asking whether or not the intervention has made a difference – whether or not it has added value. In relation to the assessment of humanitarian interventions, experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation design is simply not feasible nor in many instances, ethical. Contribution Analysis enables evaluators in these situations to better explore the dynamics of how programs like ERF function and how in combination with other factors, positive changes may accrue.

In many respects, the provisional Theory of Change model developed for this evaluation to augment the prior Results Framework provides a starting point for the use of the tools and techniques that underpin Contribution Analysis. Indeed, one of the very first steps in undertaking Contribution Analysis is to map out a Theory of Change and to identify in as much detail as possible, the risks that are present related to the attainment of each successive level of the results chain.

For this evaluation, it became evident that there were fairly discernible causal linkages between the intervention of the ERF mechanism and the attainment of outputs, basically what the program physically provided, the support to the recipient. As the results chain shown above proceeds, the causal relationship became less and less direct vis a vis OCHA’s intervention and more and more the consequence of external factors.

In this circumstance, we began to explore the type of contribution that OCHA was providing through the ERF mechanism directly, and more importantly, indirectly to the attainment of higher level outcomes such as strengthening of leadership and coordination. We also began to explore how factors external to the control of OCHA could influence the attainment of the desired outcome, especially at the higher level. It became apparent that beyond the simple input/output relationship, external factors grew in importance in relation to the overall attainment of ERF higher level objectives, including seemingly concrete objectives such as whether crucial gaps were filled. In this latter instance, the size of the ERF intervention, proportionately quite small, tended to play a role in the degree to which its intervention actually made a discernible contribution.

It is important to underscore however, that the evaluation of the ERF on a worldwide scale was not purely an exercise in Contribution Analysis. The preceding discussion emphasizes that our approach undertook to use principles and concepts of Contribution Analysis to broaden our understanding of the ERF mechanism. A formal Contribution Analysis of the ERF mechanism would have laid out a completely
alternate methodology grounded firmly and clearly on the six steps that constitute a rigorous approach to Contribution Analysis.

Step 1: Set out the attribution problem to be addressed
Step 2: Develop a theory of change and risks to it
Step 3: Gather the existing evidence on the theory of change
Step 4: Assemble and assess the contribution story, and challenges to it
Step 5: Seek out additional evidence
Step 6: Revise and strengthen the contribution story

Rather, the evaluation tools and instruments were crafted in such a way that the principles underlying Contribution Analysis were included in them. For example, discussions with stakeholders addressed issues of who else might have been involved in the intervention, what was the relative level of the ERF intervention versus that of others, what risks were there involved, etc. Interviews with institutional stakeholders, and especially UN stakeholders, focussed on the question of how the ERF mechanism in particular may have contributed to the attainment of an intangible objective such strengthening leadership and coordination, or building partnerships.

On balance, the inclusion of these questions considerably enriched the value of the information secured, especially in relation to tangible and intangible contributions of the ERF mechanism itself in comparison to other types of OCHA interventions and as well, consideration of risk, or factors that might detract from the attainment of a goal.

Document review

The central document review covered key internal documents provided by OCHA, both at the Headquarters and the Country Office levels, including strategy, planning and annual reporting documents linked to ERF activity as well as information extracted from OCHA’s Financial Tracking System (FTS). The Evaluation Team reviewed other key programming documents relating to the design and management of pooled funds, such as specific policies and guidance notes. We reviewed additional evaluations and studies linked to pooled funding and humanitarian response, as well as those related to the cluster response to humanitarian disasters.

Desk Reviews

The TOR for this assignment specified that the evaluation conduct a desk review of 15 ERFs, including three that have been closed or that are in the final stages of operation. To ensure consistency of analysis, an ERF desk review template has been used to overview the ERFs not subject to a specific country case study (Appendix VI). Subsequently it was decided to eliminate the review of the three already closed ERFs and not to address Syria due to it being only recently established and due to current sensitivities.

Additional in-person Interviews, Telephone Interviews / Focus Groups

In addition to interviews held during the five field visits and as a part of the seven desk reviews, interviews were carried out in with key informants across the globe. They were be guided by a semi-structured interview protocol. The following stakeholder groups were interviewed, either in person or through telephone interviews.

- OCHA HQ staff in Geneva and NY;
- Interviews and focus groups with the donors group(s) in Geneva and New York and also at their HQ locations;
- Interviews and focus groups with members of major international NGOs;
- Interviews with members of IASC Cluster Groups and Working Groups other members of the UN family with strong links to pooled funding, such as the World Food Programme, UNICEF.

Addressing Unforeseen Circumstances

Unforeseen circumstances can influence the pace and direction of any evaluation. For this process, we chose to work in a very proactive manner, securing as much field level data in advance and thus already
having identified some unanticipated limitations, for example, the magnitude of project files thus necessitating a sampling technique. As well, advance access to field level material enabled the team to better focus the short duration field missions, again for example, toward NNGO respondents.

**SURVEYS**

Two electronic surveys were conducted, one directed toward OCHA stakeholders globally and the other towards external stakeholders, largely INGOs and NNGOs, in all the presently operational ERF environments. UN partners, global NGO stakeholders and other global partners were included in this second survey. A full description of the surveys follows in this draft of the Final Report.

**COUNTRY CASE STUDIES**

The general approach for the five country case studies (field missions) was one where data collection occurred throughout an entire week with the debrief at the start of the following week. Therefore, the evaluation team prepared the PowerPoint exit debrief during the intervening weekend days. The ratified Inception Report (Volume II) contains a detailed description of the methodology used to select the five missions - Colombia, oPt, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Indonesia, as well as the methodologies used to animate the field missions.

Two person teams were utilized. In four of the five cases (the exception being Colombia) a representative of EGS accompanied a senior evaluator from Universalia. This presence in no way detracted from the independence of the missions. Rather, the insights and contextual information provided by the EGS team member increased the level of understanding and thus enhanced overall relevance.

**OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEYS**

As noted above in the overall discussion of the methodologies used for this Global Evaluation, early on it was decided to develop a two electronic surveys, one designed for stakeholders external to OCHA, and the other for OCHA staff and managers.

The list of survey recipients was compiled in late September and early October. For the External Survey, grant recipient contact points were amassed for all operational ERFs post 2010. Key focal points from UN agencies, donor bodies and other governmental bodies and representatives of international NGOs at their headquarters were also included in the External Survey so as to generate as wide a set of relevant stakeholders as possible. The Internal Survey included the Headquarters personnel involved in pooled funding generally as well as key managers were included. At the country level, Heads of Office and OCHA personnel directly involved with the ERF mechanism were included.

Both Surveys were sent out in the first week of October, coinciding with the launch of the first country case studies. Three reminders were circulated over the successive six weeks, two from Universalia and one from the Chief of OCHA’s Evaluation and Guidance Section.

The overall response rates to both surveys were as follows:

External Survey: 234 responses/862 emails sent 27%

Internal Survey: 59 responses/137 emails sent 43%

This rate of response is adequate for a certain degree of disaggregation, although it is somewhat lower with respect to the External Survey than was anticipated. Both response rates however, are well within industry norms. With respect to disaggregation, both surveys have been somewhat disaggregated to provide for a more sensitive level of analysis.

In addition to the basic internal and external responses, Volume IV also contains the disaggregated responses so as to better inform stakeholders to this evaluation of any differences in rates of response in differing categories of stakeholders.
Overview of the External Survey

The following tables provide some basic information of the respondent population for the External Survey. It is very clear that the overall Survey responses will represent a strong majority of NGO respondents. This is extremely important as these NGOs and especially the national level ones are the direct recipients of ERF granting support (with the possible exception of those few who represent headquarters elements of international bodies). It is also interesting to note the degree of similarity of response across various categories of stakeholders.

### How would you describe yourself?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National NGO Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Agency Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify:</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>234</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overview of the Internal Survey

With some 59 respondents and an overall response rate of 43%, the Internal Survey has sufficient population so as to warrant its use, albeit with some degree of care. First, as the Table below illustrates, some 34 respondents were based in either Geneva or New York, approximately 58% of the total. Based on an analysis of the number of potential respondents, Headquarters responded at a much higher rate than field personnel. The Table below also shows that in many instances, only one response was received from a given country where an ERF was in place. No instructions were provided to country level offices to attempt to consolidate their response into only one. Indeed, during the field missions, the Universalia/EGS team encouraged a broad response rate among the identified OCHA managers and staff. Therefore, the actual rate of response at the field level is estimated to be somewhat lower, with this lower rate than Headquarters naturally being somewhat disappointing.

### What country are you currently working in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo, Democratic Republic</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response | Chart | Percentage | Count
---|---|---|---
Haiti | | 3% | 2
Indonesia | | 3% | 2
Kenya | | 2% | 1
Mali | | 2% | 1
Pakistan | | 7% | 4
Switzerland | | 19% | 11
Thailand | | 2% | 1
United States | | 39% | 23
Yemen | | 2% | 1
Zimbabwe | | 3% | 2
Occupied Palestinian Territory | | 5% | 3
Total Responses | | | 59

What is your current function?

Response | Chart | Percentage | Count
---|---|---|---
HQ level personnel of OCHA (Geneva or New York City) | | 56% | 33
Country or regional level personnel of OCHA | | 41% | 24
Other, please specify: | | 3% | 2
Total Responses | | | 59

Limitations/Challenges

There were some conceptual challenges that faced this evaluation, that appear to be largely related to assumptions that underlay the TOR and the subsequent evaluation questions. The most significant of these assumptions appears to be that related to the direction of the evaluation. While it has been clearly designed to be the first comprehensive global evaluation of ERFs, there is a dichotomy in its direction. First, there is a degree of ambiguity about whether the five country case studies are case studies that contribute to a global evaluation.

Given the timeframe available for field work, approximately six calendar weeks starting on October 1st and ending on November 9th, combined with team size, led to an assumption that each mission to each of the locales would be allocated approximately the same number of person days so as to smooth the planning process and eliminate the possibility of extensive negotiations for custom missions. This equality of treatment resulted in some degree of differential access across the locales. For example, in Ethiopia, where the ERF is nearly as large in value as all the other ERFS combined, this equality of treatment...
probably resulted in a less in-depth review than occurred in smaller funds in oPt or Colombia. Two of the five selected locales, on first inspection, appeared to be nearly dormant, Indonesia and Afghanistan. However, in both these locales and especially in relation to Afghanistan, there were strategic considerations in play which, in essence, led the evaluation to a higher level of analysis.

An additional challenge to this global evaluation lay in a dichotomy related to its focus. As part of the Inception process, it became evident that there were tugs and pulls between those stakeholders, both internal and external, who were seeking a global assessment of procedures and operational practices, and those who were seeking a more strategic assessment of the overall value of the ERF mechanism and its place in the global humanitarian architecture. In essence, this dichotomy was one between a process-based evaluation versus a strategic one that would be concentrating on the higher level objectives for ERF - such as how they fill gaps, how they build synergies and how they improve the effectiveness of the humanitarian architecture as a whole. For this reason, the team introduced in the Inception Report, the concept of “emerging issues” so as to attempt to strike a balance between these two potentially competing dynamics.

As the global evaluation evolved, it became increasingly evident that the key issues facing the ERF mechanism were in fact not related to whether one individual step in the process took five days or three, or whether a bank account in a recognized financial institution was a prerequisite for a grant application. What came into focus was the fact that qualitative processes around the proposal review were more important in decision-making and to the ERF process as a whole than procedural compliance. What also became clear as a paramount concern among all stakeholders, at both the global and country levels, was the degree to which the strategic concerns, identified in the Inception Report as Emerging Issues, were taking centre stage in both the consideration of the efficiency and effectiveness of the ERF and of its overall relevance. Therefore, this global evaluation has tended to shift focus toward the strategic considerations while recognizing the need to identify the operational ones that may be barriers to the relevance of an ERF and its effectiveness as a tool.

This determination also was in large part influenced by the degree of similarity of practical and operational level Findings across the five case study ERF locales and clearly apparent in the desk top review of the others.
Appendix VI : Summary of Other ERFs

SUMMARY OF THE DESK TOP REVIEW OF ERFs

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO,

HAITI, KENYA, MYANMAR, PAKISTAN,

YEMEN, ZIMBABWE
1. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Name of Fund

Emergency Response Fund, but has existed under different appellations such as Quick Impact Projects, Emergency Humanitarian Intervention, and until the end of 2011, the Rapid Response Fund.

Reason (Natural disaster, conflict, etc.)

Respond to small-scale crisis and provide NGOs, and occasionally, UN agencies with financing for sudden humanitarian crisis to support needs of vulnerable communities that cannot be addressed by the Humanitarian Action Plan (HAP). DRC faces a complex humanitarian emergency: armed fighting, forced displacements, natural disasters, and epidemics of measles and cholera.

Was this an IDP situation?

Yes, in 2011, there were close to 1.7 million IDPs in the DRC as a result of armed fighting. Congolese refugees also live in neighboring countries and the DRC is also home to refugees from Angola.

Duration and value

The ERF was established in late 1999. According to the 2011 Annual Report, the Fund allocated US$1,027,565 to implement five projects using funding carried over from the previous year. These five projects supported 107,267 beneficiaries. Since 2005, ERF in the DRC did not receive contributions from donors and the resources used to finance projects came from the remaining balance from previous years. Since 2006, the Pooled Fund has been the only source of funding for the ERF. Between 2000 and 2006, the ERF in the DRC has received contributions totaling US$ 15.6 Million.

Were Other Combined Funds in place?

Yes, the Common Humanitarian Fund (Pooled Fund) and the CERF.

Were there patterns in the types of grants, cyclical patterns, repeat recipients?

In 2011, the five projects were implemented in the context of four clusters: logistics (35% of funding), food security (29% of funding), WASH (14% of funding), and health (22% of funding). Four of the five projects
were implemented in areas identified as conflict zones, and one was implemented in a stabilized zone. A total of 65% of funding was disbursed to INGOs and 45% of funding went to NNGOs.

**Did the granting process comply with OCHA standards for timeliness?**

All projects implemented in 2011 were completed, audited, and final payments owed to the implementing agencies were made. The 2007 evaluation provides details on the timeliness of the ERF grants at that time. It estimated that on average, from the date a proposal is received to the signature of a grant agreement takes about 25.5 days. The time taken by Geneva to approve the submission of a fund transfer to the date the money was transferred was approximately 25 days.

**What roles did the local advisory body play; how was it consulted?**

There was no clear evidence in documents reviewed.

**What evidence is there that the ERF has taken into account the needs of vulnerable groups in the design and delivery of the grants?**

Each ERF project takes into consideration gender and disaggregates beneficiaries by numbers of women, men and children. As well, projects funded under the logistics cluster allowed new access to territories which enabled implementing agencies to reach vulnerable people in remote areas.

**Is there evidence of DIRECT involvement of such vulnerable groups in the design?**

There was no clear evidence in documents reviewed.

**Is there evidence of the inclusion of DRR considerations in the project design?**

A proportion of the 2011 ERF funding went to preparedness (35% of funding), but no clear indication on disaster risk reduction.
2. Haiti

Name of Fund

Haiti Emergency Relief and Response Fund (ERRF)

Reason (Natural disaster, conflict, etc.)

The ERRF in Haiti was established to reduce human suffering in response to sudden emergency/natural disasters (for needs such as food, shelter, water and sanitation and health care services) and to improve coordinated response to emergency. Haiti has had to deal with a series of destructive hurricanes in 2008 (Fay, Hanna, Gustave and Ike), a devastating earthquake in 2010 and a cholera epidemic.

Was this an IDP situation?

No, but some ERRF projects included components focusing on the return and reintegration of earthquake IDPs.

Duration and value

The ERRF was established in 2008 with US$ 3.7 Million. As of August 2011, US$ 86 Million was received in donor contributions of which approximately US$ 80 Million was allocated for projects, and about US$ 57.4 Million was disbursed.

Were Other Combined Funds in place?

Yes, the Common Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the country-level Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF). In 2008-09, CERF provided more than 10 times the volume that ERRF managed. Following the Flash Appeal of January 16, 2010, and revisions to it, ERRF managed nearly twice the CERF volume. Following the 2011 CAP, CERF again took a lead twice that of ERRF.

Were there patterns in the types of grants, cyclical patterns, repeat recipients?

ERRF projects are approved for a three to six month period and are used to fund humanitarian needs not included in the CAP. More than 60 % of the ERRF projects were extended beyond their end dates. In 2008-09, beneficiary agencies were allowed to apply incurred costs retroactive to the date of the signed Letter of Endorsement. This retroactivity ended abruptly in 2010. In 2010, the portfolio of activities was dispersed across 10 different clusters (shelter (22%), CCCM (16%), logistics (14%), early recovery (13%), health/nutrition (10%) and agriculture (10%)). National NGOs are not widely included in the ERRF process. In 2008, 3 NNGO projects were funded and in 2010, 4 projects were funded.

ERRF project ceilings varied: US$ 130,000 following the 2008 hurricanes, US$ 750,000 for the earthquake and US$ 500,000 for cholera.

ERRF projects did not always meet ERF criteria. According to the 2012 Audit, a number of projects should not have qualified for funding because their objectives were more development-related, being addressed by other agencies, or overlapping with other ERRF projects. Projects amounting to US$ 10.3 Million did not fully meet the ERF requirements.

Did the granting process comply with OCHA standards for timeliness?

The audit process for projects funded in 2007, 2008 and 2009 started only in April 2010 resulting in delays in the completion of the audits. For a number of projects, final disbursement and closure could not be achieved on a timely basis because of lack of audited financial statements.

From the receipt of the proposal to the return of the Memorandum of Understanding to ERRF, there was a time span of an average of 65 days.
What roles did the local advisory body play; how was it consulted?

According to the 2010 evaluation, the advisory board (AB) never existed in Haiti due to time constraints and manpower. Guidelines exist however to describe its main roles and responsibilities. The 2012 Audit states that without an AB, the HC did not task other forums such as the HCT, the clusters, and/or OCHA Haiti to develop a strategy. The failure to establish and use governance and control mechanisms limited the HC’s ability to develop an appropriate strategy for the ERRF and to subsequently exercise adequate controls over the review of the appropriateness and approval of the projects.

What evidence is there that the ERF has taken into account the needs of vulnerable groups in the design and delivery of the grants?

Gender equity elements and marginalized groups were targeted by the portfolio. One example is in Cash for Work projects, in which every effort targeted a certain proportion (normally 30%) of women.

Is there evidence of DIRECT involvement of such vulnerable groups in the design?

There was no clear evidence in documents reviewed.

Is there evidence of the inclusion of DRR considerations in the project design?

There was no clear evidence in documents reviewed.
3. Kenya

Name of Fund

Kenya Emergency Response Fund

Reason (Natural disaster, conflict, etc.)

The Kenya ERF was set up to respond to natural disasters, fill gaps in non-food interventions, and provide support to early action activities. According to the HRF Concept Note, the humanitarian context in Kenya is characterized by a combination of widespread chronic vulnerability and intermittent and recurrent shocks – including drought, floods, human and animal disease outbreaks and localised conflict. Insecurity is also a concern in north eastern Kenya where refugee camps hosted over 560,000 refugees and asylum seekers at the end of 2011.

Was this an IDP situation?

Not officially, but Kenya has to deal with high influxes of refugees from countries such as Somalia and Sudan that face protracted or latent conflicts.

Duration and Value

The Kenya ERF was established in June 2009 and is ongoing. Between 2009 and 2011, the ERF was allocated US$ 6,344,075. Total spending between 2009 and 2011 is US$ 4,628,051. The average value of a grant was about US$ 130,000. Total number of grants during that period was 33.

Were Other Combined Funds in place?

Donors’ contributions to humanitarian response in Kenya are channelled to three OCHA-managed humanitarian funding mechanisms: 1) Kenya Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan (EHRP); 2) Central Emergency Response Plan; 3) ERF.

Were there patterns in the types of grants, cyclical patterns, repeat recipients?

Project proposals for the Kenya ERF cannot exceed US$ 150,000 per recipient organization and project periods cannot exceed six months in duration. The majority of the funds in 2010 have been awarded to INGOs (73% in comparison to 27% to local NGOs). UN agencies’ proposals have all been turned down. Agriculture is the sector in which most funds are disbursed due to the prolonged drought conditions. In 2011, Agriculture projects represented 37% of allocations and WASH 36%. In 2011, ERF turned to a more strategic approach by providing specific funding envelopes to prioritized needs.

Did the granting process comply with OCHA standards for timeliness?

The Kenya ERF has experienced delays in the remittance of the 20% approved fund balance to various agencies. Plus, OCHA’s Administration and Finance Unit in Geneva is not always able to fulfil its pledge to disburse funds in 10 working days. In some cases, disbursements have taken a month due to a lack of staff in the unit and competing demands from other crises.

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9 Based on incomplete data for 2010.
What roles did the local advisory body play; how was it consulted?

The advisory group (AG) was constituted in 2012. Prior to its establishment, there were limited interactions between donors and ERF management. The AG is still new and there is no information on the role that it plays.

What evidence is there that the ERF has taken into account the needs of vulnerable groups in the design and delivery of the grants?

The Kenya ERF is planning to have the Gender Marker fully rolled out in 2012. Projects implemented in 2011 had made an effort in incorporating gender perspectives particularly in the selection of target groups through targeting female-headed households; the participation and involvement of both men and women in the implementation of the projects; and in the overall strategies that were used in community mobilization.

Is there evidence of DIRECT involvement of such vulnerable groups in the design?

There was no clear evidence in documents reviewed.

Is there evidence of the inclusion of DRR considerations in the project design?

According to the ERF 2011 Annual Report, 75% of ERF projects have included components of resilience building activities to reduce risk and mitigate impact of disasters.
4. Myanmar

Name of Fund

Myanmar Humanitarian Multi Stakeholder Fund (HMSF)

Reason (Natural disaster, conflict, etc.)

The Fund was set up both because of internal conflicts and natural disaster. The goal of the Fund is to respond to urgent humanitarian needs of people residing in, or in proximity to, insecure areas and/or the consequences of it, such as internal displacement.

Was this an IDP situation?

Yes, the Fund gives priority for support to populations residing in, or around insecure areas and support is provided for communities hosting displaced populations.

Duration and value

The Fund in Myanmar was established in mid-2007. Since 2007, it has received more than US$ 6 Million in funding and has spent close to US$ 4 Million\(^{10}\). The number of beneficiaries varied from 1,440 in 2010 to 72,321 in 2008. The average value of the grants was around US$ 320,000.

Were Other Combined Funds in place?

A CERF was also in place in Myanmar.

Were there patterns in the types of grants, cyclical patterns, repeat recipients?

The HMSF projects are usually multisectorial. HMSF works across several sectors, but WASH and Health are the two most important (other sectors were education, protection, food security and livelihoods). In 2011, the Fund gave funding to three new sectors, namely Food, Shelter and Protection. There is no funding limit and the level of funding for each proposal is decided by the Board based on available funding and agreed priorities. The HMSF targets local partners, LNOGs and CBOs, with access to project areas.

Did the granting process comply with OCHA standards for timeliness?

Delays have been incurred due to administrative limitations on money transfers to Myanmar and other bureaucratic hurdles, together with operational aspects linked to the conflict setting. Local partners faced difficulties due to the mandatory 20% holdback of the final installment due to their limited funding or internal programmatic regulations.

What roles did the local advisory body play; how was it consulted?

An Advisory Board (AB) has been established to provide strategic and policy directions to the fund and to review and endorse proposals submitted by partners for funding. According to its guidelines, the Board members can recommend priority project proposals to the HC for funding. The Board has overall

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\(^{10}\) Incomplete data for 2012.
responsibility and ensures that the Fund is used in a complementary manner to other initiatives (such as CERF) and would ensure that the funds are used strictly in line with the criteria developed in the Fund guidelines. No specific examples on how the AB was consulted were found in the documents reviewed.

**What evidence is there that the ERF has taken into account the needs of vulnerable groups in the design and delivery of the grants?**

The gender marker is not yet applied in the HMSF but efforts are being made to include it in 2012. HMSF documents also state that the main beneficiaries of the Fund are vulnerable groups living in ceasefire or mixed administration areas, and relocation sites, including with host communities.

**Is there evidence of DIRECT involvement of such vulnerable groups in the design?**

OCHA has given training to support capacity building for implementing partners, including workshops on protection. However, it is not clear how vulnerable groups were involved in this training or other aspects of the HMSF.

**Is there evidence of the inclusion of DRR considerations in the project design?**

There was no clear evidence in documents reviewed, except for the fact that the Fund seeks to prevent erosion of livelihood assets by supporting positive coping mechanisms of communities in times of acute emergencies. This is done through enhanced support to community-driven initiatives that reduce vulnerability.
5. Pakistan

Name of Fund

Pakistan Emergency Response Fund

Reason (Natural disaster, conflict, etc.)

The ERF in Pakistan was set up to respond to needs of communities displaced by conflict. However, it was launched shortly after the 2010 floods which explains why natural disaster accounted for the most of its disbursements in 2010 (only 9% of the projects were allocated to conflict-related response). The priorities are therefore to respond to unforeseen natural or man-made emergencies before mainstream response comes on line, and to address gaps in the Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan (PHRP).

Was this an IDP situation?

Currently there are almost 900,000 IDPs mainly from the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and FATA. Two ERF projects were targeted to IDPs moving from Jalozai Camp implemented by Save the Children.

Duration and value

The ERF was established in March 2010. Between August 2010 and August 2011, US$ 34.7 Million was spent on 124 grants to 3.8 million beneficiaries with an average value of US$ 279,838. India provided 53% of the ERF funds in 2010-11 with a US$ 20 Million donation.

Were Other Combined Funds in place?

There is a Pakistan Floods Emergency Response Plan (PFERP) that was launched in August 2010. The Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan (PHRP) received only 50% of funds requested in 2010 and no significant additional funding was made available for 2011. Responding to Pakistan’s Internally Displaced (RAPID) Fund is fund set up to address the urgent and unaddressed humanitarian needs of IDPs. Between 2009 and 2011, the fund has received just under US$ 40 Million. There is also a CERF for UN agencies only.

Were there patterns in the types of grants, cyclical patterns, repeat recipients?

The ERF prioritizes NGOs over UN agencies. NGOs received 95% of the funds, split between INGOs and NGNOs with the former receiving 56% of the funds and the latter 39%. Sectorial allocations prioritized shelter/NFI (30% of funding) and Health projects (20%). Other sectors include CSS, early recovery, education, food security, nutrition, protection and WASH. Flood-related projects (91% of amounts allocated) dominated and limited resources were allocated to IDP (9% of amounts allocated). The Pakistan ERF evaluation highlights the absence of planning documents to help identify areas of priority need which could help target potential ERF allocations.

Did the granting process comply with OCHA standards for timeliness?

Delays in the completion of prioritized needs assessments affected the proposal development and review process. The average time taken from receipt of a proposal to disbursement of the funds is just over 63 days. The fastest time in which this was achieved was 20 days in September 2010, soon after the initial floods and the slowest was 229 days. Obtaining a signed agreement from OCHA Geneva takes an average of 45 days.

A major issue was the 5 month delay in commencing the audit. The financial burden of this delay has been significant on NGOs. The ERF Pakistan Evaluation conducted in 2011 reports that: 1) the funding
process was quicker than it is in other countries (two weeks faster than Ethiopia and five weeks faster than Haiti and Somalia); 2) many projects provided timely services with respect to time-critical projects, e.g. provision of winterisation kits and agriculture inputs; 3) there were significant delays in the administration process, in partners’ submission of revisions and the cluster review process.

**What roles did the local advisory body play; how was it consulted?**

The AB provides general guidance on the overall strategic direction and policy issues related to the ERF processes and priorities. AB members however, do not have a formal process to support them in determining strategic priorities, so their main focus has been on reflecting on the past rather than on planning for the future and setting priorities and targets.

**What evidence is there that the ERF has taken into account the needs of vulnerable groups in the design and delivery of the grants?**

A Gender Task Force participates in the proposal review process by screening proposals against the Gender Marker. ERF projects placed an emphasis on gender equality and women’s empowerment. There is also a requirement in the proposal and completion report that project data is to be disaggregated by sex. The 2011 evaluation suggests a high correlation between the poorest members of communities and those targeted by ERF projects. The 2010 Annual Report states that 52% of approved projects had the potential to advance gender equality significantly; 41% contributed towards gender in a limited manner; and 7% did not give any consideration to gender.

**Is there evidence of DIRECT involvement of such vulnerable groups in the design?**

According to the 2011 Evaluation, a number of ERF-funded organisations work through village committees. Claims of gender balance in committees appeared to be questionable as female committee members knew very little about the tasks that had been assigned to them and appear to have been omitted from decision-making processes.

**Is there evidence of the inclusion of DRR considerations in the project design?**

The ERF Annual Report recognizes that a considerable allocation for disaster preparedness activities is imperative. These activities should strengthen the resilience of the communities to deal with disasters in the future.
6. Yemen

Name of Fund

Yemen Emergency Response Fund

Reason (Natural disaster, conflict, etc.)

The ERF in Yemen was established to provide NGOs and UN agencies with a funding mechanism to respond to emergency needs of vulnerable communities. ERF projects target both emergencies caused by natural disasters and conflicts. Yemen is facing a grave and evolving humanitarian situation, due to the combined impacts of underdevelopment, economic shocks, political strife, repeated armed conflicts, natural disasters, and influx of refugees.

Was this an IDP situation?

Yes, in the North, a vast majority of long-term IDPs were displaced by six rounds of conflict in Sa’ada and in the south, recent fighting between security forces and insurgents has additionally displaced nearly 90,000 people. The influx of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers from the Horn of Africa is also a problem. In 2009, there was an estimated 150,000 IDPs located in camps, spontaneous settlements, communities trapped within conflict zones or other insecure areas.

Duration and Value

The ERF in Yemen was set up in August of 2010. Since then, it has received US$ 11 Million in funding and has spent US$ 7.3 Million on 38 projects with an average value of US$ 192,561. The number of beneficiaries in 2010 was 125,172 and increased to 3,324,895 in 2012 in part due to one UNICEF project that had 1,600,000 targeted beneficiaries (vaccines), and Oxfam GB targeted almost 1 million beneficiaries in a project for safe disposal of sewage water.

Were Other Combined Funds in place?

CERF funding was also available. Since 2006, the CERF has allocated a total of US$ 18.9 Million to Yemen, now one of the largest recipients of CERF funds. Funding is also provided through the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (YHRP).

Were there patterns in the types of grants, cyclical patterns, repeat recipients?

ERF funding in Pakistan ranges between US$ 25,000 and US$ 150,000 and project duration is generally no more than 6 months. In 2012, projects were mainly in WASH (38% of funding) and Health (29% of funding). Allocations went to INGOs (52% of funding), UN (33% of funding) and LNGOs (15% of funding). ERF conducted a capacity building workshop for NNGOs where training on humanitarian principles, cluster approach, assessment and ERF guidelines and how to access and apply for the fund was provided. This shows the desire of ERF in Yemen to include national NGOs as recipient partners. In the case of Yemen, the inclusion of national partners has been part and parcel of the work, particularly in implementing operations in inaccessible areas and during a time when international presence was low in country (evacuations).

Did the granting process comply with OCHA standards for timeliness?

Process time varies during different periods depending on the situation and availability of the cluster leads and the Review Board in the country. From receipt of a proposal to the first disbursement, the average number of days is 50.6.
As of 2012, NGOs still had not received the remaining 20% of their grant.

**What roles did the local advisory body play; how was it consulted?**

According to the Yemen Guidelines, the AB supports the HC in overseeing Fund operations, strategy and setting policies and priorities, conducting periodic reviews of the Fund, and identifying remedies to problems or deficiencies in Fund operation. No details were available on how it was consulted.

**What evidence is there that the ERF has taken into account the needs of vulnerable groups in the design and delivery of the grants?**

Gender mainstreaming is included in the ERF documents and applications forms (beneficiary data that includes a breakdown of women, girls, boys and men). During training sessions carried out for NGOs, it was explained that the concept of gender was to be included during the preparation of the proposal, implementation and monitoring. According to the 2010 Annual Report, the Gender Marker tool was supposed to be applied to all ERF projects in 2011.

**Is there evidence of DIRECT involvement of such vulnerable groups in the design?**

An ERF implementing agency, CARE has, within the scope of its ERF project, established community committees consisting of representatives of IDPs and the host community for increased ownership and sustainability. The committees ensure local management of water resources in the short and long terms, assist in identifying and overseeing interventions as well as the identification of beneficiary households, and take responsibility for maintenance and protection of water sources beyond the lifetime of the project.

**Is there evidence of the inclusion of DRR considerations in the project design?**

There was no clear evidence in documents reviewed.
7. Zimbabwe

Name of Fund
Zimbabwe Emergency Response Fund

Reason (Natural disaster, conflict, etc.)
The ERF in Zimbabwe was set up to support rapid response projects seeking to contribute to sustaining lives and prevention of further erosion of livelihood. ERF funds were used to cope with the cholera epidemic from 2008 to 2009.

Was this an IDP situation?
The ERF was initially set up to meet the emergency needs of people affected by displacement but has continued to be replenished by donors thereby facilitating responses to other emerging requirements in the country.

Duration and Value
The ERF was established in 2006. Between 2009 and 2011, it spent US$ 9 Million, through 54 grants.\(^{11}\)

Were Other Combined Funds in place?
There is a CERF.

Were there patterns in the types of grants, cyclical patterns, repeat recipients?
In 2010, Agriculture received the most support taking up 48% of the funding, followed by Health at 31%, WASH at 14% and multi-sector at 7%. A small component (7%) covered multi-sector activities which included capacity building mainly of national NGOs which were not accessing the ERF grant due to limited capacity in both human as well as material resources. Out of the total grants distributed to partner organizations, the largest amount of funds was allocated to INGOs (58% of funding) followed by NNGOs (37% of funding). Funding to UN agencies was limited (5% of funding).

Did the granting process comply with OCHA standards for timeliness?
There was no clear evidence in documents reviewed.

What roles did the local advisory body play; how was it consulted?
According to the ERF Charter, the AB reviews project proposals with reference to a criteria adopted from the CERF and makes decisions by simple majority. The AB makes recommendations to the HC for final approval or rejection of project proposals. There was no clear indication on how often it was consulted.

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\(^{11}\) Incomplete data.
What evidence is there that the ERF has taken into account the needs of vulnerable groups in the design and delivery of the grants?

Projects were generally selected based on beneficiaries and their level of vulnerability in the community. The 2010 Annual Report states that partners incorporated gender aspects by considering specific vulnerabilities in women, children, the elderly and the sick in their programming.

Is there evidence of DIRECT involvement of such vulnerable groups in the design?

The 2010 Annual Report states that beneficiaries had participated in the planning as well as in the implementation processes of the projects and confirmed the projects had contributed positively to their lives. It also states that 20% of the total beneficiaries in each sector represented children under the age of 18 and 10% represented adults who are more than 60 years of age, and generally, females were a greater presence amongst all beneficiaries across all sectors.

Is there evidence of the inclusion of DRR considerations in the project design? There was no clear evidence in documents reviewed.
Appendix VII : List of Evaluations

Bibliography – Evaluations


Bibliography – Country summaries
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