

OCHA on Message: Central Emergency Response Fund



What is the Central Emergency Response Fund?

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

CERF objectives as set by the General Assembly:

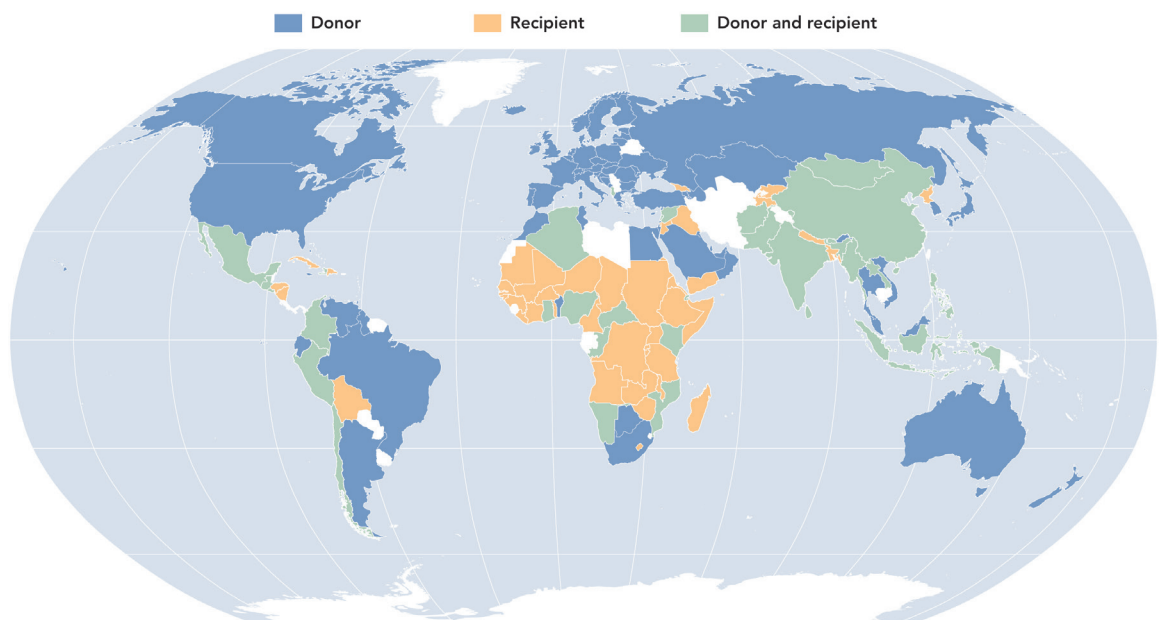
- Promote early action and response to avoid loss of life
- Enhance response to time-critical requirements
- Strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises

CERF has a grant facility of US\$450 million and a loan facility of \$50 million. By the end of its fifth year in operation, CERF had raised \$2 billion for the grant facility. This funding was donated by more than two thirds of the General Assembly and Observer Missions, scores of private-sector organizations and more than 10,000 individuals.

More importantly, \$1.5 billion in CERF funding has been allocated to humanitarian country teams in more than 70 countries since 2006. In an average year, CERF allocates approximately \$400 million to 50 different country teams. Sectors that typically receive funding include food, health, water and sanitation, and shelter. CERF has a ceiling of \$30 million for each humanitarian emergency. Two thirds of CERF allocations go to rapid response allocations (for a sudden-onset emergency or a significant deterioration in an existing crisis) within 72 hours of an application being received from a Resident Coordinator. The remaining third is allocated through the “underfunded window” in two rounds each year to programmes in countries where the gap between demonstrated needs and available funds can be shown to be greatest. Both windows are designed to complement existing humanitarian funding mechanisms, including the Consolidated Appeal Process (see *OCHA on Message: CAP*), Flash Appeals and country-based pooled funds. Top CERF recipients include Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

Donors and Recipients of CERF Funds Since Inception

As of 15 April 2010



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United Nations humanitarian agencies and the International Organization for Migration can apply for CERF funding. WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR are the top three agency recipients of CERF funding. Applications for CERF funding must demonstrate that proposed activities are in line with CERF's life-saving criteria. The Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator submits applications to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the CERF Secretariat, based on an in-country prioritization process. The General Assembly resolution that created CERF does not allow for NGOs to apply directly for CERF funding. However, NGOs frequently receive CERF funding when they act as implementing partners of United Nations agencies. OCHA cannot receive CERF grants as the ERC is the Fund Manager.

What is the role of OCHA?

The ERC serves as Fund Manager and is supported by the CERF Secretariat, which is situated within OCHA. At the headquarters level, desk officers often play key roles in helping Resident Coordinators and country teams prepare CERF proposals. A 23-member CERF Secretariat is responsible for ensuring that the funds are allocated properly, disbursed in a timely manner, and that use of the funds in individual countries is reported transparently. At the same time, the Secretary-General appoints independent experts to serve on the CERF Advisory Group, which provides him with policy advice and guidance on the fund.

At the country level, OCHA supports Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators in mapping emergency humanitarian needs. This data informs the country-based prioritization process and, in turn, CERF project applications. OCHA staff often support country-based efforts to apply for funds and to report on the use of funds after they are received.

A key component of humanitarian reform is more adequate, flexible and timely humanitarian financing. CERF plays an important role in this. It is an effective coordination tool, as the process of mapping life-threatening needs at the country level helps to bring humanitarian organizations together through the clusters (see *OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Architecture*).

What does OCHA say?

- CERF has strengthened the humanitarian community's ability to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies, and has saved lives across the world.
- CERF ensures that funds are delivered fast and fair. It evens disparities among appeals and sectors.
- CERF is a fund by all, for all. OCHA is working to grow sources of funding, broaden the donor base and secure long-term, multi-year donor pledges.

To find out more

- <http://cerf.un.org>
- CERF Quarterly Update

On 12 January 2010, Haiti was hit by an earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale. It devastated the capital, Port-au-Prince, and the surrounding areas. On 13 January, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced an initial allocation of \$10 million of CERF funding for emergency response. WFP, FAO, IOM and UNICEF could therefore jumpstart their programmes to provide shelter, clean water, health services and food to some of the thousands of people struggling to cope in the aftermath of the earthquake. Funding was also made available for logistics for humanitarian operations. One month into the operation, a WFP spokesperson in Haiti said: "The CERF has become an extremely useful tool for agencies such as WFP. We received over \$5 million very quickly for our response in Haiti - it allowed us to buy food quickly. It has become such a valuable tool in assisting our quick response to sudden-onset emergencies."

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¹ As it falls under the umbrella of the General Trust Fund, CERF is financially administered by the UN Controller, in line with UN Secretariat Financial Rules and Regulations and subject to audits according to UN Secretariat audit policies and schedules.