

I. Introduction

This note provides guidance on the monitoring¹ of CERF-funded projects at field level. The note seeks to clarify roles and responsibilities in monitoring the implementation of CERF grants and outlines activities that shall take place to ensure availability of necessary information during and after the implementation phase. Processes related to official CERF narrative and financial reporting are not addressed in detail in this note; please refer to CERF's website for relevant guidance on this. The note has been developed in response to requests from CERF practitioners at field level as well as to findings and recommendations from CERF-related evaluations and from audits by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)². The note is meant to complement and not replace existing CERF guidance.

II. Summary

CERF allocates funding to support a joint strategy for life-saving humanitarian action, based on prioritized needs, to respond to a new or suddenly deteriorating crisis or to provide a response to underfunded emergencies. A CERF allocation consists of an overarching strategy supported by a group of projects, which recipient UN agencies jointly commit to implement within the agreed timeframe. Agencies are accountable for their CERF-funded projects, and therefore responsible for monitoring project implementation³. As CERF projects have been collectively prioritized under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) agencies shall provide information on implementation of CERF projects to the RC/HC through OCHA⁴, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)⁵, and cluster coordinators⁶. **The objective of CERF monitoring is to give the RC/HC and the HCT assurance that CERF-funded activities are implemented as intended and to enable corrective actions to be taken if necessary.** It is also important in fostering joint learning in support of improved response. A key monitoring tool shall be an interim update submitted by agencies to the RC/HC combined with related discussions and briefings in relevant coordination fora. Monitoring arrangements should be agreed by the HCT⁷ at the beginning of the CERF process⁸, communicated by the RC/HC to relevant stakeholders and documented in the CERF application submitted to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC).

III. Key Points Regarding Monitoring of CERF Allocations

Key Responsibilities:

- **The Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator:** The RC/HC leads and oversees CERF processes at country level and reports back to the ERC on results achieved.⁹ The RC/HC shall request updates on the implementation of CERF-funded humanitarian action from agencies or clusters to provide assurance that CERF activities are implemented as intended and to enable timely corrective actions if required. The RC/HC will be

¹ To reflect the full range of issues that often come up during discussions with stakeholders on this topic the note uses the term 'monitoring' in the broader sense (i.e. systematic collection, analysis, communication and use of information from projects and programmes during the project cycle).

² OIOS audits have called for formal processes to ensure that RC/HCs are kept informed about CERF project implementation and have also sought clarity on OCHA country offices' role in supporting CERF monitoring.

³ ST/SGB/2010/5 – article 5.1: "Eligible organizations shall take full responsibility for the use of and reporting on all funds disbursed under the Fund [...]"

⁴ Or the RC Office in countries without an OCHA office.

⁵ Or the UN Country Team where no HCT exists.

⁶ Or sector coordinators where clusters do not exist.

⁷ In consultation with relevant coordination entities such as cluster coordinators and inter-cluster coordination groups.

⁸ In countries that receive frequent CERF allocations monitoring arrangements can be agreed and documented once and applied across future allocations.

⁹ ST/SGB/2010/5 – article 5.2: "Resident Coordinators or Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators shall oversee the monitoring of and narrative reporting on projects funded by the Fund"

supported in this by OCHA country offices, where these exist. During implementation of the CERF allocation, agencies shall keep the RC/HC informed about the status of implementation of individual projects according to the schedule and format set out by the RC/HC. To that end the CERF secretariat will provide an **interim update** template which agencies are to fill in and submit to the RC/HC at agreed milestone(s) during the implementation period (typically halfway through the cycle). Upon completion of CERF-funded projects, the RC/HC submits a consolidated **narrative report** to the ERC, via the CERF secretariat, on results achieved with CERF funds. The report is prepared in consultation with the HCT and cluster coordinators and is based on project-level inputs from CERF recipient agencies in the country and their implementing partners.¹⁰

- **Recipient Agencies:** The **responsibility for monitoring of individual CERF projects** lies with the recipient agencies. CERF projects should be monitored as part of agencies' overall programme monitoring arrangements in a given country. Monitoring of CERF projects is necessary for agencies to report on the achievement of project targets and the number of people reached¹¹, and it should enable early detection of potential challenges allowing agencies to take timely corrective measures and ensure completion of activities within the CERF-specific implementation period. During the implementation period **agencies are required to keep the RC/HC informed about the status of project implementation**, including of any challenges or delays in the projects¹². In this respect recipient agencies shall provide the RC/HC, OCHA, the HCT, and relevant cluster coordinators with project implementation updates according to agreed schedule and format including by submitting the above mentioned pre-populated interim project update.
- **The Humanitarian Country Team:** The HCT is **collectively accountable for a CERF allocation** and is expected to jointly follow the implementation of CERF projects. To enhance accountability and transparency **updates by recipient agencies on implementation of CERF projects should be included in the HCT agenda**. Upon completion of CERF-funded projects, the HCT should make an **after-action review (AAR)** with relevant stakeholders a standard component of any CERF allocation, to facilitate joint reflection on results achieved and lessons learned, and to inform the reporting process for a CERF allocation.¹³
- **OCHA Country Office:** OCHA offices shall **support the RC/HC** in her/his responsibilities to oversee CERF processes at country level. This will include **managing the agreed CERF monitoring and reporting processes** on behalf of the RC/HC, collecting the required information, updates and reports related to CERF project implementation from recipient agencies and consolidate and communicate this to relevant stakeholders.

Information Sharing around CERF Projects:

- CERF recipient agencies shall provide the RC/HC, the HCT, OCHA and relevant cluster coordinators with **appropriate and timely information** on implementation status of CERF grants. This will include sharing relevant information from agencies' monitoring activities, including through the pre-populated **interim update** template shared by the ERC upon approval of the CERF grant.¹⁴ Cluster coordinators may be called on to advise the RC/HC on CERF's contribution at a strategic level. The RC/HC should use her/his authority to request necessary information from agencies and clusters.
- **Regular updates** on progress of implementation of CERF projects should be provided in cluster, inter-cluster and HCT meetings, preferably with the involvement of implementing partners.
- As part of the CERF narrative report, agencies should share any **evaluation reports** that include CERF-funded projects or activities with the RC/HC and the CERF secretariat.

¹⁰ Guidance on the CERF reporting process is available on the CERF website at www.unocha.org/cerf/resources/guidance-and-templates

¹¹ This information is required for the narrative report on the use of CERF funds.

¹² This obligation is reiterated in the official allocation announcement email from the ERC to the RC/HC

¹³ Guidance on CERF after-action reviews is available at www.unocha.org/cerf/resources/guidance-and-templates

¹⁴ The template is also available at www.unocha.org/cerf/resources/guidance-and-templates

- CERF regularly commissions independent reviews of the Fund's added value at regional or country level. During these reviews, and any other kind of **review, evaluation or audit** related to CERF, agencies should provide relevant information on CERF projects to the evaluators or auditors. This may include relevant non-public information from agencies' internal monitoring systems, including monitoring reports. With prior consultation and agreement agencies shall also allow site visits to CERF-funded projects when deemed necessary.¹⁵

Collective Monitoring:

Since funding from CERF and other pooled funds is collectively prioritized by the humanitarian community at country level under the leadership of the RC/HC it is different than funding from other sources. In humanitarian operations where system-wide monitoring processes are in place at **sector/cluster level**, CERF's contribution to the response should also be reflected through these processes. Assessing CERF's contribution through overall response monitoring will help promote strategic assessment of CERF's added value, ensure adequate visibility and enhance collective accountability for CERF allocations. **IASC guidance on response monitoring**¹⁶, which is used for Periodic Monitoring Reports, asks that the contribution of CERF and other pooled funds to the overall collective response be included in overall response monitoring. In addition, if feasible and relevant, the RC/HC in consultation with the HCT may decide to complement agencies' own regular monitoring efforts with collective monitoring of CERF projects. Such collective CERF monitoring could be led by clusters or use monitoring frameworks from country-based pooled funds (CBPFs) where these exist. If collective monitoring of CERF projects is undertaken the objective should be to gather additional information that will help foster joint learning, advance good practices, inform future allocations, and enhance accountability.

IV. Formalizing CERF Monitoring Arrangements

Arrangements for CERF monitoring should be agreed at the time of CERF allocation submission and communicated to relevant stakeholders as follows:

- Upon preparation and submission of a CERF request, under the leadership of the RC/HC, the HCT shall **agree on how the overall CERF allocation shall be monitored**. This includes agreement on when the pre-populated interim CERF project update template shall be completed and provided to the RC/HC, and in what other format information on individual CERF projects shall be provided to the RC/HC, when this information shall be discussed by the HCT, and in countries with a Humanitarian Response Plan, how relevant information shall be reflected in Periodic Monitoring Reports. It may also include decisions on whether any collective monitoring will be undertaken through clusters or through monitoring systems of country-based pooled funds where these exist.
- **Focal points within each CERF recipient agency** shall be identified to provide OCHA with a clear entry point for issues and information related to CERF monitoring.
- The agreed CERF monitoring arrangements are **documented in the CERF submission** to the ERC¹⁷, and shall be communicated by the RC/HC (or OCHA) to the relevant stakeholders in country.
- CERF recipient agencies shall describe their **plans for project-level monitoring** in the relevant section of the CERF submission template.¹⁸

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¹⁵ Paragraph 5.13 of the CERF Umbrella Letter of Understanding: "When deemed necessary by OCHA, and with prior consultation and agreement of the Eligible Organization on the relevant Terms of Reference, OCHA may conduct on-site visits of projects financed by the Grant funds."

¹⁶ Available at www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/programme-cycle/space/response-monitoring-guidance-templates.

¹⁷ Section 14d under part II of the CERF application template (www.unocha.org/cerf/resources/guidance-and-templates).

¹⁸ Section 13c under part III of the CERF application template (www.unocha.org/cerf/resources/guidance-and-templates).