

3. Norway's policy towards CERF

CERF has gradually contributed to strengthening the UN's ability to deliver effective humanitarian assistance, both by responding rapidly in acute emergencies and by mitigating unevenness in donor support for more long-term/underfunded emergencies. CERF has also enhanced the UN's ability to effectively coordinate international humanitarian efforts. This combination constitutes the core of our common responsibility for assisting people in distress. By supporting an international humanitarian fund, without seeking to exert political influence on the way funds are allocated, we are helping to strengthen the criteria for independent, impartial and neutral humanitarian assistance.

Norway is an important global contributor of humanitarian assistance. However, there is a limit to what we as a nation alone can achieve unless we have professional partners (the UN, ICRC and NGOs) that can rapidly initiate emergency relief and other activities in humanitarian crises. This requires predictable financing, which is an area in which CERF and other funds play a fundamental role. As donor, we will actively seek to ensure that CERF is steadily improved and that it is at all times perceived as a relevant source of financing.

Norway has adopted a constructive, but critical, approach to the UN's use of CERF funds. In our view, the Fund should be used to provide traditional emergency relief in concrete crises. This can present a challenge, particularly in long-term, underfunded emergencies where there is also pressure to

establish sustainable solutions for increased self-sufficiency and development. This is a balancing act and there are obvious grey areas. We are therefore concerned to ensure that funds are not routinely allocated to the same programmes in underfunded emergencies, thus eventually becoming part of the core contribution to the UN agencies. Nor is it advisable that the Fund should be used for purposes outside the scope of its mandate. Norway takes the view that support for transitional and reconstruction phases must be financed by other mechanisms. However, in some cases, early reconstruction will be relevant. A dilution of CERF's mandate could lead to a lack of resources for new crises and thereby undermine its possibility of timely response.

Contributions to CERF have varied. Only once have we attained the target of USD 450 million. This can partly be ascribed to the financial crisis and foreign exchange fluctuations. Nonetheless, it is a fact that more donors now prefer to provide funding bilaterally for individual crises, because it gives them a greater opportunity to influence the way the funds are used. Despite the high level of legitimacy attained by CERF, the Fund (in 2010) accounted for only three per cent of overall global humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, being dependent on the same seven donors who provide 85 per cent of CERF's funding makes the Fund too vulnerable. Norway is therefore committed to increasing the percentage of large, stable donors to CERF.

CERF

Central Emergency Response Fund

1. Facts and figures

Type of organisation: International humanitarian relief fund

Established in: 2006

Headquarters: New York, separate secretariat in OCHA

Number of country offices: None

Head of organisation: UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos (UK)

Date of Board meetings in 2011: No Board meetings, but meeting of the Advisory Group

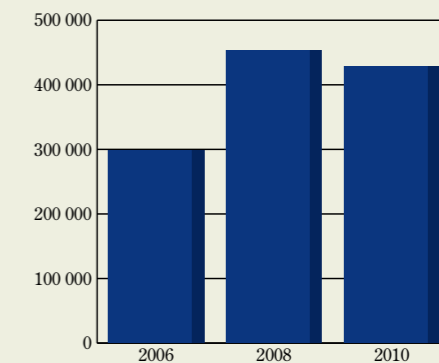
Norway's representation on Board: No Norwegian representative in the Advisory Group

Number of Norwegian staff: None

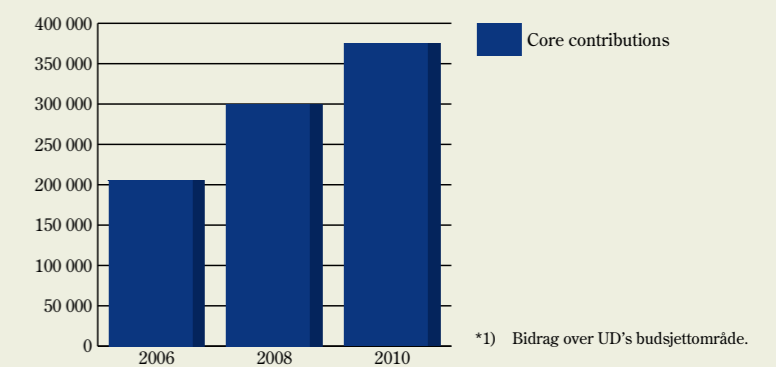
Responsible ministry: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

Website: <http://ochaonline.un.org/cerf>

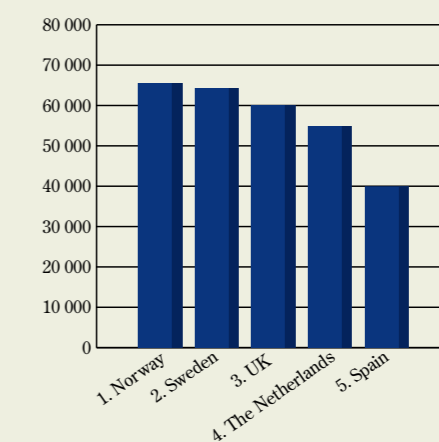
Total revenues (in US\$ 1000)



Norway's contributions^{*1)} (in NOK 1000)



The five largest donors in 2010 (in US\$ 1000):



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<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/selected-topics/un>.

Mandate and areas of activity

CERF was established as one of three pillars of humanitarian reform aimed at improving coordination of international humanitarian relief work. The other two pillars consisted of: i) strengthening the role of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the humanitarian coordinators (HC) in humanitarian crises, and ii) strengthening coordination in a crisis by grouping sectors in clusters.

The CERF is an international emergency relief fund mandated to enable the timely, effective provision of humanitarian assistance to countries and regions where the civilian population has been affected by natural disasters or armed conflicts. Its aim is to reduce loss of life and provide emergency relief to civilian populations in times of crisis.

The Fund's objectives are i) to promote timely action and response to reduce loss of life, ii) to enhance humanitarian response to time-critical requirements, and iii) strengthen humanitarian response in underfunded crises.

Since the establishment of the Fund, more than USD 2.3 billion has been allocated through CERF to 80 countries or territories to assist vulnerable groups who are victims of floods, earthquakes, drought, epidemics or armed conflicts. CERF funds constitute a limited portion of the total amount of humanitarian assistance, as the vast majority of funding is provided directly to the UN or NGOs through bilateral agreements.

Eligibility to receive CERF funds is based on a country appeal for humanitarian assistance coordinated by the UN. The appeal describes the scope of the crisis and, on the basis of a needs assessment, a plan of priority measures is drawn up. UN agencies may apply for funding from CERF for selected activities, which are then assessed in relation to "life-saving criteria" defined by CERF. These criteria determine which humanitarian programmes can receive funds from CERF.

CERF consists of three components: i) a lending mechanism that provides UN agencies with quick loans to deal with acute emergencies; ii) a rapid response mechanism that provides grants in response to acute emergencies (approx. 2/3 of the Fund) and iii) a mechanism that provides grants for more long-term, under-funded crises (approx. 1/3 of the Fund).

The Fund is administered by a dedicated secretariat in OCHA. CERF funds are allocated to programmes administered by UN humanitarian agencies and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Parts of the funding can be passed on by the UN to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with which it has partnership agreements. Normally, the UN country team, under the leadership of a humanitarian coordinator, consults with and sends a priority application to the CERF secretariat in New York. However, there are exceptions to

this procedure, particularly when an acute emergency arises, when the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, can make decisions regarding allocations to emergency relief programmes.

Results achieved in 2010

There are ongoing, often protracted humanitarian crises in many countries due to climate- and/or conflict-related emergencies. Many of them no longer have any news value and have become "forgotten" crises. Help is still needed, but due to the lack of international attention donor contributions are limited. In such cases, CERF becomes an important guarantor of funding to provide minimum coverage of humanitarian response to some of these crises. In March, USD 100 million was allocated to 13 of these countries, among which the largest recipients were Ethiopia, DRC and Afghanistan. In September, a further USD 42.6 million was allocated to nine countries, among which Chad and Yemen received the most assistance.

In 2010, USD 415 million in CERF funding was divided between 469 programmes in 45 countries, where over 22 million people received humanitarian assistance as a result of CERF funds. Of these, 22 million people received food aid, 19 million were given clean water, 19.5 million children were immunised and 1.5 million people were given a roof over their heads. Moreover, 1.1 million families received start packages for agricultural projects to reduce their dependence on humanitarian aid relief by increasing their possibility of achieving food self-sufficiency. This and other activities helped to save lives, relieve distress and prevent the further escalation of a humanitarian crisis.

The five largest recipients of CERF funds were Pakistan (12 per cent), Haiti (9 per cent), Niger (8 per cent), DRC (7 per cent) and Sudan (6 per cent). The five UN agencies that received the most CERF funding were the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

2010 was a year of extreme natural disasters that affected millions of people. On 12 January at 04.53, an earthquake struck Haiti, immediately causing massive destruction and loss of life. At 10.00 on the same day, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator decided to allocate the first USD 10 million through CERF to emergency relief programmes on Haiti. In the next few days, relief programmes were started up, needs assessments were carried out and further allocations were made by CERF. The Fund demonstrated its strength in being able to react quickly and helping to limit further damage and loss of life in the first, extremely critical phase of the disaster.

Later, in the summer, Pakistan suffered disastrous flooding. A land area of more than 160 000 km² was inundated, two

million houses were destroyed and over 20 million people were affected. At the most intense stage of the crisis, more than nine million people were in need of acute emergency assistance. Obtaining the enormous sums of money required posed major challenges. CERF funds were provided early in

2. Assessments: Results, effectiveness and monitoring

In 2010, 65 per cent of CERF funds went to climate-related emergencies and 35 per cent to conflict areas. This contrasts with the situation in 2009 when the bulk of CERF funding was allocated to crises resulting from conflict. Funding allocation varies from one year to the next, but the trend shows an increase in climate-related emergencies such as flooding, drought and earthquakes.

The UN's humanitarian agencies and their partners must be prepared in terms of expertise and resources to be able to respond rapidly and quickly upscale operations when new crises arise. To be able to do so, budget funds must be available for this purpose. CERF is able to act as a guarantor in this connection because donors pledge funds which are disbursed to the Fund early in the year. CERF is seldom the largest contributor to humanitarian appeals, but it is often one of the first. Due to its rapid response capability, CERF has a good reputation as a reliable, predictable contributor. In countries undergoing protracted crises, funds provided by CERF have often served as an incitement to improve the prioritisation and coordination of humanitarian aid.

It is important that decision-making processes relating to the use of CERF funds are based solely on humanitarian need. Consequently, the UN General Assembly has decided not to establish a separate Board of Directors for CERF. Having such a Board might give rise to a risk of member countries and contributors influencing the use of the Fund in specific humanitarian crises on the basis of political preferences.

Maintaining confidence in CERF is important. All parties involved must ensure that the Fund's mandate, procedures and established criteria are complied with, and that decision-making processes are sufficiently documented and transparent. There are a variety of control mechanisms:

- The Annual Report which is published in April/May and the report of the Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly each autumn.
- Ordinary audits and other control mechanisms in accordance with established UN systems.
- External evaluations of CERF. The first one was carried out in 2008 and the second in 2011.
- A website with an updated overview of the Fund's financial situation and allocation of funds.

the emergency response and acted as a catalyst for donors to increase their contributions. Pakistan is the country which has to date received the highest percentage of CERF allocations in one year: a total of USD 51.8 million (12 per cent of CERF's total allocations in 2010).

- CERF's Advisory Group, consisting of 18 persons appointed by contributing member countries. Members serve in their individual capacity as humanitarian experts and meet 3-4 times a year. They provide input to the CERF Secretariat and the UN International Relief Coordinator on how the CERF mechanism functions and can also propose improvements.

As part of the UN Secretariat, CERF is subject to external audits by the UN Board of Auditors and internal reviews by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). These audit reports are not readily available, but can be obtained by contacting the UN Secretariat directly. CERF must comply with the anti-corruption and whistle blower protection rules that have been adopted by the UN Secretariat.

Performance reporting is a challenge. There are no requirements for separate reports on the results of UN agencies' use of CERF funds, because the funding is one of several sources of financing for their country programmes. Performance reporting is incorporated into the UN agencies' annual reports, evaluation reports and other available information.

More knowledge is needed about whether CERF functions in accordance with its mandate. The UN has recently developed a Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF), which is designed to report on whether CERF has functioned effectively and to give involved parties necessary insight into how decisions are made. The PAF was tested in Kenya in 2010 and considered to be successful. More countries will gradually be included, and the goal is to achieve an enhanced system for reporting on CERF's effectiveness as a channel for emergency response funding.

CERF strengthens the coordination of UN operations in crises, both in terms of practical coordination, and in terms of ensuring that emergency relief is provided in accordance with humanitarian principles. More humanitarian crises are occurring in complex contexts, which are heavily politicised and often militarised. It is crucial to have a strong humanitarian leadership that operates independently of political considerations. Evaluations show that CERF has contributed to strengthening the role of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and the local relief coordinators.