

CERF

Central Emergency Response Fund

1. Facts and figures

Type of organisation: International humanitarian resource fund

Established in: 2006

Headquarters: New York

Number of country offices: None

Head of organisation: UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos (UK)

Date of Board meetings in 2013:

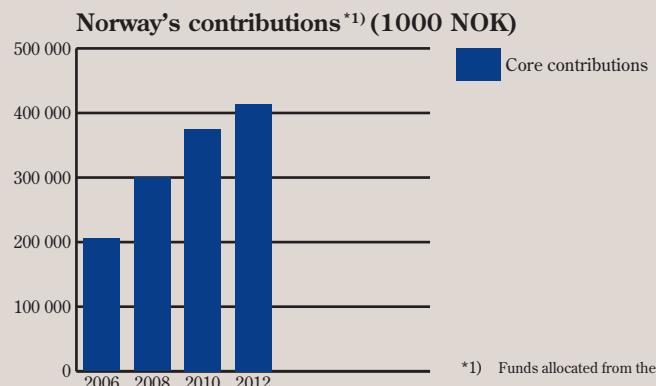
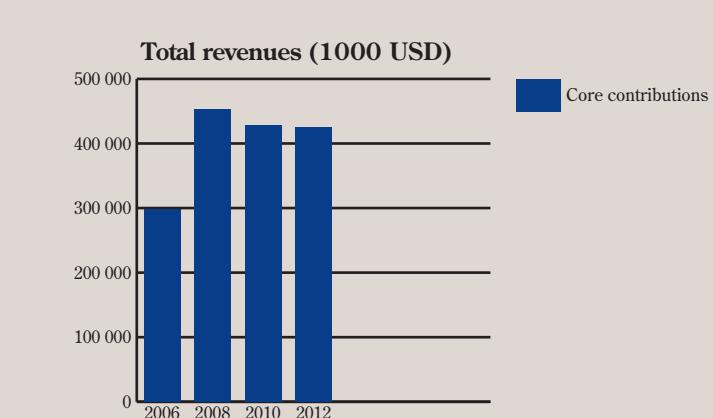
Technically, the UN General Assembly and the ECOSOC Human Affairs Segment are CERF's Board, but in practice CERF does not have its own Board, only an Advisory Group

Representation on Board: Norway has a representative in CERF's Advisory Group from 2012 to 2014

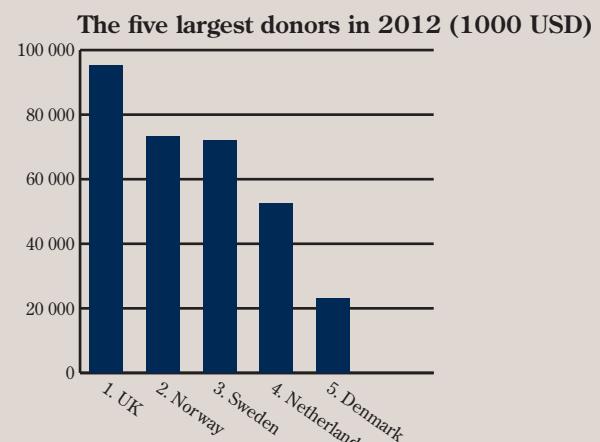
Number of Norwegian staff: None

Competent ministry: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Website: www.unocha.org
www.cerf.un.org



*1) Funds allocated from the MFA's budget



Mandate and areas of activity

The UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was established in 2006 by the UN General Assembly. CERF is the UN's largest humanitarian fund and receives contributions from 125 countries, as well as from the private sector and individuals. Four countries give 63 per cent of the total funds, and Norway is the second-largest donor.

CERF's mandate is to enable the timely, effective provision of humanitarian assistance to areas where the civilian population has been affected by natural disasters or armed conflicts. Its objectives are i) to provide humanitarian assistance to reduce loss of life, ii) to enhance humanitarian response to time-critical requirements, and iii) strengthen humanitarian response in underfunded humanitarian crises.

Since the establishment of the Fund, over USD 2.9 billion has been disbursed through CERF to 87 countries or territories. CERF funds constitute a limited portion of the total amount of humanitarian assistance, as the vast majority of funding is provided through bilateral agreements directly to the UN or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or directly to a country's government. CERF funding is allocated on the basis of a national appeal for humanitarian assistance coordinated by the UN. The appeal describes the scope of the crisis and is based on a needs assessment and a plan of priority measures. UN organisations may apply for funding from CERF for selected activities, which are then assessed in relation to specific criteria.

CERF has a dual structure: i) a rapid-response mechanism that provides funding in response to acute emergencies (approx. two-thirds of the Fund) and ii) a mechanism that provides funding for more long-term, underfunded crises (approx. one-third 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), and parts of the funding will be passed on to NGOs.

The allocation of funds for different types of crises varies from year to year. In 2010, 65 per cent of CERF funds went to natural-disaster-related crises, including crises caused by climate change, and 35 per cent to crises in conflict areas. This contrasts with the situation in 2011 and 2012, when a larger proportion of funds went to crises resulting from conflict. The trend over time shows an increase in climate-related, protracted humanitarian crises such as flooding and drought.

Results achieved in 2012

In 2012, the Fund provided grants for humanitarian measures in 49 countries, as well as grants for life-saving emergency relief to virtually all of the major global humanitarian crises. The need for rapid provision of emergency relief funds was considerable in 2012, and CERF disbursed USD 327 million in rapid response funding to 44 countries, including Syria, South Sudan, Niger and Yemen. In 2012, USD 158 million was granted for humanitarian assistance for underfunded, forgotten emergencies in 21 countries.

In 2012 more than 40 per cent of CERF funds was allocated to efforts to assist people displaced by war and conflict in Mali, South Sudan, Syria and Myanmar. Approximately one-third of the Fund, USD 115 million, was disbursed for food assistance, and in 2012 the World Food Programme (WFP) was again the humanitarian organisation that received the most CERF funding. A total of USD 78 million was disbursed to combat disease outbreaks in countries including South Sudan and DR Congo.

Syria:

In 2012, CERF granted USD 36 million in humanitarian assistance for people in need in Syria. USD 4 million was also disbursed to measures for refugees in Jordan and USD 3 million to Lebanon. In total, CERF provided USD 43 million in grants in response to the crisis in Syria and in the region, equivalent to around NOK 258 million. CERF funding has primarily been granted to provide assistance and protection for refugees in Lebanon and Jordan and for persons displaced from their homes in Syria by war and insecurity, including Iraqi refugees in Syria.

2. Assessments: Results, effectiveness and monitoring

The organisation's results-related work

CERF is generally considered to have contributed to strengthening the UN's ability to deliver effective humanitarian response, both in rapid response to acute emergencies and in its efforts to even out the disparities in donor support for more protracted/underfunded emergencies. CERF has also enhanced the UN's ability to ensure effective coordination of international humanitarian response, as was emphasised in the Five-Year Evaluation of CERF.

OCHA has established a Performance and Accountability Framework to serve as a basis for reporting on whether CERF has functioned effectively and give involved stakeholders necessary insight into the way decisions are made. The framework was tested at country level 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.

In the long term, it will be expedient to link reporting on CERF's results to a more general system of results reporting at sector or country level. Work has begun on developing such a system, but it is a comprehensive process that will take some time.

Planning and budgeting systems

The normal procedure for preparing a CERF allocation is for UN country teams, under the leadership of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, to consult with and send a priority application to the CERF Secretariat in New York. Decisions regarding use of the Fund are made by the UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator, based on the recommendation of the CERF Secretariat in OCHA. However, there are exceptions to this rule, particularly in the event of an acute emergency, when the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, may make decisions to disburse funds to emergency relief programmes without extensive prior consultation.

Only twice (in 2008 and 2011) has the UN reached its target of a total budget of USD 450 million. Several donors prefer to provide funding bilaterally for individual emergencies, because it gives them a greater opportunity to influence the way the funds are used, and because it offers donors better public-relations opportunities. Despite the high level of legitimacy attained by CERF, the Fund (in 2012) accounted for only 3 per cent of overall global humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, being dependent on the same eight donors who provide 82 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.

The UN's humanitarian agencies and their partners must have the requisite expertise and resources to be able to

respond rapidly and quickly upscale operations when new emergencies arise. CERF is able to act as a guarantor in this respect because donors pledge funds that are disbursed to the Fund early in the year. While CERF is seldom the largest contributor to humanitarian appeals, 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 facing protracted crises, funds provided by CERF have often served as a catalyst for improving the prioritisation and coordination of humanitarian aid.

Oversight and anti-corruption

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. An Advisory Group has been established for CERF consisting of 18 persons nominated by member countries, and subsequently appointed by the UN Secretary-General on the recommendation of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator. The members serve in their individual capacity as humanitarian experts and meet from two to four times a year. They provide expert advice to the CERF Secretariat and the Emergency Relief Coordinator on how the CERF mechanism functions and may also propose improvements. Susan Eckey, nominated by Norway, is a member of the Advisory Group from 2012 to 2014.

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 oversight 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 oversight mechanisms in accordance with established UN systems.
- External evaluations of CERF, of which the first was carried out in 2008 and the second in 2011.
- A website with an up-to-date overview of the Fund's financial situation and allocation of funds.

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 may 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.

Institution-building and national ownership

As an international emergency response fund, CERF has limited functions with regard to promoting institution-building and national ownership. Institution-building will primarily revolve around strengthening capability to respond effectively to disasters, but precautionary measures and identification of vulnerable areas where timely response is crucial will be important.

More humanitarian crises are occurring in complex contexts that are heavily politicised and often militarised. More humanitarian donors may also have a political and security-related engagement. It is therefore important to have a strong humanitarian leadership that operates independently of political considerations. Special challenges arise in situations where states invoke national sovereignty to justify preventing humanitarian aid agencies from providing assistance to people

in distress. At the same time, there are humanitarian crises where the government's involvement at central and local level, including when CERF funds are used, is both necessary and useful, particularly in connection with natural disasters.

Willingness to learn and change

The Five-Year Evaluation showed that CERF strengthens UN coordination of humanitarian emergency response. This applies not only to practical coordination, but also to efforts to ensure that emergency relief is provided in accordance with humanitarian principles. The evaluation showed that CERF has contributed to strengthening the role of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), thereby promoting more effective humanitarian response. A plan has been drawn up to implement the recommendations in the evaluation, and most of these have now been fulfilled.

3. Norway's policy towards CERF

As a contributor of humanitarian assistance, Norway is dependent on effective actors, such as the UN, the Red Cross Movement and international NGOs, that can rapidly initiate emergency relief operations and other activities in humanitarian crises. CERF constitutes the cornerstone of our ability to provide timely, predictable financing in response to humanitarian crises. As a donor, we will make active efforts to ensure that CERF is continuously improved and perceived as a relevant source of funding. In Norway's view, the Fund should be used to provide traditional emergency relief in concrete emergencies.

There may be challenges, particularly in long-term, under-funded emergencies where there is also pressure to establish sustainable solutions for increased self-sufficiency and development. Norway is open to using CERF for the early

humanitarian action where needs assessments detect nascent crises.

Norway is 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 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 emergencies and thereby undermine its possibility of timely response. Norway has supported the efforts to strengthen and develop the CERF Secretariat, which has steadily improved its methods and organisational structure.

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For more information, contact the Section for Budget and Administration by e-mail at: sbf-fn@mfa.no. This document can be found on our website: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/selected-topics/un>.