

# Gearing up humanitarian action in the **Central African Republic:**

## The **Emergency Response Fund**

Activity Update, October 2007

### ***Background and overview***

One million people in the north of the Central African Republic continue to directly suffer the consequences of violent conflict, forced displacement and attacks from criminal gangs. At heart a protection crisis, this situation is having dire humanitarian consequences for civilians in conflict areas: For many, hospitals and health centres have either been destroyed or are too far away, their children cannot go to school, their fields lie idle, and they have no safe drinking water. Above all, there is the fear of future attacks or reprisals which haunts 300,000 people and keeps them displaced. Given the gravity of the people's needs, the humanitarian presence at the start of 2007 was remarkably weak. Five international NGOs struggled to cover the most urgent needs, while UN agencies lacked partners to implement their programmes.



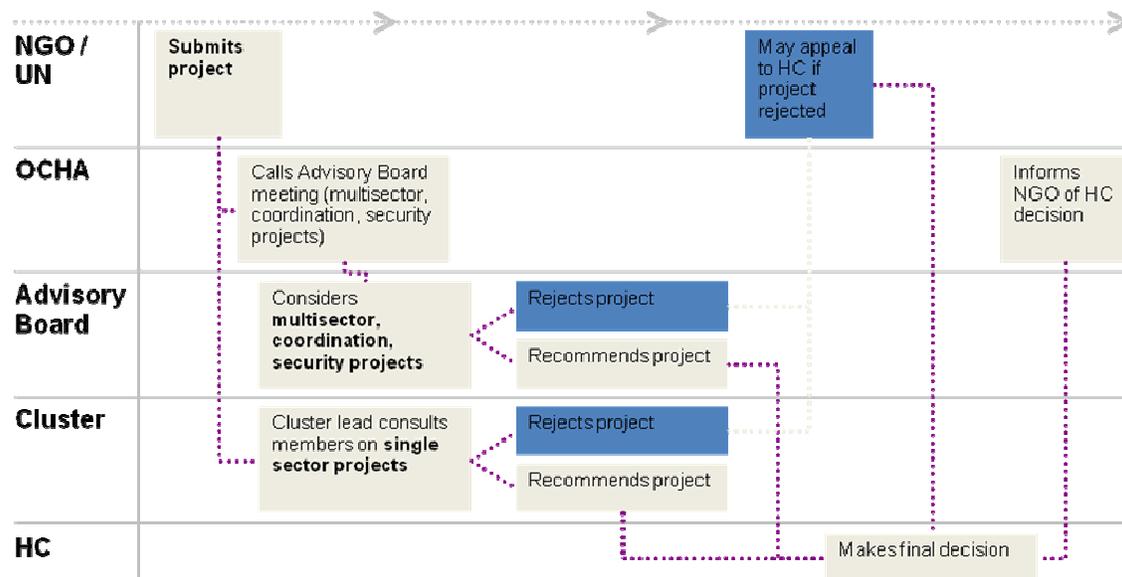
In response, the Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team in the Central African Republic has geared up its humanitarian response, enhancing life-saving assistance and protection. To support humanitarian organisations setting up office in conflict areas and responding quickly to needs where gaps exist, the Humanitarian Coordinator set up the Emergency Response Fund (ERF), administered by UNDP and OCHA. Originally devised as a \$1m fund, donor interest has far exceeded expectations. During the first six months, four donors have contributed \$4.6m (incl. pledges), making the ERF the fourth largest source of humanitarian funding in the Central African Republic. Twenty-six projects by eleven NGOs and five UN entities, with a budget total of \$3.3m, have benefited from the ERF, providing humanitarian assistance directly to some 380,000 people, or delivering the support services necessary to reach them. The ERF gives humanitarian organisations a way to quickly access funds and increases predictability, while remaining selective through a two-level decision-making process. To date, five projects, amounting to \$1.2m, have been rejected. The inclusiveness of the ERF, involving NGOs, the French Red Cross, and UN agencies, has strengthened humanitarian coordination, in particular at the cluster level, and empowered the Humanitarian Coordinator. Yet, there are ways to develop the fund to improve the timeliness and quality of humanitarian assistance in the Central African Republic. The ERF mechanism is continuously reviewed to ensure that it is as fast, flexible, and transparent as possible.

## How the ERF works

The Emergency Response Fund covers start-up costs and gap-filling activities in response to rapidly changing circumstances, when other funding mechanisms are unavailable. The ERF is characterized by simplicity, flexibility, speed, and transparency. The fund's aim is also to reinforce humanitarian coordination in the Central African Republic, particularly the cluster system. To that end, the selection process for submitted one-page project sheets takes place at two levels. First, projects are discussed within the relevant cluster, or, if they do not fall within a cluster, by the ERF's Advisory Board, which has a rotating membership. The cluster lead or the board then either recommend a project to the Humanitarian Coordinator, ask the submitting organisation for a revision, or reject it (a decision that may be appealed). In a second step, the Humanitarian Coordinator makes the final decision on which projects should be funded. Activities funded by the ERF have to be implemented within six months. While there is no fixed ceiling, projects are expected to range up to \$250,000.

The Advisory Board, in which two NGO, two UN and one donor representative participate, also has a second role: It reviews the functioning of the ERF on a quarterly basis and advises the Humanitarian Coordinator on adjustments needed to ensure that funding meets the most urgent needs.

Deadlines for clusters or the advisory board to review projects, for the Humanitarian Coordinator to make a final decision, and for OCHA and UNDP to follow up and disburse funds are tight, and closely monitored by the ERF focal points in OCHA and UNDP. Organisations should receive their funds 20 working days after submitting a project. During its first six months, however, the ERF faced difficulties getting up to speed with the consequence that these delays were often not fully respected. Figuring out the balance between the fund's envisaged flexibility and internal administrative procedures, stakeholders figured out operative details on the go, to ensure accountability and transparency. These early difficulties are currently being overcome, as NGOs and UN agencies get acquainted with the ERF's functioning and as cluster leads take on full responsibility for their sectors.



### **Funding situation**

Donor interest in the Emergency Response Fund has greatly exceeded initial expectations. Including a latest pledge from the Netherlands, funding to the ERF amounted to \$4.6m over the first six months of its existence. To support the Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team's humanitarian response, the ERF was subsequently increased to \$5m. It is thus funded at 93%. However, the fund will be continued in 2008 and additional contributions are welcome.

The ERF exists to provide funds rapidly when no other funding mechanism is available. The cluster leads, members of the advisory board, and the Humanitarian Coordinator ensure that the fund is not used for projects that do not meet the fund's objectives (i.e. filling real gaps or covering start-up costs), or that are incoherent. In other words, the ERF is not a fall-back for projects that have been rejected by 'traditional' donors.

**Table 1: Financial overview** (as of 10 October 2007)

|                            |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Funding requested for 2007 | \$5,000,000 |
| Funding received           | \$2,899,908 |
| Pledges                    | \$1,735,000 |
| Funding (incl. pledges)    | \$4,634,908 |
| Funds still needed         | \$365,092   |

**Table 2: Contributions and pledges** (as of 10 October 2007)

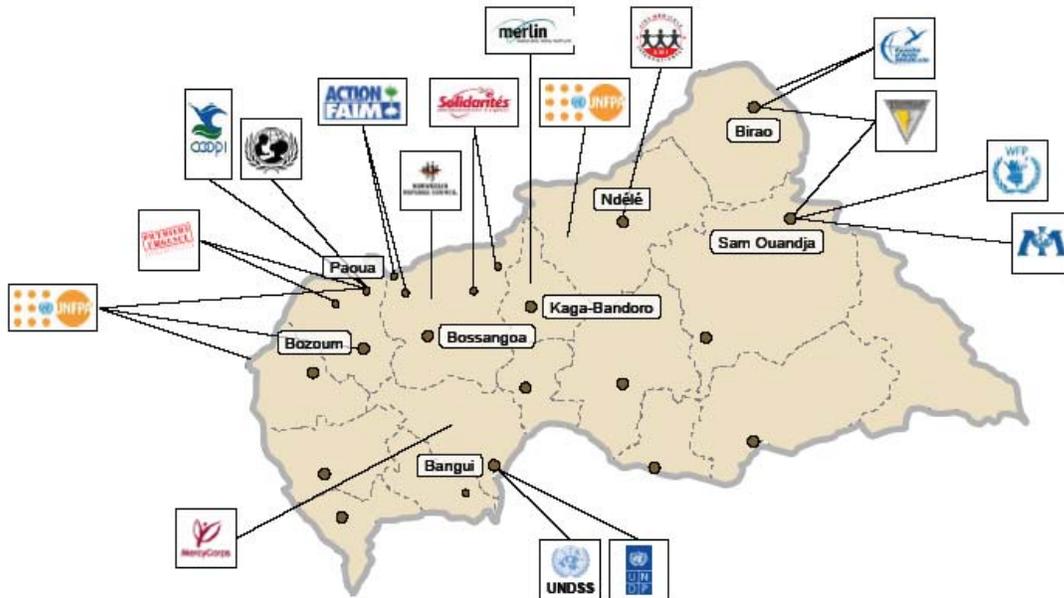
| Donor          | Contribution       | Pledge             | Total              |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Netherlands    | \$1,083,576        | \$1,235,000        | \$2,318,576        |
| Norway         |                    | \$500,000          | \$500,000          |
| Sweden         | \$716,332          |                    | \$716,332          |
| United Kingdom | \$1,100,000        |                    | \$1,100,000        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$2,899,908</b> | <b>\$1,735,000</b> | <b>\$4,634,908</b> |

**Table 3: Project overview** (as of 10 October 2007)

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Number of projects submitted to ERF               | 32          |
| Number of UN entities/NGOs submitting projects    | 5/12        |
| Total budget amount of submitted projects         | \$4,820,971 |
| Number of approved projects                       | 26          |
| Number of UN entities/NGOs with approved projects | 4/12        |
| Total budget amount of approved projects          | \$3,321,970 |
| Number of rejected projects                       | 5           |
| Number of UN entities/NGOs with rejected projects | 1/3         |
| Total budget amount of rejected projects          | \$1,178,800 |
| Number of pending projects                        | 1           |
| Number of UN entities/NGOs with pending projects  | 1/0         |
| Total budget amount of pending projects           | \$250,701   |

### The ERF at work

Some 380,000 people, including internally displaced Central Africans, refugees from Darfur, malnourished children, pregnant women and people being directly affected by conflict, have benefitted from the 26 projects approved for ERF funding. Projects cover a variety of sectors, from education, food security and nutrition, over health, to shelter, basic household items, water and sanitation. So far, no projects have been submitted for protection and recovery activities. Projects are implemented from Nana-Mambéré prefecture in the northwest at the border with Cameroon and Chad to Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures in the far northeast, bordering eastern Chad and Sudan's Darfur region. With the exception of two projects by UNDP and UNDSS, providing support services to UN agencies and NGOs in Bangui so that they can operate more efficiently in the key emergency areas, and a Mercy Corps project that improves access to clean water, schools, and health centres in Ombella-Mpoko prefecture, all projects are implemented in the seven northern prefectures that are most affected by violent conflict, forced displacements and general insecurity.



With ERF-funding, COOPI, Première Urgence, Action contre la Faim, and Triangle Génération Humanitaire are distributing food, seeds and tools provided by WFP and FAO to 87,500 displaced persons in the areas of Paoua and Markounda in the northwest and in Vakaga prefecture in the northeast. Solidarités distributes basic household items provided by UNICEF and UNHCR in the area of Kabo in the central northern part of the country. In the northeast, Comité d'Aide Médicale provides access to psychosocial counseling to 20,000 vulnerable people affected by conflict. UNFPA has conducted a campaign for HIV/AIDS prevention in conflict areas – the Central African Republic at 6.2% has the ninth highest prevalence rate in the world, and rates in rural areas are even higher. The Emergency Response Fund has also helped Merlin establish a presence in Kaga-Bandoro, the Norwegian Refugee Council in Batangafo, Aide Médicale Internationale in Ndélé in Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, and the International Rescue Committee to start education activities in Nana-Gribizi prefecture.

Finally, support from the fund was crucial to quickly respond to the needs of 2,700 Darfur refugees after they arrived in Sam Ouandja in late May, following a ten-day long march. WFP, the International Medical Corps, and Triangle, together with UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA, were able to ensure access to drinking water, to distribute emergency food rations, to provide basic health care and shelter.

**Table 4: ERF funding by sector** (as of 10 October 2007)

| <b>Sector</b>                               | <b>Approved amount</b> |
|---|------------------------|
| Coordination and support services           | \$284,221              |
| Education                                   | \$150,000              |
| Food security                               | \$732,919              |
| Health                                      | \$940,357              |
| Multisector assistance to refugees and IDPs | \$586,217              |
| Shelter and non-food items                  | \$99,606               |
| Nutrition                                   | \$358,650              |
| Security                                    | \$70,000               |
| Water, sanitation, and hygiene              | \$100,000              |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                          | <b>\$3,321,970</b>     |

In addition, people struck by conflict are the indirect beneficiaries of projects that help humanitarian organisations do their work faster and more efficiently, and reach more people in need. UNDP is has established a Service Centre to help NGOs with customs clearance, visas, registration, and advice on service providers and procurement. The UN Department for Safety and Security communicates with UN missions in conflict areas and tracks security incidents reported by the UN and NGO community. UNICEF has established a communications system at the newly opened inter-agency sub-office in Paoua.

**Table 5: ERF funding by organisation** (as of 10 October 2007)

| <b>Organisation</b>                   | <b>Approved amount</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Action contre la Faim                 | \$100,000              |
| Aide Médicale Internationale          | \$100,000              |
| Comité d'Aide Médicale                | \$364,550              |
| COOPI (Cooperazione Internazionale)   | \$124,709              |
| International Medical Corps           | \$500,000              |
| International Rescue Committee        | \$200,000              |
| Mercy Corps                           | \$185,697              |
| Merlin                                | \$100,000              |
| Norwegian Refugee Council             | \$150,000              |
| Première Urgence                      | \$174,736              |
| Solidarités                           | \$364,321              |
| Triangle Génération Humanitaire       | \$167,665              |
| UN Development Programme              | \$100,000              |
| UN Department for Safety and Security | \$70,000               |
| UN Population Fund (UNFPA)            | \$197,028              |
| UNICEF                                | \$321,650              |
| World Food Programme                  | \$101,614              |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                    | <b>\$3,321,970</b>     |

## ***Lessons learned***

During the first six months of its existence, the Emergency Response Fund attracted donor contributions far exceeding initial expectations, and helped 16 NGOs and UN entities to implement 26 projects. Some 380,000 people, almost all of whom were in conflict areas, benefited from humanitarian assistance thanks to the ERF. Yet, the Humanitarian Coordinator's office, UNDP and OCHA faced a number of challenges in getting the fund to run at full speed.

First, the aim for simplicity, flexibility, and speed had to be balanced with programmatic rigour and financial accountability. On occasion this led to some delays in the disbursement of funds, beyond the 20-day target. Continuous and open consultation between NGOs and UN agencies applying for funds on the one hand, and on the other UNDP and OCHA which, on behalf of the HC run the fund, have enabled organisations to tackle these challenges and ensure that the fund is the fastest available in the Central African Republic. To that end, OCHA has elaborated a detailed flow-chart, with precise deadlines, of all the steps involved in the ERF disbursement process, from project approval to submission of the final report. This flowchart will make it easier to hold agencies involved in the ERF accountable, and make sure that deadlines are met, and that funding reaches recipients as fast as possible.

Second, as the fund grew to five times its initially planned size, there was an initial tendency to approve virtually all submitted projects. In one case, a project was approved that had been included in the 2007 Coordinated Aid Programme (CAP) but had failed to attract funding from traditional donors. Realizing that they had to be more strict in their application of the ERF groundrules, the cluster leads, the advisory board, and the Humanitarian Coordinator have become more selective, and have since rejected 5 projects, at both levels of the decision-making process.

Learning from these initial difficulties, it became clear that there is a need for continuous consultation on key documents with UN agencies and NGOs benefiting from the fund. All steps in the process, and responsibilities at each step, are now clearly mapped out. As these challenges are overcome, the Emergency Response Fund has the potential to grow further and to consolidate its role as one of the central funding sources for humanitarian action in the Central African Republic.

***For further information, please visit [www.hdptcar.net](http://www.hdptcar.net) or contact:***

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**Annex: List of ERF projects (as of 10 October 2007)**

| <b>Sector</b>        | <b>Organisation</b> | <b>Project Title</b>  | <b>Amount</b>   |
|----------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>Coordination</b>  | UNDP                | Serving the Aid Community   | \$100,000   |
|                      | UNFPA               | Identification of IDPs in the prefectures of Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Bamingui-Bangoran, Nana-Gribizi, and Vakaga  | \$71,221  |
|                      | UNICEF              | Interagency Data Communications Project / Paoua Office  | \$113,000   |
| <b>Education</b>     | NRC                 | Delivery of emergency education and protection programmes   | \$150,000   |
| <b>Food security</b> | COOPI               | Reinforcement of logistic capacities for the distribution of seeds and tools and seeds protection rations for 25,000 IDPs                                 | \$124,709   |
|                      | Première Urgence    | Reinforcement of operational and logistics capacities for the support of IDPs in OuhamPendé   | \$174,736   |
|                      | Solidarités         | Food security for the vulnerable population of Nana-Gribizi prefecture  | \$264,715   |
|                      | Triangle            | Food Security for vulnerable people In Birao area   | \$67,145  |
|                      | WFP                 | Emergency Airlift operation of food items to Sudanese refugees in Sam Ouandja   | \$101,614   |
| <b>Health</b>        | AMI                 | Primary health care – Mother and Child Health and EPV in Bamingui-Bangoran  | \$100,000   |
|                      | CAM                 | Psychosocial support and prevention of STDs for the traumatized population of Birao   | \$100,000   |
|                      | CAM                 | Psychosocial support, prevention of HIV/AIDS, STD & sexual abuse, community activities for the vulnerable and traumatized population of Vakaga prefecture | \$164,550   |
|                      | IMC                 | Primary health care and community health for refugees and host population in Sam Ouandja (Haute-Kotto prefecture)   | \$100,000   |
|                      | IMC                 | Primary health care and community health in Ouadda and surrounding villages and for refugees and host population in Sam Ouandja (Haute-Kotto prefecture)  | \$250,000   |
|                      | Merlin              | Support to primary health services in Nana-Gribizi  | \$100,000   |
|                      | UNFPA               | Prevention of STI/HIV/AIDS amongst youth in conflict-affected zone in Ouham and Ouaham-Pendé  | \$50,907  |
|                      | UNFPA               | Prevention of STI/HIV/AIDS among adolescents and youths in conflict-affected areas in Bamingui-Bangoran   | \$74,900  |
|                      | <b>Multisector</b>  | ACF   | Support to the delivery of seeds, tools and NFI to IDPs |
| IRC                  |                     | Education and Operational Gap Coverage  | \$200,000   |
| MercyCorps           |                     | Access to social rights in Ombella-Mpoko: water, health, education  | \$185,697   |
|                      | Triangle            | Emergency assistance to Sudanese refugees and local vulnerable populations in Sam Ouandja   | \$100,520   |
| <b>NFI/shelter</b>   | Solidarités         | Emergency distribution of NFIs for the conflict-affected population in Ouham  | \$99,606  |
| <b>Nutrition</b>     | IMC                 | Therapeutic feeding center and supplementary feeding center for refugees and host population in Sam Ouandja (Haute-Kotto)                                 | \$150,000   |
|                      | UNICEF              | Prevention and management of malnutrition amongst children under five in most conflict-affected prefectures   | \$208,650   |
| <b>Security</b>      | UNDSS               | Strengthening communication capacity  | \$70,000  |
| <b>Water</b>         | CAM                 | Wells rehabilitation and hygiene promotion in Birao   | \$100,000   |