

In response to Covid-19, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) is allocating \$25 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) via IOM to NGOs to support their lifesaving response to the pandemic. The allocation aspires to give NGOs more direct access to CERF funding. IOM serves as grant manager facilitating the contracting of NGOs at country level. The allocation will be provided to six countries: Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Haiti, Libya, Sudan, and South Sudan.

## **1. Why has the ERC decided to allocate Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) funding to NGOs?**

Given the unprecedented nature and magnitude of the Covid-19 response, the channeling of funding in response to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) to NGOs has been slower than expected, and a number of NGOs have been unable to scale up their response to the crisis as required. Following numerous discussions and many global calls for greater direct funding to NGOs, the ERC decided to explore options for channeling CERF resources to NGOs. The allocation of \$25 million to NGOs, via IOM, complements the \$95 million allocation made by the ERC to UN agencies. The urgency of the situation has called on OCHA to find innovative solutions for cooperation across the entire humanitarian community.

## **2. What is the objective of the allocation? Why?**

The objective is to support NGOs' lifesaving Covid-19 programmes in priority countries in the sectors of health (including mental health and psychosocial support) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The NGO projects are expected to include a strong consideration of gender issues, including gender-based violence, and people with disabilities. Where possible, an integrated WASH and Health approach is recommended. These sectors were chosen because of their direct influence on the Covid-19 response – and because they are areas where NGOs can play a significant role, in a complementary manner to the UN.

## **3. How will the allocation be managed?**

As CERF can only disburse money directly to UN agencies, IOM serves as a grant manager of the overall allocation, contracting a number of NGOs at the country level, and ensuring the monitoring and oversight of projects. The contractual arrangement will mirror – to the extent possible – the contractual arrangements that CERF provides to UN agencies, thereby providing NGOs with similar “conditions” as those asked of UN agencies. This has been an important feature in structuring the allocation. In each country, the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) sets up a committee or uses existing humanitarian financing structures (i.e., those linked to a country-based pooled fund) to select a small number of NGOs. These will set up agreements with and receive the CERF funding from IOM.

## **4. Why was IOM selected as grant manager?**

IOM offered a flexible and light contracting approach for NGOs with project templates and reporting requirements aligned with those applied by UN agencies receiving CERF funding. Considering the rapidly evolving Covid-19 situation, and the need to quickly channel the funds to front-line responders, the speed and flexibility of the proposed modality was a key factor in selecting IOM. IOM also agreed to reduce its indirect programme support costs, enabling a higher proportion of CERF funds to be channeled for NGOs

lifesaving programming. IOM will stand up dedicated resources to ensure the timely disbursement of funds, provide assistance with CERF reporting and monitor the implementation of programming in each of the six countries. IOM will not programmatically engage with the Health and WASH clusters and focus on its role as grant manager facilitating contracting of NGOs at country level.

#### 5. How were the six countries selected?

Given the scale of underfunding in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, and the relatively limited funding available through the CERF allocation, there was a need to focus on a few countries where the CERF funding can have an immediate impact. The countries were selected by the ERC based on an analysis of risk and the severity of Covid-19 needs, considerations of geographical diversity, and in-country capacity.

#### 6. What is the role of the RC/HC in the allocation process?

In line with standard CERF processes, the RC/HCs lead the identification of the most pressing humanitarian needs, most urgent response activities, and the ideal use of the CERF funds. Similarly, the RC/HCs retain leadership on identifying the best-placed NGOs, at the country-level, with the operational capacity and readiness to implement key Covid-19 programmes in line with the priorities identified at country level. RC/HCs are supported to that end by OCHA or the RCO, and by clusters/sectors.

#### 7. What is the role of OCHA?

The OCHA **country office** coordinates and facilitates the process in support of the RC/HC. This includes support to help organize and mobilize partners and clusters where necessary; coordination of the identification of priorities in the Health and WASH sectors; chairing of the selection committee; review and coordination of NGO proposals; and compilation of NGO proposals for submission to the CERF secretariat. Where there is no OCHA Office, the Resident Coordinator's Office will lead the process.

The CERF secretariat at OCHA **headquarters** developed the framework for the allocation in close collaboration with IOM headquarters; developed global guidance, criteria and CERF templates; and, in coordination with IOM, will review and clear the NGO project proposals in support of the ERC. The CERF secretariat will also review and advise on potential NGO project revision requests and interim updates and final reports on the implementation of the CERF-funded NGO activities.

#### 8. How are the NGOs selected in each country?

The ERC has stressed the need to ensure a quick allocation process and NGO selection processes will be kept light. The RC/HC establishes an inter-cluster/inter-agency committee under the chair of OCHA (or the Resident Coordinator's Office if there is no OCHA Office) to lead the NGO selection process. The exact composition of the membership of the committee may vary but will likely include the WASH and Health cluster coordinators; relevant NGO consortia if present; as well as relevant experts on protection issues, such as a gender advisor and the Protection Cluster Coordinator. IOM participates as an observer but is not part of the selection process. In countries with a CBPF, the RC/HC may decide to use established CBPF mechanisms for NGO selection instead of the selection committee. To ensure a focused and quick process, a general call for NGO proposals or concept notes is not made; rather, NGOs are selected based on their programmatic expertise, implementation capacity, field presence, and other criteria described in the guidance note. The RC/HC makes the final decision on the NGO selection.

#### **9. Will the in-country CERF 'strategy' be based on a prioritisation process?**

Yes. To ensure that CERF funds support the most urgent, priority needs in-country related to the Covid-19 response, the WASH and Health cluster (or sector) coordinators identify the Covid-19-related priorities for their respective clusters (geographic areas, affected people, type of activities, etc.). These priorities are shared with the selection committee who, under the leadership of the RC/HC, decides on the joint priorities for the CERF allocation in line with at least one of the strategic priorities of the GHRP.

#### **10. Will the selection of NGOs be guided by a set of criteria?**

Yes. In addition to the country-specific priorities, the committee considers a set of global selection criteria provided for the CERF allocation. The global criteria have been set out to ensure that selected NGOs have the necessary programmatic expertise, implementation capacity and field presence to quickly scale up key Covid-19 programmes and complete implementation within the 9-month project period. The selection criteria have been developed to support speed of the allocation and implementation.

#### **11. How will the process differ in a country with a CBPF?**

In countries with a country-based pooled fund (CBPF), instead of setting up a selection committee, the RC/HC may decide to use existing CBPF structures to manage the prioritization and NGO selection process. Other aspects of the CBPF structure may inform the NGO selection process, e.g. the risk assessment rating of NGOs. In addition, complementarity between CERF NGO funding and the CBPF funding towards Covid-19 response should be sought where applicable.

#### **12. Are national/local NGOs eligible?**

Both international and national/local NGOs can be selected if they fulfil the global criteria laid out in the guidance note. Recognizing the localization agenda, and in line with standard CERF processes, sub-granting of CERF funds to national/local NGOs to implement activities is allowed when and where feasible and programmatically justified but has to be detailed in the NGO proposal.

#### **13. Is this a new CERF funding window?**

No. The allocation was set up in response to the unprecedented specific challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. This innovative allocation takes place within CERF's rapid response window and is experimental in nature.

#### **14. Where can I find more information on CERF?**

Check the CERF website (<https://cerf.un.org/>), the pooled funds Covid-19 dashboard (<https://pfbf.unocha.org/COVID19/>) or contact the CERF secretariat:

- Michael Jensen, Chief of CERF, [jensen7@un.org](mailto:jensen7@un.org)
- Nico Rost, CERF Rapid Response Lead, [rosten@un.org](mailto:rosten@un.org)