

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ADDED VALUE OF THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE FUND (CERF) TO THE VENEZUELA REGIONAL REFUGEE AND MIGRATION  
CRISIS



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# Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

## Disclaimer

The views presented in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the CERF secretariat. The field mission was conducted in November 2018 and the review is based on the author's views at this time. The initial draft of the report was submitted to the CERF secretariat in January 2019 but, due to an extended comments phase, the revisions were not finalized until August 2019. The situation and the response have progressed in the 7 months between the review being conducted and the report being published. This progression is not reflected in the report.

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## Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
C4D	Communication for Development
CEBAF	Centros Binacionales de Atención en Frontera
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CO	Country Office
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
ELC	Equipo Local de Coordinación
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GIFMM	Interagency Group for Mixed Migration Flows
GTRM	Interagency Working Group on Refugees and Migrants
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HQ	Headquarters
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IP	Implementing Partners
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LACRO	Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
MoH	Ministry of Health
NCE	No-Cost Extension
NFI	Non-Food Item
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD/DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
P2P	Peer to Peer
PAF	Performance and Accountability Framework
PAHO	The <i>Pan American Health Organization</i>
PoC	Persons of Concern
RC	Resident Coordinator
ROLAC	Regional Office of Latin America and the Caribbean
RR	Rapid Response
RMRP	Refugee and Migrant Response Plan
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
ToR	Terms of Reference
UFE	Under-Funded Emergency
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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UNDSS	UN Department of Safety and Security
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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## 1. Executive Summary

### Introduction

The escalating outflow of Venezuelan nationals into neighboring countries that began in 2015 reached regional critical emergency thresholds late 2017 and early 2018.<sup>1</sup> This triggered a CERF response to the regional refugee and migration crisis in the form of five rapid response (RR) allocations amounting to a total of US\$17.2 million. An initial unique, transboundary, regional rapid response allocation was granted in May 2018 in support of UNHCR and IOM and their activities in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago after the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General had asked the two agencies to coordinate and steer the operational response in the region. A further rapid response allocation was provided to Colombia in response to a country-specific request from the Humanitarian Coordinator in a country with a Humanitarian Country Team and cluster system in place, and that had issued a response plan for mixed migration flows from Venezuela (April- December 2018) as an addendum to its Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Three additional rapid response country-level allocations were subsequently provided for Ecuador, Peru (September 2018) and Brazil (October 2018), respectively, in response to requests submitted by Resident Coordinators in those countries. Within the realm of the CERF Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF), this review covers these five allocations and focuses on strategic questions unique to the specific regional allocation and the value added by the CERF to the broader humanitarian endeavor in this context. This review was conducted in November 2018, with findings based on the author's views at this time.

### Value added of the CERF

#### *Regional allocation*

Through its unique regional allocation<sup>2</sup> to two UN agencies in response to the Venezuelan refugee and migration crisis, CERF helped UNHCR and IOM carry out their role, and prompted the agencies to work more closely together on a joint proposal and response. The unprecedented regional allocation was also seen as an attempt on the part of the CERF to respond flexibly in support mixed-migration crises. While CERF funding was not provided with a view to set up the IOM-UNHCR Regional Platform that followed in the months after the allocation, the CERF allocation was very much seen by UNHCR, IOM and other agencies as a precursor for the Regional Platform and the work on the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP). In this sense, the regional allocation was considered to be a strategic decision to ensure the necessary support for UNHCR and IOM in their leadership role, as established by the Secretary-General's request. The regional allocation also helped leverage additional funding from other sources (see graphs of funding received by UNHCR and IOM in section 5 of the report). The regional allocation also addressed some needs in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, where CERF country-level allocations were not provided due to the limited humanitarian presence and structures in country; agencies' limited operational capacity; and the majority of prioritised activities not adhering to CERF's life-saving criteria. CERF country-level allocations are less forthcoming when the UN presence is lacking and operational capacity is limited, which means affected populations in those countries can be worse off as these factors are compounded by a lack of funding.

The regional allocation provided to two UN agencies to support the implementation of life-saving activities prioritised in their respective response plans for the crisis across six countries was presumed to be faster than an allocation including additional agencies, RC/HC consultation and a more comprehensive inter-agency process. Both IOM and UNHCR were able to scale up their presence and response to needs and pave the way for a Regional

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<sup>1</sup> This involved the convergence of several factors including large numbers of Venezuelans at border points, overstretched local structures and resources, the increasingly vulnerable state of the Venezuelans arriving, and the increasing use of unsafe land routes to exit the country due to a reduction in flights departing Venezuela.

<sup>2</sup> When referencing/discussing/making recommendations around 'regional allocations', reference is made to this particular allocation made to two lead-agencies across several countries, unless otherwise specified.

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Inter-Agency Coordination Platform – with UN agencies and various international organizations – and a Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants to foster a coordinated response and mobilize resources from the international community. The disadvantages were that RC/HCs were disempowered as a result of how the allocation process was eventually managed overall. Other UN agencies heavily invested in the response, such as WFP, PAHO/WHO and UNICEF, were excluded in the initial CERF allocation by the CERF secretariat. Inter-agency processes were bypassed,<sup>3</sup> overall pre-existing coordination capacities were weakened, and the usual CERF interagency processes that favour mutual accountability and shared reporting were not established. The response to the Venezuela regional crisis requires broad partner engagement that both IOM and UNHCR have sought to encourage. The regional allocation to two agencies was a missed opportunity to lay the foundations for broader partner engagement earlier, thereby better defining the response and clarifying roles and responsibilities and assistance across sectors.

### *Country-level allocations*

In countries that also received country-level allocations,<sup>4</sup> Colombia especially, inter-agency coordination capacities and structures were already in place. In Colombia, where there is now a mixed IDP-refugee and migrant response, the Venezuelan influx risks overshadowing the worsening in-country conflict-related humanitarian emergency and parallel coordination efforts may weaken the overall response.<sup>5</sup> An important concern related to the sustainability of separate coordination platforms is that all other agencies do not have a clear role and responsibility that can be shared in the future, thereby weakening existing coordination structures and potentially affecting the efficiency of, among others, future CERF processes.<sup>6</sup> On the whole, all agencies consulted felt that CERF had been a less predictable funding instrument in this response and, in the case of the Brazil, Ecuador and Peru country-specific allocations, less timely. UNHCR and IOM staff largely felt that they were in a difficult situation vis-à-vis their UN agency partners, partially as a result of the unique nature of the regional allocation and lack of initial communication and information on the allocation by the ERC/the CERF secretariat and the fact that they would be the only agencies to receive funding from the CERF at the regional level.

### *Overall*

The CERF added value to the broader humanitarian endeavour by raising the profile of the situation of the displaced Venezuelans in the region and providing much needed funding to a less visible and poorly funded crisis. It was important that the CERF provide allocations at the country level, in addition to the regional allocation, to respond to the crisis at hand at a greater scale and favour coherent, effective inter-agency approaches, enabling a broader response to needs-based on joint assessment and prioritisation of needs. The fact that CERF was one of the few donors providing funding to UNHCR, IOM and agencies in Colombia in the first half of the year also gave UN agencies more credibility vis-à-vis the government. Agency efforts to scale-up for the response regionally, and in particular UNHCR's, were remarkable. Amounts provided to the response at country level in all countries, and especially in the case of Ecuador,<sup>7</sup> were however considered limited to kick-start activities. Overall, CERF

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<sup>3</sup> Agencies coordinate at different levels within the IASC RC/HC system: within clusters (intra-cluster) between clusters, inter-cluster and where applicable at HCT level.

<sup>4</sup> Country-level allocations were provided to Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru.

<sup>5</sup> There are parallel coordination structures now in-country (e.g. HCT/Humanitarian coordination with clusters and the GIFMM), which is further elaborated in section 5 of this report.

<sup>6</sup> The platform coordination mechanism did not define sectors that all other agencies could identify with and take on a clear role (e.g. Health, WASH, Food security). Should CERF decide to provide regional UFE or RR funding in the future, agencies felt that this would be more complicated given that existing coordination structures had been weakened, in spite of the CERF's objective of strengthening cluster/sector coordination.

<sup>7</sup> Although increasing needs were identified throughout the transit route to Peru, as well as in many major cities in Ecuador, the country-level allocation was too small to address the broader response and CERF-funded programming was therefore restricted to the main entry points.

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requirements for detailed information in applications – both at regional and country-level - were considered excessive by most respondents and ineffective for this response to a fluid mixed migration. In contrast to the time usually taken for other CERF Rapid Response allocations, all agencies at the country level felt that timeliness considerations had been less of a priority for CERF in this context, with the ERC requesting a consolidated regional overview and analysis of needs before making a decision on the country-level allocations (with the exception of Colombia), and that there was limited understanding –as in the case of other donors- of the emergency nature of the crisis and the level of vulnerability of the more recent waves of migrants and refugees.

### Recommendations

#### *On the CERF Regional Allocation:*

It is premature, based on the Venezuela regional allocation, to recommend that the CERF pursue regional allocations with similar coordination structures in the future. The regional allocation was key for UNHCR and IOM to immediately assist those most in need and identify the health, SGBV, child protection, trafficking and smuggling and urban integration challenges<sup>8</sup> but overall the CERF has greater added value supporting country-level allocations led by the relevant RC/HCs and supporting a consultative UNCT/HCT process in-country with all concerned agencies and partners. In this case, the strategy behind the decision to confine the regional allocation to the two agencies was driven by the importance of visibly supporting their leadership role, in light of the SG's decision. UNHCR and IOM very much valued the support received by the ERC and CERF that was critical for their scale-up, but the decision may have inadvertently undermined their relationships with other agencies. UNHCR and IOM favoured, and would have benefitted from, other agencies also receiving support from the CERF at the same time.

#### *Overall*

As at the country level, any regional allocation also requires defined accountability and reporting lines. CERF Regional allocations could potentially be more appropriate in the following situations:

- If and when a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator<sup>9</sup> is in place that is accountable to the ERC and can lead and decide on priorities for the CERF request and ensure its coherence across the region. An HC in the region could be asked to provide this facilitating regional role across several countries and ensure that both UNHCR and IOM representatives play a key role in the prioritisation and overall coherence of the allocation.
- In regional contexts, like for instance the Caribbean, where UNCTs have less capacities in place, fewer agencies are involved, and inter-agency processes can be less significant, as seen in the Caribbean sub-regional component of the RMRP.<sup>10</sup>
- In targeted cross-border efforts involving joint programmes for more coherent and effective responses and economies of scale (e.g. joint procurement, common staffing).

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In the RMRP, the funding required in Ecuador for direct emergency assistance and protection amounts to \$73,920,537 in comparison to \$50,154,439 for Peru, yet Peru received the larger CERF allocation.

<sup>8</sup> As noted by UNHCR and IOM in the CERF interim report on the regional allocation

<sup>9</sup> Regional Humanitarian Coordinators (RHC) are appointed when a humanitarian response has a regional impact warranting overall strategic coordination at the regional level. The RHC usually supports HCs in the affected countries to ensure overall coherence in the response, build on existing synergies with development actors, as well as increase advocacy and fundraising efforts. There are currently two RHCs, one for the Sahel Region and one for the regional impact of the Syria crisis. RHCs are designated by the ERC in consultation with the IASC.

<sup>10</sup> The RMRP includes a sub-regional appeal for the Caribbean, which includes Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Aruba, Curacao and Dominica. The amount required is \$34.8 million out of the total \$738 million for the RMRP, or 4.7 percent.



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### *On Coordination:*

In general, Resident Coordinators (RCs) should be the entry point as the highest UN official in the country and the lead for all the UN's country-level operational activities. Current UN reforms seek to further empower RCs to work across the development-humanitarian-peacebuilding continuum. The Secretary-General's report on the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system also emphasises that all inter-agency pooled funding in support of country-level work should be coordinated by the RC; that the RC will clearly define responsibilities in situations of humanitarian crises or peacebuilding; and that UNCT members will report to RCs on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda which includes "leave no one behind". In a humanitarian response, existing capacities should be considered and strengthened. If international humanitarian assistance is required, the Resident Coordinator is accountable to the ERC for coordinating the response efforts of all humanitarian actors (UN and others). Humanitarian actors must respond to needs quickly, with relevant responses and scale-up, but the aim should always be to enable national and local responses.

The Colombian context, which has the largest IDP population in the world, is regarded as a mixed situation and OCHA's capacity and role in-country should be strengthened to ensure an appropriate response to growing needs and a worsening situation. The limited OCHA office capacity can affect the facilitation of the CERF processes. In Colombia, the OCHA presence has been winding down since 2016<sup>11</sup> and at the time of the review (November 2018) the office had been reduced to 1 international staff member (Head of Office) at Bogota level that can engage on CERF-related processes.<sup>12</sup>

### *CERF Processes and Templates:*

Finally, the CERF secretariat should consider the usefulness of some of the information<sup>13</sup> it requires up-front in rapid response application processes, particularly in this type of fluid mixed migration response. Allowing agencies to provide more specific information two months into the implementation phase of the approved projects should be considered for greater flexibility and effectiveness, favouring a needs-based response. Although flexibility is built into the implementation stage, and agencies can ask for the reprogramming of activities, this is not always understood or favoured at the country level.

In the future, the CERF should not wait for interim reporting that does not provide adequate and timely information on the situation against which decisions on allocations can be made, and instead should rely on other sources, e.g. information from assessments provided by agencies including UNHCR and IOM in the field and/or the RCO or OCHA focal points.

The CERF secretariat would have to adapt its application and reporting templates to regional allocations for these to reflect priorities, and work with key actors to address practical challenges related to regional allocations. The current regional allocation process and associated reporting effort did not on its own enable the development of a regional and coordinated operational result framework beyond the compilation of the national result frameworks of each agency. The CERF secretariat should convene a webinar early on with all relevant stakeholders (i.e. RC/HCs, regional directors of UN agencies including OCHA) and provide information on the main aim and objectives of the allocation and explain and provide transparency on the process. The webinar should be as transparent and

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<sup>11</sup> Melanie Teff and Daphne Panayotatos, *Crises Colliding, The Mass Influx of Venezuelans into the Dangerous Fragility of Post-Peace Agreement Colombia*. Refugees International. Field Report, January 2019.

<sup>12</sup> The CERF focal point was terminated in December 2018, meaning that she was unable to participate in the After-Action Review or provide comments on this review.

<sup>13</sup> Information about specific activities and budget lines but above all the information about the needs, which were unknown/ rapidly and constantly changing with the migration being fluid, as opposed to other types of disasters. The figures in this context were massive: over 1.5 million Venezuelans estimated in Colombia. The third wave of migrants in increasingly vulnerable conditions. 5,000 persons a day crossing the border between Ecuador and Peru at the time.

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inclusive as possible. This effort would be in line with the CERF's aim of facilitating strategic planning and coordination. OCHA would have to continue to play a key role coordinating and facilitating processes in all cases (advising the RHC or RC/HCs and/or HCTs). When either refugees or mixed flows are involved, UNHCR, and where relevant also IOM, should be given a key role in ensuring the coherence of the request and their representatives could review the application without delaying processes.

The CERF application should add a category of "other" in the gender-disaggregation of beneficiaries, to allow for identification of transgender, intersex or other, non-binary, genders by at least including "other" as a category.

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## 2. Introduction

This review assesses the value added by CERF funding provided for the humanitarian response to the regional Venezuela refugee and migration crisis in 2018. It covers five rapid response allocations amounting to a total of US\$17.2 million, namely: (i) the CERF rapid response regional allocation in May 2018 in support of two agencies', UNHCR and IOM's, life-saving activities outlined in their respective regional response plans for the Venezuela migration crisis, covering activities in six neighbouring countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago)<sup>14</sup> and (ii) the four country-specific rapid response allocations for Colombia (July 2018), Ecuador, Peru and Brazil (September/October 2018) in response to the influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The review is based on interviews and observations conducted in November 2018 and the report reflects the views of the situation at this time.

The escalating outflow of Venezuelan nationals into neighboring countries that began in 2015 reached regional critical emergency thresholds in late 2017 and the first three months of 2018.<sup>15</sup> New waves of migrants and refugees arriving into host communities included a growing number of individuals and households in extremely vulnerable conditions. In Brazil, the Government of Roraima declared a state of social emergency due to the "intense, unlimited and disorderly flow of Venezuelans without means or conditions to sustain themselves".<sup>16</sup> Large concentrations of Venezuelans in mainly border areas swelled, leading to increasingly poor reception conditions and public health risks. Structures and resources available at the local level became clearly insufficient to cope with needs. Authorities became increasingly concerned about the spread of diseases including malaria, measles, diphtheria and tuberculosis in reception areas and claimed that, due to a lack of health access in Venezuela, arrivals were boosting transmission rates. Governments in the region, and particularly Colombia in February 2018 as the most affected country, started requesting UN support to respond to humanitarian needs. UNHCR issued a one-year supplementary appeal in March and IOM a two-year regional action plan in April.

## 3. Background on the CERF allocations

Considering UNHCR and IOM's role in the Venezuela mixed refugee and migration crisis response, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) in May 2018 approved \$6.2 million as initial seed funding to the two agencies for life-saving activities outlined in their respective regional response plans.<sup>17</sup> The Secretary-General's bulletin entitled *Establishment and operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (ST/SGB/2010/5)* stipulates that, although requests should be primarily field driven, "in exceptional circumstances, in particular those related to transboundary crises affecting multiple countries, the Coordinator may consider a request made directly by an eligible organization, provided that consultations have taken place with Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators in the affected areas." The joint CERF allocation represented 10 per cent of the requirements of UNHCR's \$46 million one-year plan and 5 per cent of the requirements of IOM's \$32 million two-year plan for the crisis, targeting some 195,000 beneficiaries across Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago. While the two agencies' respective regional plans covered a total of 17 countries, the CERF request selectively targeted only Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago.

In an effort to ensure adequate coordination of CERF funding by UNHCR and IOM and support core CERF objectives, the two recipient agencies were asked to formulate a joint CERF application and present an analysis of needs and a coherent prioritization across the countries. CERF funds were sought to address three out of the five

<sup>14</sup> After the United Nations Secretary-General in April 2018 had asked UNHCR and IOM to coordinate and steer the operational response.

<sup>15</sup> This involved the convergence of several factors including large numbers of Venezuelans at border points, overstretched local structures and resources, the increasingly vulnerable state of the Venezuelans arriving, and the increasing use of unsafe land routes to exit the country due to a reduction in flights departing Venezuela.

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR Venezuela Situation Update / November 2017

<sup>17</sup> CERF regional Rapid Response allocation in support of UNHCR and IOM's respective regional response plans for Venezuelan refugees, migrants and host communities in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago (18-RR-VZR-30453, May 2018)

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jointly agreed and coordinated response objectives to enable IOM and UNHCR to support multi-sector needs of the Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the six countries, including implementation of a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM); protection against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV); and provision of documentation, shelter, health care, and direct cash-based assistance.

The ERC requested that the RC/HCs of the six countries under the allocation be consulted by UNHCR and IOM on the formulation of the joint application and reporting and informed on the implementation of activities. In contrast to provisions under the SG's bulletin that stipulate that RC/HCs oversee the monitoring of, and narrative reporting on, projects funded by the CERF and submit a narrative report on the use of funds and results achieved, in this instance, the RC/HCs of the recipient countries were not charged with the responsibility for the coordination, implementation and reporting of the allocated funds.

The ERC considered country-specific CERF requests to cover additional identified needs, above and beyond those addressed by UNHCR and IOM. CERF funds were sought by the RC/HC for Colombia on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team in line with the HRP addendum. Both UNHCR and IOM<sup>18</sup> in this instance decided not to apply for additional funding under this country-level allocation. CERF provided a US\$6 million rapid response allocation to Colombia in July 2018, in response to the mixed population influx from Venezuela.

Three further allocations for Ecuador, Peru and Brazil were subsequently made in September/October 2018 following a more comprehensive view of the regional situation, which was requested by the ERC before deciding upon additional funding. The CERF allocated US\$ 1.5 million to Ecuador and Brazil respectively, and US\$ 2 million to Peru. In these instances, UNHCR and IOM participated in the prioritization discussions and application proposal processes. In Peru, IOM received a quarter of the total allocation and US\$ 400,000 in Brazil for food and shelter assistance.

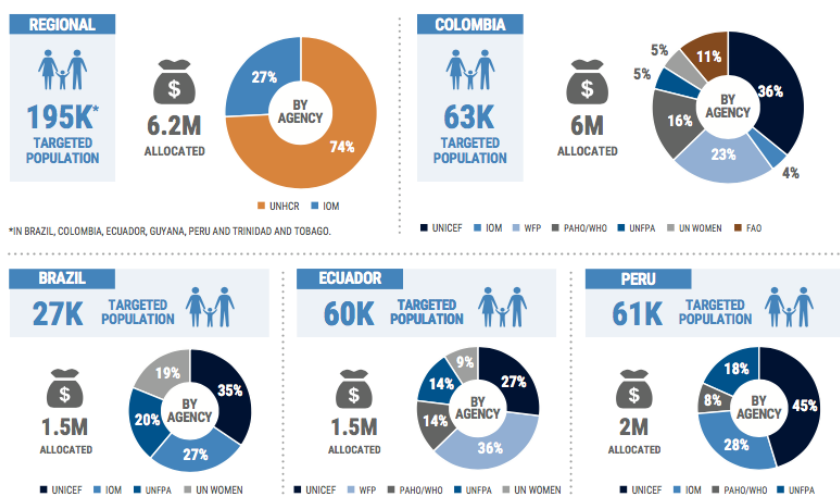
At a certain point, country-level allocations to Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago (countries covered under the regional allocation) were also under consideration but were, however, not provided due to the lower scale of needs and limited humanitarian presence and structures in country. A key benefit of the regional allocation in this case was the ability to provide some funding to countries like Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago where there is humanitarian need but a lack of UN presence and operational capacity. CERF country level allocations are less forthcoming when the UN presence is lacking and operational capacity is limited, which means affected populations in those countries can be worse off as these factors are compounded by a lack of funding.

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<sup>18</sup> A shelter project implemented by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) was included under an IOM grant to cover a prioritised outstanding need in this sector.

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Figure 1. Overview of CERF Funding for the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis in 2018



Source: OCHA ROLAC

### 3.1 Objectives and Scope of the CERF PAF Review

The Terms of Reference (ToR)<sup>19</sup> detail the objectives and key questions of the review. The critical overriding question on which assurance is sought is: Has CERF funding successfully added value to the broader humanitarian endeavor? A primary purpose of this review is to explore certain strategic issues unique to this specific regional allocation and forward-looking questions and lessons learned on CERF's role in supporting similar regional allocations under the coordination of (a) lead agency(ies) going forward. The review also aims to provide the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) with an appropriate level of assurance around the achievement of key performance benchmarks and planned results for the CERF mechanism around the intended inputs, outputs and outcomes as defined by the Performance Accountability Framework (PAF) in 2010. This independent review is one of the three to five annual reviews that the CERF secretariat has aimed to conduct as part of the PAF process.

This review focuses on the four main objectives listed in the terms of reference:

- Assessing the value added by CERF funding towards the regional humanitarian response
- Responding to strategic questions specific to this regional allocation
- Reviewing the achievement of key CERF PAF performance benchmarks
- Providing recommendations aimed at improving operational aspects of CERF and any relevant policy issues

In doing so, the review attempted to address four overarching questions:

1. How appropriate was CERF as a funding mechanism for regional transboundary responses?
2. How effective was CERF as a funding mechanism for the regional response to the Venezuela refugee and migrant crisis?
3. What, if any, was CERF's added value in this type of emergency?
4. What lessons can be drawn from this response for CERF's role in support of regional responses to mixed flows and transboundary allocations?

<sup>19</sup> See ToR in annex.

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The focus on the five allocations covered by the review provides an opportunity to compare and contrast the added value of CERF allocations in this response across different contexts with three different coordination structures:

- (i) a transboundary/regional allocation coordinated by two lead agencies across six countries;
- (ii) a country-specific request from a Humanitarian Coordinator in a country with a Humanitarian Country Team and cluster system in place (Colombia); and
- (iii) country-specific requests from Resident Coordinators in more development-oriented contexts with less established humanitarian coordination structures and mechanisms (Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil).

The review also considered the potential added value of separate and coinciding regional and country-level allocations.

### Overview of the logic model approach

The list of PAF indicators provides the basis of quality assurance around certain specific broad areas of concern to the ERC. CERF's added value refers to the following four objectives: (a) fast delivery of assistance to people in need, (b) better response to time-critical needs, (c) improved coordination among the humanitarian community, and (d) leveraging additional resources from other sources.

#### 1. CERF processes are achieving key management benchmarks in that:

- CERF submissions are based on an inclusive planning process and adhere to established quality criteria.
- Transparent systems are in place for correct allocation, efficient flow and use of CERF by agencies.
- Adequate monitoring and evaluation systems are in place at the agency level for measuring and reporting on results.

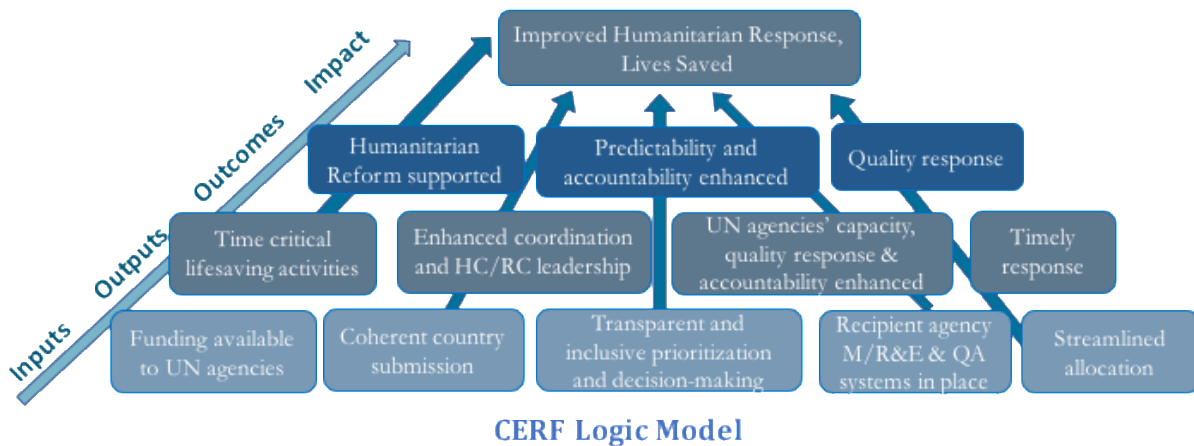
#### 2. There are reasonable grounds to believe that CERF operations favour the following results:

- CERF strengthens humanitarian response by empowering the RC/HC and enhancing the quality of coordination within the cluster approach and across clusters.
- CERF facilitates adequate coverage, eliminates gaps and facilitates an effective division of labour among humanitarian actors.
- CERF contributes to a timelier response to needs.
- CERF favors the delivery of relevant life-saving actions at critical moments.
- CERF serves as a catalyst to kick-start humanitarian response while other resources are mobilized.

The PAF makes use of a logic model approach as a means of clarifying accountability and performance expectations around a set of agreed CERF outputs, outcomes and impacts. The CERF's creation was part of the larger Humanitarian Reform process that aimed to enhance humanitarian response capacity, predictability, accountability and partnership through an improved leadership system, the Cluster Approach for better coordination, and more adequate, timely and flexible financing. Its logical framework, contained in the PAF, very much supports these output and outcome level results.

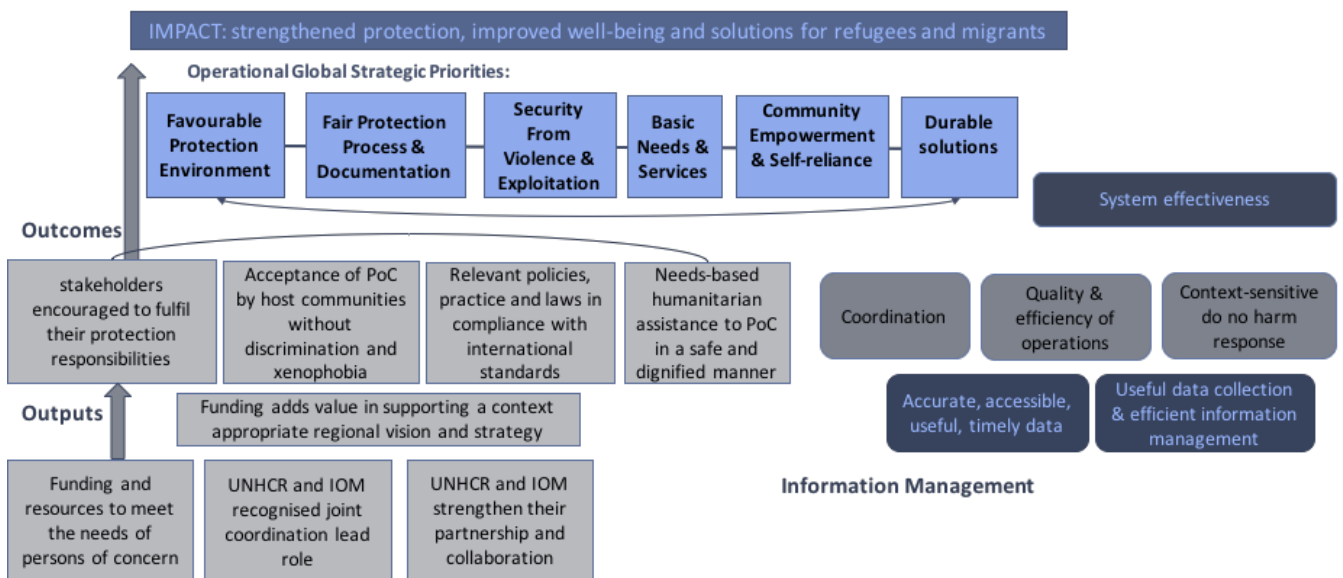
# Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

Figure 2. CERF PAF logic framework



For this review, an adapted analytical framework, based on the Operational Global Strategic Priorities identified in the UNHCR and IOM appeals and RMRP objectives as per figure 3, focusing on the main immediate life-saving objectives of the CERF, was used to review the appropriateness, effectiveness and value-added of the regional transboundary allocation. The review considered how the CERF facilitated UNHCR and IOM's joint action and their efforts to provide a regional comprehensive, predictable and harmonized response to the needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The review also covered the process and the CERF secretariat's efforts to strengthen HC/RC leadership and involvement across all allocations.

Figure 3. Mixed flows regional framework



Source: Author from UNHCR, IOM appeal and RMRP objectives

## Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

### Limitations and Constraints

In line with the PAF, the review focuses on the process and the specific unique nature of the transboundary regional allocation and coinciding country-level allocations more than on the outputs and outcomes of CERF funding. Although country-level allocations to Ecuador, Peru and Brazil had only recently been made when the review was commissioned, the review was considered very timely as it provides a snapshot and assessment of the initial processes. However, this is in contrast to other PAF reviews which usually take place at a later stage in the implementation, when there is more information available on the outcome of the grants and from the CERF After Action Reviews, along with other secondary sources.

There was an extended comments phase which meant there was significant lag time between when the mission took place and when the final draft of the report was submitted. Terms of reference<sup>20</sup> for this PAF review, as others, focused on the achievement of key performance benchmarks and planned results for the CERF mechanism around the intended inputs, outputs and outcomes as defined by the PAF and related Humanitarian Reform agenda.

In total, 46 interviews were carried out with 11 UN agencies, 3 donors, and 2 NGOs as well as 3 RCs (Peru, Colombia and Ecuador). Visits were made to 14 projects/sites where the evaluator met with affected populations, 12 community leaders, observed projects of 8 UN agencies and 8 partner NGOs and met 4 different government counterparts. Further detail is provided in the table below:

Table 1. Interviews and observations/visits conducted

	Geneva 5 Nov 2018	Ecuador 8-12 Nov 2018	Colombia 13-16 Nov 2018	Panama 19-21 Nov 2018	Remote interviews
<b>Interviews</b>	2 meetings: IOM (2 participants) and UNHCR (5 participants)	12 meetings/ interviews with 10 different agencies and the RC (3 UNHCR, 5 WHO/PAHO, 1 IOM, 1 UNDP, 1 FAO, 2 WFP, 3 UNICEF, 1 OCHA, 3 UNFPA, 1 UN Women, 1 RC)	16 meetings/ interviews (2 OCHA, 1 UNFPA, 2 UN Women, 2 WHO/PAHO, 2 WASH cluster, 1 UNICEF, 3 WFP, 3 IOM, 1 FAO, 4 Nutrition Cluster, 1 Education Cluster, 1 HC/RC, 2 UNHCR, 1 ECHO, 1 PRM)	10 meetings/ interviews (2 UNHCR, 4 WHO/PAHO, 2 IOM, 1 UNFPA, 1 UN Women, 1 WFP, 1 UNICEF, 1 World Vision, 4 OCHA, 1 AECID)	RC for Peru OCHA focal point for Peru
<b>Observations/ site visits</b>		Observed UNHCR donor visit meeting with agencies and a presentation on the Regional Platform	Observed part of an HRP planning session. Visited 14 projects implemented by different agencies, met with affected populations, community leaders, 8 UN agencies, 8 partner NGOs, CBOs and 4 different government counterparts. Attended Local coordination team meeting (ELC) and received a briefing	Meeting with OCHA was a preliminary debrief and discussion	

<sup>20</sup> See Annex.



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The review includes questions on the suitability of the CERF and its added value as a funding mechanism to support regional allocations, and recommendations on whether the CERF should undertake such allocations with similar coordination structures in the future. In *Making the case for an investment in the CERF*<sup>21</sup> (2017 and 2018), the CERF secretariat foresees that a new CERF strategy could include strengthening strategic response to regional emergencies, which pose challenges for country-based humanitarian coordination systems. It should be noted that lessons learned and recommendations coming out of the review are largely based on this one regional crisis which is unique. The review covers a regional crisis of mixed-flows, involving both refugees and migrants, with UNHCR and IOM playing lead roles.<sup>22</sup> No previous models apply to this crisis. The most similar would be the 2015 European migrant and refugee response. The context is also very specific as the region affected is practically all of the Americas and includes countries with very different characteristics; from large countries like Brazil and Colombia to small island nations in the Caribbean. Interviews included forward looking questions and tried to identify both context-specific issues and findings that could be easily generalized.

Colombia, the country with the largest influx of Venezuelans, also has the largest number of IDPs in the world.<sup>23</sup> In this context, a “mixed situation” applies: where a humanitarian IDP crisis is taking place, a Humanitarian Coordinator is in place and a refugee –or in this case refugee and migrant- response is initiated.<sup>24</sup> The diagram below reflects the commitments of agency engagement in the collaborative IASC humanitarian response, which recognises that agencies retain independence of action with respect to their agency-specific mandates. Key IASC principles include respect for mandate and equal ownership by all organisations.

Figure 4. IASC commitments of collaborative engagement



Source: OCHA-UNHCR Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice (2014)

<sup>21</sup> [https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/cerf\\_making\\_the\\_case\\_for\\_an\\_investment\\_in\\_cerf\\_20180914\\_en.pdf](https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/cerf_making_the_case_for_an_investment_in_cerf_20180914_en.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> UNHCR's refugee response is an **integral yet distinct** element in the overall humanitarian coordination architecture. Accountability and responsibility/mandate for leading a refugee response will always lie with UNHCR. Given the High Commissioner's responsibilities and role, UNHCR retains an oversight and monitoring role, within the UN response, over the delivery of services to refugees.

<sup>23</sup> European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Factsheet - Colombia, January 2019. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/colombia\\_2019-01-24.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/colombia_2019-01-24.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> “In the interest of achieving greater effectiveness by ensuring that coordination is streamlined, complementary and mutually reinforcing, and to avoid duplication at the delivery level in humanitarian operations, UNHCR and OCHA in April 2014 signed the *OCHA-UNHCR Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice* - clarifying mutual roles and responsibilities and outlining respective leadership and coordination functions in mixed situations.

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A concerted effort was made to interview all agencies that have received CERF funding through the regional and country-level allocations and reduce any potential bias in the review derived from interviewing and obtaining data from a larger number of agencies who are recipients of country-level funding, as opposed to IOM and UNHCR. Coverage of IOM and UNHCR at the HQ level also helped offset this possible imbalance. The review did not include travel to Brazil, Peru, Guyana or Trinidad and Tobago, although remote interviews were conducted with the RC and OCHA focal point in Peru. A related constraint is that, in the case of these countries, data is obtained mainly from written interviews and interviews undertaken at the regional or global level. Remote interviews are more difficult to schedule, and discussions tend to have less depth.

### 3.2 Humanitarian context: the Venezuela Regional Migration and Refugee Crisis

Approximately 68 million migrants, 26.3 per cent of the world's migrants, live in the Americas. Poverty, family reunification, inequality and violence are common factors that motivate migration, and can lead to people seeking asylum in the Americas. The current Venezuelan outflow however, involving both refugees and migrants, is unprecedented in Latin America. Venezuela is experiencing a devastating political and economic crisis that has led to severe food and medicine shortages and has driven three million people to flee the country since 2014. The total number of Venezuelans living outside Venezuela in Latin America is likely to be higher, as most data sources do not account for Venezuelans with irregular status and estimates are based on conservative host government data. Some 270,000 Venezuelans have requested asylum in other Latin American and Caribbean countries.<sup>25</sup> The escalating outflow of Venezuelans into neighbouring countries reached regional emergency thresholds in late 2017/early 2018 as new waves of migrants and refugees arriving into host communities increasingly included individuals and households in extremely vulnerable conditions as a result of a prolonged lack of access to basic services and goods. Large concentrations of Venezuelans grew in mainly border areas amidst poor reception conditions and increased public health risks. Public structures and resources available at local level were clearly insufficient to cope with needs. A significant number of Venezuelans are vulnerable to exploitation, extortion, exactions, violence, trafficking, sexual abuse, recruitment by armed groups, discrimination and xenophobia, especially in insecure border areas where criminal and armed groups operate. Receiving communities are overwhelmed, which can increasingly jeopardise coexistence and what in most countries in Latin America is largely an open-door policy.<sup>26</sup> Governments in the region, and particularly in Colombia in February 2018, started requesting UN support to respond to humanitarian needs. Several countries declared regional national emergencies on account of the influx of Venezuelans.

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<sup>25</sup> Venezuela Situation Data Portal, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/vensit>

<sup>26</sup> There are some exceptions. In Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuelans are particularly vulnerable to detention, deportation and refoulement, as noted by UNHCR in the regional CERF application.

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Figure 5. Venezuelan regional migration flows



Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela in Latin America and Caribbean



Source: RMRP (2018)

Colombia faces the most complex situation among the countries receiving Venezuelans. It has been receiving by far the biggest number of arrivals, with an estimated fifty thousand people crossing the border between Venezuela and Colombia daily.<sup>27</sup> Almost 4,000 of the persons crossing the border each day are not returning to Venezuela, out of which roughly half are staying permanently in Colombia and the other half are moving onwards to other countries in the region. Colombia is struggling with its own worsening internal humanitarian IDP and returnee situation, continued internal violence, as well as the challenging implementation of a complex peace agreement. The country has never experienced immigration, traditionally being a country of emigration rather than reception. Colombian authorities expect the number of Venezuelans to double in 2019.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The original Colombia HRP (December 2017) estimated the population of Venezuelans intending to stay in Colombia at 700,000. The addendum to the HRP states the number of Venezuelans in Colombia doubled from 300,000 to 600,000 between July 2017 and Jan 2018. Additionally, approximately 230,000 Venezuelans crossed into Colombia to enter Ecuador in the second half of 2017 (620% increase).

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2018/12/10/how-many-more-migrants-and-refugees-can-we-expect-out-of-venezuela/>

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## 4. Main Findings

### 4.1 Rapid Response Regional allocation questions

The unique transboundary allocation to two agencies, UNHCR and IOM, for a joint request of \$6.2 million (\$4.6 million being 10% of UNHCR's 1-year appeal and \$1.6 million representing 5% of IOM's 2-year appeal) was decided in April 2018 by the ERC. UNHCR issued its appeal in March 2018 when there were an estimated over 1.5 million Venezuelans in the region. Given the magnitude of the crisis and outflow that started in 2015, and the range of needs and sectors involved (e.g. health, child protection), the main UN agencies, particularly PAHO/WHO, UNICEF and WFP, were engaged in the response.

The SG's Bulletin on the CERF allows for a request made directly by an agency in 'exceptional circumstances, in particular those related to transboundary crises affecting multiple countries, provided that consultations have taken place with Resident Coordinators or Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators in the affected areas'. IOM and UNHCR at HQ level mentioned that in hindsight other agencies, such as WFP, could have potentially been included in the regional allocation in addition to IOM and UNHCR. WFP appealed for \$46 million in April for Colombia only, its Executive Director having visited the border area in March 2018. WFP is also mentioned in the joint application as having carried out joint needs assessments. PAHO/WHO, with a clear mandate in the health sector, started ramping up its response before 2017. In its supplementary appeal, UNHCR recognises the broad nature of agency engagement and "the need for strengthening an inter-agency approach that encourages the operational engagement of key sector-based United Nations agencies, notably, IOM (particularly on profiling), UNFPA, WFP, UN Women (SGBV), UNICEF, WHO/PAHO and UNAIDS (health)."

UNHCR, in its refugee coordination model, also foresees that, depending on the scale of the refugee crisis, sector working groups (Health/Nutrition, Shelter/NFIs, etc.) be established and partners who meet the requirements be invited to co-coordinate the sector. Deciding on amounts, however, would have been at the discretion of the ERC based on recommendations made by the CERF secretariat in close collaboration with OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division (OAD) and the OCHA Regional Office for Latin American and the Caribbean (ROLAC). Under current conditions, it is not clear how a broader regional allocation process would have worked, either in terms of prioritization, accountability or reporting. Consultations in-country are usually considered key to identifying needs and priorities for CERF funding. This process was decided by the ERC and favoured speed and the objective of supporting both UNHCR and IOM's key roles in this response in line with the SG's decision for the two agencies to coordinate and steer the operational response in the region.

Figure 6. Overview of Regional allocation process



### CERF added-value to the regional and country-level response

CERF helped provide much needed visibility to the scale of the crisis and the necessary seed funding to both agencies to strengthen their capacity. The emergency is invisible and not well understood, particularly by donors and other actors outside the region. CERF was instrumental in this regard and the ERC played a crucial role recognizing the need for a response and UNHCR's and IOM's roles. The overriding feeling of those interviewed was that actors outside the region were not sensitive enough to the existing humanitarian needs in Latin America and did not always appreciate the need for rapid, timely funding and the consequences of lack of resources, leading to a rapidly degenerating situation. Added to this lack of understanding is Latin American countries' middle-income countries (MIC) status, whereby many donor governments no longer provide humanitarian funding, even for

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Colombia following the signing of the Peace Agreement in late 2016.

UNHCR's appeal of US\$46 million launched in March 2018 forecasted 2 million migrants and refugees outside Venezuela by the end of 2018, which was far outnumbered by reality, with 3 million at the end of 2018. This figure excludes an estimated 35-40% underreporting. Covering some immediate needs in a visible way was important for UNHCR's and IOM's mandates and their positioning and credibility in view of their joint leadership role. Overall, the CERF has been a main contributor to UNHCR's 2018 regional appeal (its third largest donor after the United States and Germany). With over 90% of their appeal funded, UNHCR was able to mobilise other sources of funding. IOM was less effective in this regard, and less proactive according to donors interviewed, with just over 32% of their two-year appeal<sup>29</sup> funded at the end of 2018 and CERF having provided 23% of IOM's overall funding in 2018 for the response.<sup>30</sup> UNHCR is broadly regarded as having far more capacity and resources in the response. Its regional scale-up for the response was significant.

Figure 7. Funding received by UNHCR for the Venezuela Regional Response

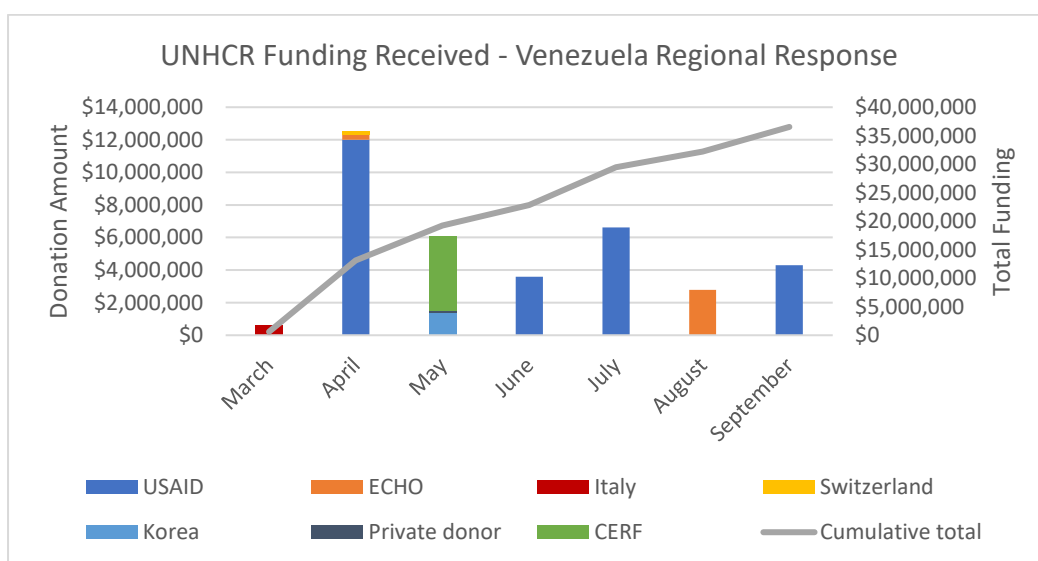
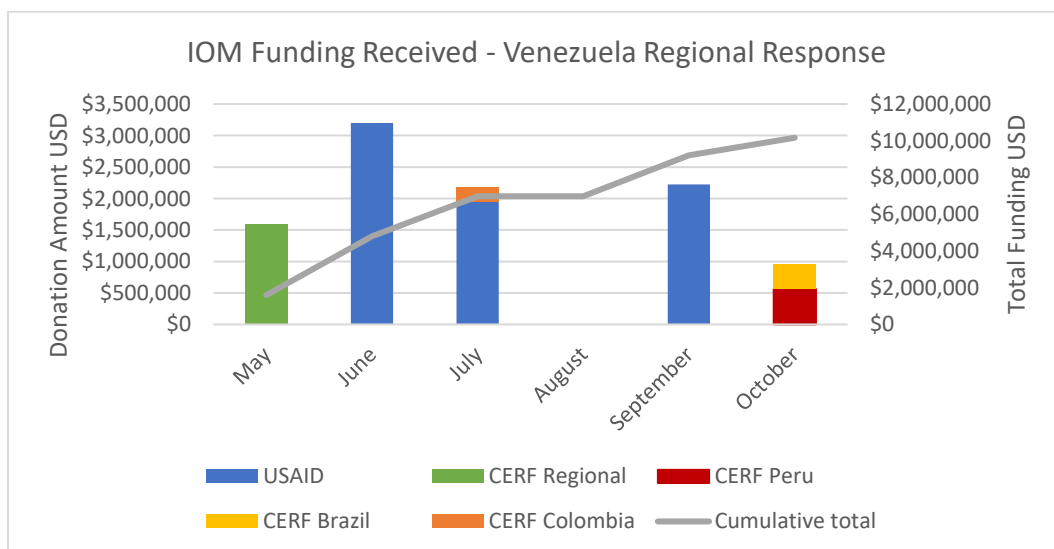


Figure 8. Funding received by IOM for the Venezuela Regional Response



<sup>29</sup> Just over US\$10 million of the 2-year, \$32.3 million appeal, of which CERF contributed over \$2.7 million

<sup>30</sup> This amount excludes the CERF funding provided to IOM's project under the Colombia allocation that was for NRC's shelter project.

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The limited funding<sup>31</sup> contributed overall towards the response has been cited as a key issue for all agencies in the region. Persons interviewed claim that the problem of underfunding, and there being limited recognition of the extent of humanitarian needs, has been a consistent problem in the region in the past also. Aside from the CERF funding, which proportionally is limited in view of the magnitude of the needs and requirements, there is a reliance on one donor (i.e. US funding).

Support for regional priorities and response strategies of IOM and UNHCR as presented by requesting agencies

CERF supported certain activities from UNHCR's Regional Refugee Response Strategy (RRRS), in line with CERF's lifesaving criteria, seeking to ensure that Venezuelans in need of international protection can access countries to which they are seeking entry, and asylum or protection-oriented arrangements, and receive protection and support to access basic rights. Through CERF's support, UNHCR was able to enhance reception capacities; prioritise protection responses in border areas, support profiling and registration; help meet basic needs and mitigate discrimination and xenophobia. CERF funding also supported some of IOM's priorities and response strategies outlined in its IOM Regional Action Plan, adhering to the life-saving criteria, which aimed at strengthening the regional response to large-scale flows of Venezuelans through data collection and dissemination, capacity building and coordination, and direct support.

At the same time, CERF is not considered by agencies to be a flexible source of funding to respond to this migration and refugee crisis. This was mentioned by key agencies involved in country-level allocations as well, who considered CERF funding excessively earmarked.<sup>32</sup> Most agencies felt that information provided at the submission stage was largely hypothetical, and that the problem was not that CERF was asking for excessive detail but that the situation was rapidly evolving with unpredictable needs and a changing target population. The suggestion was made that CERF, in this context, ask for information two months into the response. The secretariat had, in an effort to obtain information on the regional response and avoid duplication, asked for disaggregated beneficiary data at the country level. The reality of the context and the response is quite different. When completing the CERF application forms for the regional allocation, agencies described the process as "fitting circles into squares." Indeed, forms and information requested are country-specific and some of the flexibility that could be involved in a regional programme were broken down to the country level. While understandable, given the templates and the implementation timeframe, the regional allocation was more a sum of country level approaches than a broader regional response. It is important to underline that UNHCR and IOM were not

### *Scale-up of response*

In response to humanitarian needs stemming from the massive outflow of Venezuelan nationals into neighbouring countries, CERF funds enabled IOM and UNHCR to assist a number of Venezuelans with information, referrals, legal orientation on migratory status regularisation and asylum processes and provide them with direct assistance in terms of transportation, shelter, health, GBV responses, NFI and food provision to meet basic needs. Both agencies faced significant challenges given the regional dimension of the crisis, differences across countries and the extent and broad nature of needs. UNHCR and IOM were able to scale up immediate responses and strengthen their presence in key border areas to respond to needs, in particular in the areas of access to territory, information provision on rights and assistance, and protection. Given the magnitude of needs and the worsening situation in

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<sup>31</sup> UNHCR's appeal was based on an estimated 2 million Venezuelans displaced in the region, when the number has now exceeded 3 million. Therefore, although the UNHCR appeal was well-funded, the needs were higher not only in the number of Venezuelan arrivals but also their conditions were worse.

<sup>32</sup> From an agency perspective, CERF funding "is earmarked to a specific programme in a specific context and the agency requires permission to re-programme it to meet changing needs. Thus, as highlighted by the agency survey, it provides very little flexibility for implementing agencies." See Grand Bargain Workstream on Reducing Earmarking Background Paper for Workshop, Geneva, 29th May 2017 Co-conveners: Sweden and ICRC

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countries like Peru and Ecuador, the support provided to these countries through the regional allocation was, by stakeholders interviewed in these countries, considered symbolic at the time of the review.<sup>33</sup>

While significant progress was made in achieving targets as per established CERF projects and agency priorities in terms of data production and dissemination, documentation, distribution of NFIs, accommodation/shelter, movement assistance and referral support, UNHCR and IOM had to put several corrective measures in place to ensure the timely implementation of CERF supported life-saving activities. The need for changes<sup>34</sup> to IOM and UNHCR's response was driven by several factors:

- Increases of new arrivals and intensification of cross border (back and forth and *pendular*) movements and higher number of Venezuelans with increased vulnerability (families with small children, more people migrating on foot, known as *caminantes*, in dire need of immediate assistance);
- Scarcity of available goods and services in areas with high concentration of refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations;
- Uncertainty created by changes in policy and decision-making of host governments;
- tensions in inter-governmental relations when designing and implementing responses.

UNHCR and IOM value that the CERF country-level allocations have very much helped articulate and set forth a regional response beyond coordination efforts at the UNCT/HCT level. CERF helped to develop an understanding and definition of complementarity, mandates and to avoid duplication. A challenge is that response strategies have to follow the national context and therein changing national priorities and consider what agencies are actually able to achieve at a local level. Agreements are sometimes reached at the Governor level only to be overturned at the local municipal level. Politicians tend to argue that providing services will have a pull effect and be detrimental. UN agencies interviewed perceived that such challenges were more poignant in a regional allocation that is trying to balance and address needs in different contexts and in a shifting political environment, such as the local elections. On another level, there are important national-level differences affecting access to services. Agencies have to adapt their response to national and local contexts. One example in the health sector is that migrants in Colombia can only obtain emergency care, whereas in Ecuador access to healthcare is universal and free. Similarly, Colombia is against cash-based programming, while other countries may be more in favour of this modality. Therefore, in practice there are limits to a common and broader regional response covering several countries and the response would need to be adapted to the specific country context.

The regional CERF allocation enabled a response in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, countries that ultimately did not receive a country-level allocation and helped address needs of vulnerable Venezuelans in these countries. Concerns about the growing numbers of Venezuelans have led countries in the Caribbean to introduce restrictions on migration and increasingly, non-entry practices are leading to instances of *refoulement*.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ecuador received 8.6% of the funding requirements detailed in the CERF application and the situation proceeded to worsen following the CERF application. A breakdown of the percentage of funding received based on requirements outlined in the regional and country-level applications is provided in section 1 of the annex.

<sup>34</sup> As noted in the CERF interim report, one activity for Colombia (relocation of Yukpa indigenous families) was significantly reduced and delayed, and the funds were reallocated to meet costs for the communal feeding centre in Cucuta and the health activities, which were both higher than foreseen. In Ecuador, a planned shelter rehabilitation faced bureaucratic obstacles and the funds were instead allocated to provision of NFIs.

<sup>35</sup> UNHCR, 2018. UNHCR regret at deportations of Venezuelans from Trinidad and Tobago. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2018/4/5addb65d4/unhcr-regret-deportations-venezuelans-trinidad-tobago.html>

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### *Scale-up of coordination at regional and national levels*

As per the PAF, a key outcome of the CERF is to actively reinforce the role of the RC/HC and strengthening cluster coordination. This is considered “a byproduct of the effective use of CERF funds”. In this light, the TOR for this review included the following questions:

- Did CERF funding for the jointly coordinated response enable a rapid scale-up of coordination and response at the regional and national levels?
- Were CERF funds instrumental in enhancing the regional coordination platform set up by UNHCR and IOM and did CERF funding help promote increased and joint information sharing to partners as well as increase the regional approach among partners?

Although the CERF regional allocation did not provide support to the establishment of the Platform, CERF funds were considered instrumental in establishing the regional coordination platform set up by UNHCR and IOM. The Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform was set up in September 2018 to strengthen operational response and work on a humanitarian Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (RMRP), launched in December 2018. The understanding was that region-wide coordination fostering a comprehensive and coherent approach needed to be scaled up, given the magnitude of the crisis. Governments in the region are leading the response and coordinating their efforts, including through the Quito Process and Lima Group, which has been an important step towards a regional approach to scale-up the response and harmonise government policies.<sup>36</sup> The RMRP and related coordination efforts focus on four strategic areas: direct emergency assistance, protection, socio-economic and cultural integration and capacity-building for the governments of receiving countries.

The ERC’s decision to allocate funds directly to support UNHCR and IOM’s role in the regional response was unprecedented and regarded as unexpected by both IOM and UNHCR, other UN agencies and RCs in the region. His support, as the Emergency Relief Coordination and Under-Secretary General of OCHA, was a surprise and seen by UNHCR and IOM as important for their joint leadership role. CERF funding prompted UNHCR and IOM to start working together on the Venezuela regional refugee and migration response and is seen as a precursor to the plan now developed at platform level. At the time of the review (November 2018), the regional platform was still at an incipient stage, its information website was launched early November and the coordination system and processes were still to be clarified at certain levels. In Colombia, existing humanitarian architecture was already contributing to information sharing (Equipo Local de Coordinación/ELC and border working group). The overriding concern was that parallel coordination systems risk weakening the IDP agenda and the coordination role of OCHA at the same time. In Peru and Ecuador, UN agencies expressed similar concerns related to the possible shorter-term nature of the platform and how it may undermine humanitarian response and past investments made in responding to the El Niño or the 2016 earthquake.

The overall response to the crisis would possibly have been more straightforward had it involved mainly refugees, for several reasons. UNHCR’s High Commissioner has a global non-transferable mandate for refugees. IOM does not have the same status or mandate with respect to migrants – but at the time of the regional allocation refugees and asylum seekers in the region officially only accounted for around 260,000 people out of the estimated 3 million people that had left Venezuela. The Refugee Coordination Model, which agencies are more familiar with, is designed to be compatible with the other coordination mechanisms such as the cluster approach. However, at the time of the evaluation, coordination through the Platform wasn’t always perceived as compatible with the already established coordination mechanisms. A main issue raised was that sectors had been lumped together under assistance and agencies didn’t recognise their sector within this broader integrated assistance. Most stakeholders interviewed found that the country-level coordination that was already in place could have fed into the regional level.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.iom.int/news/number-refugees-migrants-venezuela-reaches-3-million>



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The understanding by a majority of UN agencies interviewed is that existing in-country coordination capacities were largely overlooked by the Platform and that it had insufficiently considered sectors. The Platform faced a number of challenges in its efforts, where the intention was to reinforce and not replace systems that are sometimes multiple and overlapping and not always clearly defined or include the necessary actors. Stakeholders largely felt that OCHA should be given a greater role in coordination efforts, especially in Colombia. There was a greater appreciation for OCHA's role by all agencies, including IOM and UNHCR. There were several statements that refer to excellent capacity and support in countries, and coordination being part of OCHA's 'DNA'. With so much on UNHCR and IOM's plate, actors were of the opinion that OCHA could assist more. Coordination by actors implementing CERF-funded projects in border areas was viewed as more operational and effective.

As with any mechanism that is being established, the Platform was in a start-up and adjustment phase at the time of the field mission in November 2018 and agencies had limited ownership and understanding of its role. At the time of the review, stakeholders interviewed that had attended Regional Platform meetings reported that they did not yet integrate the country level. The parallel set up was facing challenges and growing pains in several cases. In Ecuador, at the time of the review, a ToR had yet to be defined and agencies had yet to volunteer to undertake a coordination role within the platform. Staff in agencies meant to direct the coordination were not always given guidance on how to proceed.

Coordination was sometimes weakened during this adjustment phase. For example, in Ecuador, the RC avoided calling UNCT meetings in order not to send a mixed signal. At the same time, in-country platform coordination mechanisms have met but without clarity on roles, responsibilities and sectors. As mentioned, it is problematic that there is less complementarity with clusters/sectors and clarity on roles and responsibilities, which would help agencies take on certain roles more readily. Also, new coordination platforms tend to undermine existing and hard-won humanitarian coordination spaces that have been developed with government and non-governmental partners. This was the case in Peru as well, where UNHCR had only more recently established a presence (in mid-2018).

In terms of information on the situation, it was largely provided by governments and all agencies contributed to information sharing in all countries. Agencies receiving CERF funding through the Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru country-level allocations did not always understand how the platform had or could add value in this regard. At the time of the review, there were a few large agencies that were very openly vocal against the platform and all its processes and that considered that RCs should have been in the lead, especially at a time of UN Reform. Development agencies were more in favour and saw clearer advantages, as the platform and its plan can act as a potential bridge until development efforts start kicking-in in around 18 months. UNHCR/IOM have engaged with agencies at regional level bilaterally to better share information on the platform and foster coordination, transparency and inclusiveness. Agencies expressed a greater understanding and appreciation for OCHA's role in facilitating and coordination CERF processes and noted that OCHA ROLAC had been providing advice on inclusiveness, participation and accountability to UNHCR/IOM.

At the time of this review, the regional level (UNHCR/IOM) understood that RCs had a clear role but had not yet managed to fully articulate their involvement and inclusion in structures. The same applied to agencies in certain key sectors: e.g. PAHO/WHO with MoH to coordinate health issues.<sup>37</sup> This was understood at the regional level by UNHCR. Humanitarian agencies tended to be less convinced by the Platform and, while they were participating in it, they pointed to its potential drain on limited human resources. At the time of review, the perception was that interagency processes needed several months to be defined and settle in, and that sectors and agency roles would most likely be increasingly clarified. It would end up being unsustainable for one or two agencies to lead all sectors in a crisis of this size.

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<sup>37</sup> Each country has its own vaccination scheme and policies. Ministers of Health in the region have met to discuss surveillance, mental health, immunization, disaster response and information sharing.

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The main challenge for UNHCR and IOM was the complexity in the coordination role of the governments. With the massive crisis, the governments were relying on UNHCR, but they also needed to rely on all of the other agencies, given the massive needs. UNHCR/IOM recognise that they need to take advantage of the governmental processes and make sure that the platform is aligned with them (e.g. Quito process).

CERF funding through the regional transboundary allocation processes was therefore not always seen as helping promote increased and joint information sharing to partners, nor to support/enhance the regional approach among partners. Agencies felt that country-level allocation processes were more useful in articulating inter-agency approaches and increased information sharing. Concerns and challenges were expressed by some countries on the type of activities undertaken by UNHCR and IOM, and a few anecdotal examples were provided by interviewees of uncoordinated aid and/or inappropriate aid in two sectors included in the regional transboundary allocation.

### Impact on the empowered and strengthened RC/HC role

Strengthened coordination and HC/RC leadership is one of the CERF's core objectives. Current UN reforms also seek to further empower RCs to work across the development-humanitarian-peacebuilding continuum. The Secretary-General's report on the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system also emphasises that all interagency pooled funding in support of country-level work should be vetted by the RC and that the RC will clearly define authorities in situations of humanitarian crises or peacebuilding; and UNCT members will report to RCs on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The RC role is considered key to the UN's success in the countries it serves, and the RC leads and strategically positions the UN country team. The interviewed RCs did not understand the rationale for the CERF regional allocation process.<sup>38</sup> The Venezuelan influx had been a standing item in HCT/UNCTs as agencies in-country had been responding to the influx. RCs in the region largely felt disempowered by the regional allocation and not informed. UNHCR/IOM Geneva shared the strategy, as well as funding proposals, with all relevant RCs, providing them with 48 hours to respond/approve the regional application to CERF. CERF secretariat efforts to encourage engagement and participation of RCs in the process were insufficient and OCHA in the region could have possibly been given an expanded role as a liaison to ensure that RCs/HC were well informed, instead of primarily relying on UNHCR and IOM to share information.

At the time of the review, RCs interviewed in the region were not involved in, nor did they readily see the value of, the Platform beyond leading to further coordination between the two agencies. All RCs from the country-level allocations covered in the review have much hard-won political capital in their countries. One RC suggested that the Platform could take on more of a strategic, forward-looking role to be of value.

The PAF indicators on increased coordination and HC leadership (i.e. CERF contributes to improve coordination and to enhance HC leadership by insisting on inclusiveness and complementarity with other sources of funding, strengthened function of clusters/sectors and of inter-cluster forum, RC/HC enhances coordination between different sources of funding, avoiding duplication and enhancing other sources of funding) were reported as weaker in this response as a result of the regional allocation largely bypassing the RCs.

Suitability of CERF as a humanitarian funding mechanism to support regional allocations and CERF added value to such modality based on the response to the Venezuela refugee and migration crisis

In *Making the case for an investment in the CERF* (2017 and 2018) within the context of discussions around a larger CERF, the CERF secretariat foresees that new CERF strategies could include strengthening strategic response to

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<sup>38</sup> RCs in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru were interviewed.

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regional emergencies. However, such strategies could pose challenges for country-based humanitarian coordination systems if these are bypassed in the process. It further states that the CERF is uniquely placed to respond coherently to regional funding requirements by taking a broader perspective on needs and priorities. As mentioned previously, UNHCR and IOM consider CERF funding excessively ‘earmarked’. In this context, with populations on the move and a rapidly evolving fluid context, pre-defining the specific intervention with disaggregated beneficiary data is more of a hypothetical exercise. In this sense, efforts on the part of the CERF secretariat to have agencies provide these targets in advance as a means of favouring coordination or avoiding overlaps or duplication was not useful. In these contexts of fluid migration, it should be understood that the same Venezuelans may in fact be targeted with assistance at different times both in different countries (e.g. Colombia and Ecuador) or within the same country (e.g. different border areas or along a travel route). As Venezuelan populations continue to arrive and in increasingly worse conditions, there is a need for regularly updated, detailed information on their needs and vulnerabilities and consequently adapting programming. IOM and UNHCR considered that insufficient thought had been given to the overall process and application in an effort to gain speed. Both agencies felt that consolidating administrative and programmatic monitoring and reporting at regional level was challenging, given time constraints when implementing emergency projects in multiple countries with a wide geographical coverage. They advised in their interim reporting that “if the model is replicated, highlighting its important impact in cases of transboundary movements, perhaps a more lenient reporting can be considered.” The challenge of monitoring and reporting is largely due to the way in which the projects were defined, and the number of indicators included by agencies. The table below provides an overview of the targeted beneficiaries per agency broken down at the indicator level. While not directly requested by CERF, IOM at HQ level, for instance, was requesting monthly reports from its country offices that were considered excessively burdensome and time consuming. In the case of IOM, there are several indicators in Peru targeting 1 to 5 people.

Table 2. Overview of indicators and beneficiaries reached through the regional allocation per agency.

### Beneficiaries Reached – UNHCR Interim Report

Output	Beneficiaries Targeted	Beneficiaries Reached - Interim Report	% of Beneficiaries Reached
<b>Output 1 - Brazil</b>			
Indicator 1.1	24,500	10,500	42.9%
Indicator 1.2	17,150	21,000	122.4%
Indicator 1.3	150	15	10.0%
Indicator 1.4	3,000	4,518	150.6%
Indicator 1.5	5,000	4,518	90.4%
Indicator 1.6	12	5	41.7%
Indicator 1.7	2	2	100.0%
<b>Output 3 - Ecuador</b>			
Indicator 3.1	6,000	2,985	49.8%
Indicator 3.2	1,300	1,000	76.9%
Indicator 3.3	1057 (3800 individuals)	693 households (2063 individuals)	65.6%
Indicator 3.4	10,000	1,051	10.5%
<b>Output 4 - Peru</b>			
Indicator 4.1	90,000	34,000	37.8%
Indicator 4.2	150 (450 PoC)	627 PoC	139.3%
Indicator 4.3	90,000	3,372	3.7%
Indicator 4.4	20,000	-	-
Indicator 4.5	3	2	66.7%
<b>Output 5 - Trinidad and Tobago</b>			
Indicator 5.1	4,800	2,233	46.5%
Indicator 5.2	4,800	1,809	37.7%
Indicator 5.3	4,800	1,809	37.7%
Indicator 5.4	50	14	28.0%
Indicator 5.5	50	36	72.0%
Indicator 5.6	400 (1440 PoC)	224 households	56.0%

UNHCR: No indicator-level data on beneficiaries in interim report for Output 2 – Colombia  
IOM: No indicator-level data on beneficiaries in interim report for Output 6 – Trinidad & Tobago

### Beneficiaries Reached – IOM Interim Report

Output	Beneficiaries Targeted	Beneficiaries Reached - Interim Report	% of Beneficiaries Reached
<b>Output 1 - Brazil</b>			
Indicator 1.1	13	2	15.4%
Indicator 1.2	6,000	3,785	63.1%
Indicator 1.3	22	-	-
Indicator 1.4	8,300	3,057	36.8%
Indicator 1.5	13	2	15.4%
Indicator 1.6	13	0	0.0%
Indicator 1.7	1,500	0	0.0%
Indicator 1.8	5,580	436	7.8%
Indicator 1.9	11	1	9.1%
<b>Output 2 - Colombia</b>			
Indicator 2.1	12	delayed	0.0%
Indicator 2.2	3,852	delayed	0.0%
Indicator 2.3	7	delayed	0.0%
Indicator 2.4	550	427	77.6%
Indicator 2.5	30% (165 of 550)	4%	13.3%
Indicator 2.6	576	1,465	254.3%
Indicator 2.7	17	3	17.6%
Indicator 2.8	10	22	220.0%
Indicator 2.9	0.5%	propose to cancel	0.0%
<b>Output 3 - Ecuador</b>			
Indicator 3.1	6	2	33.3%
Indicator 3.2	3,500	1,799	51.4%
Indicator 3.3	6	2	33.3%
Indicator 3.4	6,000	-	-
Indicator 3.5	1	-	-
Indicator 3.6	7,500	-	-
Indicator 3.7	30	30	100.0%
<b>Output 4 - Guyana</b>			
Indicator 4.1	2	delayed	0.0%
Indicator 4.2	2,500	delayed	0.0%
Indicator 4.3	6	delayed	0.0%
Indicator 4.4	1,300	-	-
Indicator 4.5	4	1	25.0%
Indicator 4.6	2,800	309	11.0%
Indicator 4.7	4	1	25.0%
Indicator 4.8	4,700	-	-
Indicator 4.9	4	1	25.0%
<b>Output 5 - Peru</b>			
Indicator 5.1	1,500	936	62.4%
Indicator 5.2	3	5	166.7%
Indicator 5.3	1,000	3,182	318.2%
Indicator 5.4	7	8	114.3%
Indicator 5.5	300	288	96.0%
Indicator 5.6	300	cancelled (not cost effective)	-
Indicator 5.7	1	cancelled (not cost effective)	-

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For this type of response, the CERF's objectives and PAF logic model would also have to be adapted, especially if HC/RCs are not given the lead role. The regional allocation in this case, in the way it was decided and the key actors that it did not include, largely bypassed all of the main processes that the CERF intends to support/enhance in its allocations (e.g. HC/RC leadership, interagency processes, transparent and inclusive decision-making and prioritisation). Aside from these issues, the regional allocation to two agencies who are responsible for implementation, coordination and reporting weakens CERF's overall processes, as stipulated in the PAF. The consulted HCs/RCs are no longer accountable under the regional allocation, and joint processes and mutual accountability are weaker. There is less information on CERF-related responses and After-Action Reviews are not collective. OCHA focal points and RCs in countries have limited knowledge on the UNHCR and IOM regional allocations. Both UNHCR and IOM also favour CERF encouraging inter-agency processes and responses, and at the regional level do not feel that the capacity or appetite is in place for the Platform to take on what is now perceived as similar to an RC/HC role, supported by OCHA. UNHCR and IOM are already overstretched and embarked on a dual implementor–coordinator role.

At present, and in the context of the regional response to the Venezuela refugee and migration crisis, the CERF regional allocation is not considered a fit-for-purpose funding instrument. The CERF could be a suitable modality if there were a regional HC, and mechanisms for an inclusive/transparent prioritisation process including RCs and clearer accountability. If the agency leading/coordinating the response could foster an inclusive and transparent prioritisation process across agencies, be supported by OCHA and be in a position to avoid a conflict of interest (less decision-making or not recipient of funds) this could be considered.

Currently there is no mechanism at a regional level that could facilitate the prioritisation process. The ERC decided to support two recipient agencies but failed to recognise roles and activities of other agencies with clear and active leads in certain sectors. With UNHCR and IOM receiving CERF funds while also having a decision-making and coordination role, which could potentially present a situation of conflict of interest, these two agencies would not prefer to be in OCHA's position and exclude themselves from the allocation. Repeating a regional allocation in a similar manner could challenge UNHCR/IOM's efforts to foster inter-agency collaboration. There is an overriding view by agencies that a regional allocation based on country-level structures, recognising the leadership role of respective RC/HCs and considering the humanitarian component of RMRP and its prioritisation, would be the preferred option. Many felt that UNHCR/IOM taking a lead role in the coordination and implementation of pooled funding or adding complexity to existing architectures further complicates in-country processes. These agencies could however play a key advisory role in processes.

### 4.2 CERF Rapid Response country-specific allocations to Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil

Despite the very good working relationships in-country, the regional allocation was seen as challenging the HC/HCT-led application process in Colombia. Both IOM and UNHCR decided not to request funds through the country-level application as they had recently received funding for their activities in Colombia through the regional allocation. In Colombia, there is a solid humanitarian coordination architecture in place in the country. Agencies and donors expressed concern over OCHA's phasing out, given its traditional coordination role, including in facilitating CERF processes, and in view of the overall worsening humanitarian situation.

In other countries, UNHCR and IOM participated in the country-level prioritisation and application discussions and processes. The ERC was not supportive of additional funding for UNHCR and IOM to continue and/or expand activities already funded through the regional allocation in the case of Brazil and Ecuador. The CERF had played its catalytic role in jumpstarting UNHCR and IOM's regional response through the earlier \$6.2 million allocation.

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Given the growing needs, the assistance provided in Ecuador and Peru was considered limited.<sup>39</sup>

In the case of Ecuador, Peru and Brazil, there was less than two months of overlap between the regional and country allocations. Awaiting the interim progress report of the UNHCR and IOM regional grants considerably delayed the country-level allocations with little perceived benefit by field colleagues.<sup>40</sup> The RC in Brazil was reported to have referred directly to UNHCR and IOM for updates on the response and requested technical assistance on different occasions in the development of the country-level CERF application. UNHCR and IOM involvement in CERF application discussions, together with OCHA focal points at the country level, should have been a more effective means of responding to ERC concerns and information needs.

Interviewed actors in Ecuador, Peru and Brazil considered that delaying a rapid response allocation in these three countries made CERF less timely and predictable. In a rapidly deteriorating emergency such as the Venezuela refugee and migration crisis, urgent needs could have been better met with earlier CERF funding, enabling a stronger humanitarian response, more quickly and visibly mitigating increasing risks. In all three countries, the situation rapidly deteriorated in August.<sup>41</sup> The government of Ecuador, on 9 August 2018, declared a state of emergency in the northern border provinces as arrivals reached 4,200 people daily. In Peru, the government declared a health emergency in two provinces in the northern border on 28 August 2018. In Brazil, where riots broke out, the President issued an Emergency decree on 28 August 2018 to deploy the army to Roraima as a result of the increased violence. Amounts provided through the country-level allocations, especially in the case of Ecuador receiving \$1.5 million, were considered limited to kick-start responses and address the extent of needs within all priority sectors. Agencies were, however, able to leverage additional sources of funding in several cases. UNFPA, for instance, is systematically able to match a proportion of CERF funding when it receives an allocation with its own resources. The below table shows the timing of CERF funds from initial concept note to submission of funds.

**Table 3. Timeliness of CERF funding**

	Initial concept note submitted	Revised concept note submitted	Feedback to revised concept note received	CERF original application submitted	CERF latest final proposal submitted	Ave. days submission to funds disbursed	Total days from initial concept note to first funds disbursed <sup>#</sup>
Regional				10-May-18	21-May-18	9	N/A
Colombia	24-May-18	-	25-May-18	18-Jun-18	7-Jul-18	7	42 days
Ecuador	19-Jul-18	3-Aug-18	6-Sep-18	18-Sep-18	1 Oct-18	7.3	75 days
Peru	23-Jul-18	15-Aug-18	6-Sep-18	17-Sep-18	1 Oct-18	8.9	71 days
Brazil	5 Jul-18	10-Aug-18	6-Sep-18	24 Sep-18	3-Oct-18	8	85 days

There was surprise, questions and confusion in countries on the regional allocation. Overall, actors felt that communication by the secretariat and ERC on the CERF's approach to the regional allocation was weak. On several occasions, there were doubts in Ecuador, Peru and at the regional agency level over whether CERF would eventually allocate funds, given the length of the process in Peru, Ecuador and Brazil. Stakeholders now perceive that CERF is less predictable as a funding instrument. Transparency, inclusiveness and accountability were also perceived as weaker than in other allocations. However, complementarity was further enhanced through interagency country-

<sup>39</sup> Ecuador received 8.6% of the funding requirements detailed in the CERF application and the situation proceeded to worsen following the CERF application. A breakdown of the percentage of funding received based on requirements outlined in the regional and country-level applications is provided in section 1 of the annex.

<sup>40</sup> Much of the information contained in the interim report was available through other sources, such as the rounds of DTM already completed and the CERF country-level applications. Both agencies (UNHCR and IOM) are present in country-level interagency processes.

<sup>41</sup> See Timelines in Annex.

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level allocations, with agencies sharing information and, in some cases, cross-border collaboration. There are several examples of CERF projects at the country level integrating various UN agencies in joint implementation/programming. This was the case in the WASH sector with UNICEF and WHO, as well as joint projects on SGBV and Child Protection with UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women. Another example is the food security sector and nutrition project in Colombia that FAO, WFP and UNICEF implemented jointly in the regions of La Guajira, Arauco and Norte Santander across 4 outputs.

Colombia is considered as a model of humanitarian coordination, with an elaborate and effective coordination architecture. Although Colombia is a country with an HC, inter-agency Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and OCHA office, with a protracted humanitarian response and IDP crisis, the RCs and agencies in Peru and Ecuador consider that they also already had established and functioning humanitarian coordination structures in place, given their exposure to El Niño and other natural hazard-related disasters. In Ecuador, IOM had limited capacity in place before the regional allocation. The same is true for UNHCR in Peru. The understanding, however, for some respondents within IOM and UNHCR is that humanitarian agencies, from their perspective, are better placed to focus on emergency needs and humanitarian-principled and people-centred approaches than other UN agencies in countries with a more developmental agenda and institutional capacity issues; these agencies recognising their roles as assisting the host governments' effort to assist Venezuelan migrants and refugees.

CERF usually foresees a submission process that is transparent and inclusive of all humanitarian actors at the country level. There was limited information on how much of the regional allocation, and which activities funded by CERF under this allocation, would take place in Colombia and in other countries. Capacity and structures in Colombia were in place for the HRP and HRP addendum. Efforts are now seen as focused on establishing a parallel structure in countries. In Colombia, the *UNHCR - OCHA Note on Mixed Situations Coordination in practice* should apply to this context. It was difficult to define an HRP and then have only two agencies receiving funding through the regional allocation.

There is a worsening situation in Colombia with 7.7 million IDPs (highest in the world) and concern that the humanitarian situation in Colombia and the crisis is being forgotten. It should be understood that migrants and IDPs and returnees are in the same locations. At the time of the review, UNHCR and IOM claimed in Colombia that the HC was part of the Interagency Group for Mixed Migration Flows (GIFFM), but the HC was not aware and had not attended any meetings. If the CERF regional allocation were to be made now, it is not clear what role the HC could have and how OCHA could provide support. The GIFFM suggested that OCHA co-lead in Colombia with UNHCR and IOM but this was reportedly not encouraged at the regional level. Agencies and donors in Colombia and Panama expressed great concern for OCHA and emphasised the need for OCHA's increased role and presence in Colombia.

In both Ecuador and Peru, there were recent examples of CERF allocations and country teams had experience in the process. In the Ecuador 2016 earthquake response, CERF announced an allocation of \$7.5 million through CERF's Rapid Response Window within 72 hours to implement eight projects and to target over 8,500 affected people. Lessons from the CERF allocation suggested that additional prioritisation of protection, and in particular GBV, was necessary. Protection had only received 0.5 million in the allocation. In this instance, the prioritisation process went smoothly, with agencies recognising protection as a key priority. In the case of Peru, shelter and food were assessed as a key gap, justifying that a quarter of the allocation be allocated to IOM for this purpose.

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### 5. Conclusions

Established in 2005 as the UN global emergency response fund, the CERF is an essential enabler of global life-saving humanitarian action, allowing country teams to kick-start relief efforts immediately in a coordinated and prioritised way when a new crisis emerges. The CERF has developed a clear understanding of its function and added value within the broader financing ecosystem. Following best practice since its inception, it has a delineated programmatic scope through, among others, the PAF (2010) and its experience over time. The CERF's key design components include an articulated theory of change to achieve its expected set of programmatic results, as well as a formalised set of accountability mechanisms and reporting processes. The assumptions underlying CERF's architecture are regularly revised so that it remains fit for purpose. In this case, the CERF responded in a unique manner to a regional humanitarian crisis by supporting two mandated agencies through different processes (i.e. a regional allocation without the inclusive, transparent prioritization process and submission under the guidance of the RC/HC, facilitated by OCHA, and driven through cluster leadership).

This approach added value in that the crisis was made visible and the importance that this funding had for both UNHCR and IOM and their collaboration and work together. CERF helped support UNHCR and IOM's role in the regional response and prompted IOM and UNHCR to work together on a joint proposal and response. The two agencies have frequently collaborated in the past but not in such a significant manner. The allocation also helped leverage additional resources from other sources. It was beneficial to have IOM and UNHCR work on the application together for their joint future efforts which, along with the appointment of a Special Representative, enabled overall coherence in the positions of the two agencies. While CERF funding was not provided with a view to set up the IOM-UNHCR Regional Platform that followed months after the allocation, the CERF was very much seen by UNHCR, IOM and other agencies as a precursor for the Regional Platform and the work on the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP). The regional allocation also enabled coverage of needs in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. A main argument in favour of regional allocations is the lack of in-country capacity in smaller countries with a limited number of humanitarian actors. CERF country-level allocations are less forthcoming when the UN presence is lacking and operational capacity is limited, which means affected populations in those countries can be worse off as these factors are compounded by a lack of funding.

The regional allocation to two agencies was presumed to be faster than an allocation based on RC/HC consultation and a more comprehensive inter-agency process. The disadvantages were that RC/HCs were disempowered as a result of how the allocation process was managed by the ERC, other UN agencies heavily invested in the response were excluded, inter-agency processes were bypassed, overall coordination capacities in place were weakened and the usual CERF inter-agency processes that favour mutual accountability and shared reporting were not established. The response to the Venezuela regional crisis requires broad partner engagement and the regional allocation to two agencies was a missed opportunity to lay the foundations for earlier broader partner engagement, thereby better defining the response and clarifying roles and responsibilities and assistance across sectors.

A strategy of strengthening the strategic response to regional emergencies in contexts where such approach is deemed more suitable to respond than country-level coordination structures is presented in *Making the Case for an Investment in CERF*. However, such an approach could pose challenges for country-based humanitarian coordination systems if these are by-passed. In countries that were also covered by country-level allocations, Colombia especially, coordination capacities were already in place. In Colombia, where there was a mixed IDP-refugee and migrant response, the view at the time of the evaluation was that the Venezuelan influx risked overshadowing the worsening in-country conflict-related humanitarian emergency and that parallel efforts may weaken the overall response. An important concern related to the sustainability of separate coordination platforms is that other agencies do not clearly have a responsibility that can be shared in the future. On the whole, agencies felt that CERF had been a less predictable funding instrument in this response and, in the case of the Brazil, Ecuador and Peru country allocations,

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less timely. UNHCR and IOM staff largely felt that they were in a difficult situation with their fellow UN agency partners, partially as a result of the unique nature of the regional allocation and lack of initial communication by the ERC/the CERF secretariat and information on the allocation and the fact that they would be the only agencies to receive funding from the CERF at the regional level.

The CERF added value to the broader humanitarian endeavour by raising the profile of the situation of the Venezuelans in the region and providing much needed funding to an invisibilized and poorly funded crisis. It was important that the CERF provided allocations at the country level to better respond to the crisis at hand and favour coherent, effective interagency approaches, enabling a broader response to needs-based on a joint assessment and prioritisation of needs. The fact that CERF was one of the few donors providing funding to UNHCR, IOM and agencies in Colombia in the first half of 2018 also gave UN agencies more credibility vis-à-vis governments.

Agencies, UNHCR in particular, scaled up their response to respond to needs. Amounts provided in the response at country level however, especially in the case of Ecuador, were considered limited to sufficiently kick-start activities. Overall, agencies' perception of CERF 'earmarking' and requirements for detailed information at the application stage – both at regional and country-level- were considered excessive and ineffective for this response to fluid mixed migration. In contrast to other CERF Rapid Response allocations, agencies at the country level also felt that timeliness considerations were less of a priority for CERF in view of the regional overview of needs requested by the ERC. There was a perceived limited understanding –as in the case of other donors- of the emergency nature of the crisis and the level of vulnerability of the more recent waves of migrants and refugees.

The CERF tried to do its best in what was considered an unorthodox top-down decision. In practice, there were no cross-border interventions covered by the regional allocation to the two agencies. Overall, agencies still very much work within a country context, find it easier for their own systems to break down their response by country and the short CERF implementation period is also regarded as a deterrent to joint trans-border project implementation, given the systems in place and the need to acknowledge that countries have the lead role in a response.

The CERF's creation was part of the larger 2005 Humanitarian Reform process that aimed to enhance humanitarian response capacity, predictability, accountability and partnership through an improved/empowered leadership system, the Cluster Approach for better coordination, and more adequate, timely and flexible financing. Its logical framework contained in the PAF very much supports these output and outcome level results. CERF's key added value is its predictability, catalytic role, convening power, bringing agencies around the table to develop coordinated and joint responses across multiple sectors, incentivising an inter-agency coordinated response and empowering RC/HCs. While balancing other objectives of the fund, it should not lose sight of these core principles.



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## 6. Recommendations

### *On Regional Allocations:*

It is premature, based on the Venezuela regional allocation, to recommend that the CERF pursue regional/transboundary allocations with similar coordination structures in the future. The regional allocation was useful for UNHCR and IOM to immediately assist those most in need and identify the health, SGBV, child protection, trafficking and smuggling and urban integration challenges<sup>42</sup> but overall the CERF has greater added value<sup>43</sup> supporting country-level allocations led by the relevant RC/HCs that involve a consultative UNCT/HCT process in-country with all concerned agencies and partners. In this case, the strategy behind the decision to confine the regional allocation to the two agencies was driven by the importance of supporting their leadership role, in light of the SG's decision. UNHCR and IOM very much valued the support received by the ERC and the CERF that was critical for their scale-up but possibly undermined their relationships with other agencies.<sup>44</sup> Any regional allocation requires defined accountability and reporting lines. Since the establishment of CERF in 2005, crises have grown more severe, protracted and complex. This review set out to better understand how the CERF had added value to this regional crisis and how the fund could better operate in these different, new, regional and increasingly complex emergencies involving mixed flows. The tools and approaches needed to deliver effective humanitarian action differ based on a number of factors, but the most significant one is context.<sup>45</sup> Some elements of CERF's effectiveness will naturally be more important and feasible in some contexts, while others may take precedence or add more value in others. At present, CERF's systems and processes are not compatible with a regional allocation with similar structures and in this context.

CERF Regional allocations could potentially be more appropriate in the following situations:

- If and when a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator<sup>46</sup> is in place that is accountable to the ERC and can lead and decide on priorities for the CERF request and ensure its coherence across the region.
- In regional contexts, like for instance the Caribbean where UNCTs have less capacities in place, fewer agencies are involved, and inter-agency processes can be less significant, as seen in the Caribbean sub-regional component of the RMRP.<sup>47</sup>
- In targeted cross-border efforts involving joint programmes for more coherent and effective responses and economies of scale (e.g. joint procurement, common staffing).

### *On Coordination:*

In general, RCs should be the entry point as the highest UN official in the country and the lead for all the UN's country-level operational activities. Current UN reforms seek to further empower RCs to work across the development-humanitarian-peacebuilding continuum. The Secretary-General's report on the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system also emphasises that all inter-agency pooled funding in support of country-level work should

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<sup>42</sup> As noted by UNHCR and IOM in the interim report for the regional allocation

<sup>43</sup> As defined in the PAF (2010).

<sup>44</sup> In this sense it should be understood that UNHCR when considering the country-level allocations was not disproportionately funded by the CERF.

<sup>45</sup> OCHA Leave no one behind study (2016) highlights 12 of the elements that are critical to effective humanitarian assistance and protection and describes five overarching shifts in mind-set and approach that can contribute to improvements in supporting people in crisis, as well as moving people out of crisis. Context, however, remains the most important consideration.

<sup>46</sup> Regional Humanitarian Coordinators (RHC) are appointed when a humanitarian response has a regional impact warranting overall strategic coordination at the regional level. The RHC usually supports HCs in the affected countries to ensure overall coherence in the response, build on existing synergies with development actors, as well as increase advocacy and fundraising efforts. There are currently two RHCs, one for the Sahel Region and one for the regional impact of the Syria crisis. RHCs are designated by the ERC in consultation with the IASC.

<sup>47</sup> The RMRP includes a sub-regional appeal for the Caribbean, which includes Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Aruba, Curacao and Dominica. The amount required is \$34.8 million out of the total \$738 million for the RMRP, or 4.7 percent.

## Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

be vetted by the RC, and that the RC will clearly define authorities in situations of humanitarian crises or peacebuilding; and that UNCT members will report to RCs on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In a humanitarian response, existing capacities should be considered and strengthened. If international humanitarian assistance is required, the Resident Coordinator is accountable to the ERC for coordinating the response efforts of all humanitarian actors (UN and others). Humanitarian actors must respond to needs quickly, with relevant responses and scale-up, but the aim should always be to enable national and local responses.

The Colombian context, which has the largest IDP population in the world, is regarded as a mixed situation and OCHA's capacity and role in-country should be strengthened to ensure an appropriate response to growing needs and a worsening situation. The limited OCHA office capacity can affect the facilitation of the CERF processes. In Colombia, the OCHA presence has been winding down since 2016<sup>48</sup> and at the time of the review (November 2018) the office had been reduced to 1 international staff member (Head of Office) at Bogota level that can engage on CERF-related processes.<sup>49</sup>

### *CERF Processes and Templates:*

Finally, the CERF secretariat should consider the usefulness of some of the information<sup>50</sup> it requires up-front in rapid response application processes, particularly in this type of fluid mixed migration responses. Allowing agencies to provide more specific information two months into the implementation phase of the approved projects should be considered for greater flexibility and effectiveness, favouring a needs-based response. Although flexibility is built into the implementation stage, and agencies can ask for the reprogramming of activities, this is not always understood or favoured at the country level.

In the future, the CERF should not wait for interim reporting that does not provide adequate and timely information on the situation against which decisions on allocations can be made, and instead should rely on other sources in the field, e.g. information from assessments provided by agencies including UNHCR and IOM in the field and/or the RCO or OCHA focal points.

The CERF secretariat would have to adapt its application and reporting templates to regional allocations for these to reflect priorities, and work with key actors to address the related practical challenges. The current regional allocation process and associated reporting effort did not on its own enable the development of a regional and coordinated operational result framework beyond the compilation of the national result frameworks of each agency. The CERF secretariat should convene a webinar early on with all relevant stakeholders (i.e. RC/HCs, regional directors of UN agencies including OCHA) and provide information on the main aim and objectives of the allocation, explain and provide transparency on the process. The webinar should be as transparent and inclusive as possible. This effort would be in line with the CERF's aim of facilitating strategic planning and coordination. OCHA would have to continue to play a key role coordinating and facilitating processes in all cases (advising the RHC or RC/HCs and/or HCTs). When either refugees or mixed flows are involved, UNHCR, and where relevant also IOM, should be given a key role in ensuring the coherence of the request and their representatives could review the application without delaying processes.

The CERF application should add a category of "other" in the gender-disaggregation of beneficiaries, to allow for identification of transgender, intersex or other, non-binary, genders by at least including "other" as a category.

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48 Melanie Teff and Daphne Panayotatos, *Crises Colliding, The Mass Influx of Venezuelans into the Dangerous Fragility of Post-Peace Agreement Colombia*. Refugees International. Field Report, January 2019.

49 The CERF focal point was terminated in December 2018, meaning that she was unable to participate in the After-Action Review or provide comments on this review.

50 Information about specific activities and budget lines but above all the information about the needs, which were unknown/ rapidly and constantly changing with the migration being fluid, as opposed to other types of disasters. The figures in this context were massive: over 1.5 million Venezuelans estimated in Colombia. The third wave of migrants in increasingly vulnerable conditions. 5,000 persons a day crossing the border between Ecuador and Peru at the time.

# Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

## Annexes

### 8.1 Terms of Reference

## **INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ADDED VALUE OF THE CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND (CERF) TO THE VENEZUELA REGIONAL MIGRATION CRISIS**

### **Terms of Reference**

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**27 September 2018**

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### **1. Background to the CERF and Performance and Accountability Framework**

It is widely recognized that the key strengths of CERF lie in its ability to respond quickly and in the relatively high degree of flexibility it affords users compared with other sources of humanitarian funding. Member States and private donors require appropriate assurances that the considerable funds involved are managed appropriately and meaningful results are being achieved. The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) function is charged with a formal fiduciary responsibility over the proper use of CERF funds, and relies upon the CERF secretariat to assist with the proper discharge of these responsibilities. In this context, the development of a Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF) for CERF is regarded as an effective tool.

Paragraph 19 of General Assembly Resolution 60/124 calls for “the establishment of an appropriate reporting and accountability mechanism to ensure that the funds allocated through the Fund are used in the most efficient, effective and transparent manner possible.” Consequently, the CERF Advisory Group at its meeting on 12 October 2006 called for the development of a Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF). In addition, the 2008 CERF Two-Year Evaluation gave as Key Recommendation 4: “The multiple lines of accountability for CERF need to be clarified, in consultation with the UN Controller and the operational agencies, to specify the roles of each actor.” In response, the CERF secretariat developed a PAF, a first draft of which was circulated in 2009. The PAF was formally adopted in 2010.

The CERF PAF proposes, among other things, the introduction of independent reviews to be conducted annually within a sample of three to five countries as determined by the ERC. The CERF Advisory Group supported the inclusion of such an independent country-level mechanism. Following a pilot review conducted in Kenya in early 2010, the CERF Advisory Group met on 1 July 2010 and endorsed the PAF. Since then, the CERF secretariat has aimed to conduct between three and five country-level reviews per year.<sup>51</sup>

### **2. Scope and Purpose**

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<sup>51</sup> A full list of reviews conducted to date and final reports are available online at <http://unocha.org/cerf/reportsevaluations/evaluations/country-reviews/performance-and-accountability-framework>

## Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

The main purpose of the present country and regional-level review will be to assess the value added by CERF funding towards the regional humanitarian response to the Venezuela refugee and migration crisis. A major aim of the review will be to provide the ERC with an appropriate level of assurance around the achievement of key performance benchmarks and planned results for the CERF mechanism around the intended inputs, outputs and outcomes as defined by the PAF. In addition, the review will explore certain strategic questions unique to this specific regional allocation. The review will include recommendations aimed at improving operational aspects of CERF and may also identify relevant policy issues, which need to be addressed at a global level.

The review will cover five 2018 CERF Rapid Response allocations towards the humanitarian response to the Venezuela refugee and migration crisis, namely: (i) the CERF rapid response regional allocation in late May 2018 in support of UNHCR and IOM's life-saving activities outlined in their respective regional response plans for the Venezuela migration crisis, covering activities in the six neighbouring countries of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago; (ii) the country-specific rapid response allocation for Colombia in July 2018 in response to the influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country; (iii) the country-specific rapid response allocation for Peru (submitted September 2018) in response to the influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country; (iv), the country-specific rapid response allocation for Ecuador (submitted September 2018) in response to the influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country; and the country-specific rapid response allocation for Brazil (also submitted in September 2018) in response to the influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country.

The focus on these five allocations will provide an opportunity to compare and contrast the added value of CERF allocations to situations/contexts with three different coordination structures; namely (i) a transboundary/regional allocation coordinated by two lead agencies across six countries; (ii) a country-specific request from a Humanitarian Coordinator in a country with a Humanitarian Country Team and cluster system in place (Colombia); and (iii); country-specific requests from Resident Coordinators in more development-oriented contexts without established humanitarian coordination structures and mechanisms (Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil).

### Regional Allocation:

**CERF regional Rapid Response allocation in support of UNHCR and IOM's respective regional response plans in support of Venezuelan refugees, migrants and host communities in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago (18-RR-VZR-30453, May 2018):** The Secretary-General's bulletin entitled *Establishment and operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (ST/SGB/2009/4)* stipulates that "in exceptional circumstances, in particular those related to transboundary crises affecting multiple countries, the Coordinator may consider a request made directly by an eligible organization, provided that consultations have taken place with Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators in the affected areas." Considering the co-leadership role of UNHCR and IOM for the Venezuela mixed refugees and migration crisis and their operational presence in the region, the Emergency Relief Coordinator agreed to provide \$6.2 million as initial seed funding to UNHCR and IOM Headquarters for life-saving activities outlined in their respective regional response plans. The joint CERF allocation represented 10 per cent of UNHCR's \$46 million one-year plan and 5 per cent of IOM's \$32 million two-year plan for the crisis, targeting some 195,000 beneficiaries across Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago. While the two agencies' respective regional plans covered a total of 17 countries, the CERF

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request targeted only the countries of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago (see annex A).

To ensure adequate coordination of CERF funding by the two recipient agencies, UNHCR and IOM were asked to formulate a joint CERF application, presenting a consolidated analysis of the needs and a coherent prioritization across the countries. CERF funds were sought to address three out of the five jointly agreed and coordinated response objectives to enable IOM and UNHCR to support multi-sector needs of the Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the six countries, including implementation of a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM); protection against Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV); and provision of documentation, shelter, health care, and direct cash-based assistance.

Moreover, the ERC instructed that the RC/HCs of the six countries under the allocation be consulted by UNHCR and IOM on the joint application. In addition, the two agencies were advised to keep the RC/HCs informed of the implementation of activities, and to coordinate and submit the interim update and final narrative report to CERF for the allocation. The RC/HCs of the recipient countries would thus not be charged with the overall responsibility for the coordination, implementation and reporting of the allocated funds.

### Country-specific allocations for Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil:

Within the context of more traditional CERF-funded responses under already established humanitarian or resident coordination structures and mechanisms, the review will look at CERF funding towards the priorities identified under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinators on behalf of the HCT/UNCTs; the coordination mechanisms in-country, in particular cluster coordination vis-à-vis UNHCR and IOM's mixed migration coordination platform; while also looking at the complementarity of these three country-specific allocations with the funding allocated towards the regional response. More specifically, the review will look at the following four country-specific allocations:

**CERF Rapid Response allocation to Colombia in support of Venezuelan refugees, migrants and host-communities in-country (18-RR-COL-30738, July 2018):** While approving the regional allocation in response to the crisis (see above), which included a proportion of the \$6.2 million for UNHCR and IOM's response in Colombia, the ERC also agreed to consider country-specific CERF requests if additional needs were identified above and beyond those addressed by UNHCR and IOM. In line with this recommendation, CERF funds were sought by the RC/HC for Colombia on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to 63,000 of the most vulnerable people through Health, Food Security and Nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Education in Emergency, Protection and Shelter interventions. The activities targeted Venezuelan migrants and refugees, Colombians returnees, host communities and mixed families in the border areas (Arauca, La Guajira and Norte de Santander) and other regions, where the mixed migration flow consisting of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers had arrived (Atlántico, Magdalena, Bolivar, and Nariño). In response to the request, CERF provided a \$6 million rapid response allocation to Colombia in response to the mixed population influx from Venezuela, which in the first five months of 2018 saw 700,000 Venezuelans reported by the Colombian migration authority, in addition to the 800,000 Venezuelans that have remained in Colombia since 2017. While the application did not include a proposal by UNHCR as these activities were already supported

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under the regional allocation, IOM included a shelter project implemented by the Norwegian Refugees Council (NRC) as agreed by the inter-cluster coordination group and confirmed not to duplicate already funded activities. Overall, the Colombia allocation was presented as complementary to the regional allocation.

**\*CERF Rapid Response allocation to Ecuador in support of Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers in-country (18-RR-ECU-32097, September 2017):** In line with the ERC's agreement to also consider country-specific CERF requests targeting additional needs above and beyond those addressed by UNHCR and IOM under the regional allocation, CERF provided a \$1.5 million rapid response allocation to Ecuador in response to the increased influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants to the country. CERF funding is sought by the RC on behalf of the UNCT to assist some of the most vulnerable 60,750 Venezuelans, mainly in the areas of health, protection, including against gender-based violence and child protection, food security, and WASH at the main points of entry notably in San Miguel and Rumichaca.

**\*CERF Rapid Response allocation to Peru in support of Venezuelan refugees and migrants (18-RR-PER-32095, September 2018):** In line with the ERC's agreement to also consider country-specific CERF requests targeting additional needs above and beyond those addressed by UNHCR and IOM under the regional allocation, CERF provided a \$2 million rapid response allocation to Ecuador in response to the increased influx of Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers to the country (the highest number in the region) entering the country in vulnerable conditions through the Binational Border Service Centre on the Peruvian side of the northern border (CEBAF Peru), and in Tumbes Region. CERF funding is sought by the RC on behalf of the UNCT to assist some 61,114 of the most vulnerable Venezuelan refugees and migrants arriving to the country through the northern border. CERF funds will support the most vulnerable people in need at the arrival phase covering existing critical gaps within the sectors of health, protection against gender-based violence as well as child protection, nutrition, WASH and multi-sector response. The CERF funded intervention will help Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers to continue their route and, if staying in the country, to have better conditions to start their social integration.

**\*CERF Rapid Response allocation to Brazil in support of Venezuelan refugees, migrants and host-communities in-country. (18-RR-BRA-32278, September 2018):** Also in line with the ERC's agreement to consider country-specific CERF requests targeting additional needs above and beyond those addressed by UNHCR and IOM under the regional allocation, CERF provided a \$1.5 million rapid response allocation to Brazil in response to the increased influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants to the country. CERF funding was sought to assist some 27,010 Venezuelan refugees and migrants as well as host population within the sectors of protection, including against gender-based violence and child protection, health, food security, shelter and multi-sector response in the Roraima State, including municipalities that lack response capacity as well as border and transit points. The areas of interventions under the regional CERF allocation and the Brazil country-specific CERF request form an interlinked and complementary part of the overall comprehensive emergency response. The proposed activities under the Brazil request reflect the critical life-saving interventions gaps identified and discussed at the inter-agency coordination mechanism established in the field.

\*As at 27 September 2018, under review by the CERF secretariat and pending approval by the ERC

### 3. Key issues

## Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

The critical overriding question on which assurance is sought is: **Has CERF funding successfully added value to the broader humanitarian endeavor?**

CERF's added value refers to the following four objectives: (a) fast delivery of assistance to people in need, (b) better response to time-critical needs, (c) improved coordination among the humanitarian community, and (d) leveraging additional resources from other sources.

Using the indicators from the CERF PAF, assurances will be sought around the following specific areas of concern:

1. *CERF processes are achieving key management benchmarks in that:*

- CERF submissions are based on an inclusive planning process and adhere to established quality criteria.
- Transparent systems are in place for correct allocation, efficient flow and use of CERF by agencies.
- Adequate monitoring and evaluation systems are in place at the agency level for measuring and reporting on results.

2. *There are reasonable grounds to believe that CERF operations favour the following results:*

- CERF strengthens humanitarian response by empowering the RC/HC and enhancing the quality of coordination within the cluster approach and across clusters.
- CERF facilitates adequate coverage, eliminates gaps and facilitates an effective division of labor among humanitarian actors.
- CERF contributes to a timelier response to needs.
- CERF favors the delivery of relevant life-saving actions at critical moments.
- CERF serves as a catalyst to kick-start humanitarian response while other resources are mobilized.

Further key issues specific to this review and to the individual allocations include:

### **CERF regional Rapid Response allocation**

- Did CERF funds effectively support the regional priorities and response strategies as presented by the requesting agencies?
- Did CERF funding for the jointly coordinated response enable a rapid scale-up of coordination and response at the regional and national levels?
- Were CERF funds instrumental in enhancing the regional coordination platform set up by UNHCR and IOM and did CERF funding help promote increased and joint information sharing to partners as well as increase the regional approach among partners?
- How suitable is CERF as a humanitarian funding mechanism to support regional allocations and can CERF add value to such modality?
- How did the allocation at the regional level to two agencies, rather than one, impact on the coordination and the efficiency of implementation?

## Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

- How were the RC/HCs of the six recipient countries covered under the regional allocation consulted at the different stages of the process, including concept note, application and implementation? Should this have been done any differently? If so, how?
- Did the different approaches to prioritization of needs/the targeted countries under the CERF allocation by the two lead agencies impact on the “coordinated approach” across the region? And if so, how?
- Did humanitarian partners properly understand, and were they well informed about CERF’s approach to the regional allocation? And was guidance effectively communicated to recipient agencies and partners?
- How does the regional allocation, including the agencies’ administrative arrangements, affect effective monitoring and reporting on implementation?
- Did the regional allocation have any adverse impact on the empowered and strengthened RC/HC role, considering that strengthened coordination on country level is one of CERF’s core objectives?
- What lessons can be drawn from this regional CERF allocation and should CERF encourage/support allocations under similar set-ups going forward?

### **CERF Rapid Response country-specific allocations to Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil**

- Did CERF funding enhance the complementarity of the country-level allocations to Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil with the response funded by the regional allocation?
- Did the regional allocation facilitate or challenge the HC/HCT-led prioritization and application process in Colombia?
- How was the coordination/complementarity/harmonization between the regional level and country level allocations managed within the country(ies) for best impact of CERF funds received?
- Was the added value of the regional CERF allocation similar in a country with already well established and functioning humanitarian coordination structures, like Colombia, to one without such structures in place, such as Ecuador and Peru operating within a more development-oriented context?

#### **4. Review Methodology**

The formal assessment of agency performance vis-à-vis CERF-funded activities remains the prerogative of recipient agencies via their own internal oversight procedures (internal performance reporting, audit and evaluation etc.). The review approach will therefore be designed in a manner that avoids duplication with such procedures and meets only the immediate assurance needs of the ERC in relation to the PAF.

Recognizing that CERF funds are often co-mingled with other donor funds by agencies and that the in-depth assessment of beneficiary-level impact is formally the charge of recipient agencies, the review will not attempt to link beneficiary-level changes to CERF activity, except where recipient agencies already have this data. The review mechanism will not seek to provide comprehensive coverage linked to detailed narratives and contextual analysis around how and why results are being achieved. Rather it will focus instead on providing an assurance around issues of the fund’s strategic and operational impact.



## Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

The review has two main components: (1) an analysis of CERF's added value to the humanitarian response to the regional Venezuela refugee and migration crisis; and (2) forward-looking questions on CERF's role in (a) supporting similar regional allocations under the coordination of (a) lead agency(ies) going forward; (b) lessons learned from CERF funds supporting such regional allocation considering challenges and opportunities with regard to prioritization, joint analysis and planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting under the present coordination structures. For component 1, the review will present its findings and assessment according to the set of criteria outlined in the CERF PAF.

The review will consist of a desk review of relevant documents, remote interviews of stakeholders, including with the newly appointed Joint Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the region, and visits to some of the recipient countries with on-going project implementation (Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil); and visits to the respective regional offices of OCHA, UNHCR and IOM, as well as UNHCR and IOM headquarters in Geneva as required. The country visits will allow for meetings and interviews with relevant in-country RC/HCs and stakeholders and may include travel to CERF-funded humanitarian projects. The analytical approach will be deliberately kept rapid and light.

Prior to leaving the visited countries, the Consultant will brief the respective RC/HCs or agency HQ representatives on the preliminary findings and may leave a short analytical summary of initial observations and potential recommendations in relation to the key assurance issues identified above. The RC/HC, together with the HCT, may subsequently be requested to provide a "management response" to any recommendations in the report once it has been finalized.

### 5. Data Collection

Desk review: A quantitative analysis will be conducted on the data, reports and files available at the HQ and country level. The desk review includes:

- Remote interviews with key stakeholders,
- If relevant, surveys targeted at key stakeholders,
- Review of relevant studies and evaluations,
- Funding data, including funding from sources other than the CERF (e.g. OCHA's Financial Tracking Service),
- Timelines on sums requested, allocated from CERF database,
- CERF country-level reports on context, needs, status of implementation, activities, results and lessons learned,
- CERF meeting minutes at HQ and country-level and notifications of application decisions,
- CERF Project files at HQ and country-level,
- Humanitarian appeals and other humanitarian strategy documents.

Semi-structured interviews at country level may include: RC/HCs, OCHA staff, Cluster leads, cluster coordinators at capital level, HCT members, agency CERF focal points, I/NGO partner implementing CERF projects and those

## Independent Review of the Added Value of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the Venezuela Regional Refugee and Migration Crisis

without access to CERF funds, affected people, host government, donors. UN Agencies will be asked to provide relevant documents and indicate interview partners to facilitate the review.

Interviews at headquarter and/or regional level may include: Stakeholders at OCHA headquarters in New York, relevant agency focal points, and selected donor representatives as relevant. Interviews will also take place with selected CERF secretariat staff to get further background and perspective.

Select project site visits: The consultant may visit sites of CERF-funded projects in the visited countries to help provide some limited anecdotal information regarding the use of funding at the affected population level and can provide a field-level snapshot and some direct contact with affected people and other key informants in field locations.

In-Country working session to review provisional results. This will be used as learning opportunities to discuss, validate and fill key gaps in the findings and recommendations.

### 6. Proposed Consultant

It is anticipated that one consultant will be required to prepare and conduct the review. The consultant will be independent. She/he should have the following skills:

- Expertise in UN humanitarian action and financing and knowledge of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and humanitarian coordination system
- Expertise and extensive experience in humanitarian evaluation
- Expertise in analyzing financial data in tandem with other types of information
- Expertise in project management and implementation
- Knowledge, including field experience with a broad range of humanitarian actors, such as UN agencies, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, local government disaster response structures and systems, and NGOs
- Familiarity with migration crisis response
- Ability to analyze and integrate diverse and complex quantitative and qualitative data from a wide range of sources
- Proven project and programme evaluation skills.
- Fluency in written and spoken English and Spanish.

### 7. Management and Support

The review will be managed by the CERF secretariat, which will identify country-level focal points to support the review mission. Their responsibilities will include:

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- Provide necessary administrative, coordination and logistical support to the consultants,
- Facilitate the consultants' access to specific information, key informants and expertise necessary to perform the assessment,
- Monitor and assess the quality of the review and its process,
- Ensure sufficient engagement by the HCT during the mission and in response to the draft and final report,
- Disseminate final report,
- Facilitate relevant management response to the final report and subsequent follow up.

The OCHA Regional Office in Panama as well as the OCHA Country Office in Colombia and the Humanitarian Advisory Teams in Peru/Ecuador/Brazil will support the consultant to liaise with key partners and other stakeholders, make available to the consultant necessary information regarding CERF-funded programmes, projects and activities in the country. Following the preparation of a draft report, the country office will provide factual verifications of the report. The country office will provide the review consultant support in kind (e.g. arranging meetings with project staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries; and assistance for any project site visit).

### 8. Deliverables

The consultant will be expected to produce the following main outputs:

- (1) Country visit (including final presentation/debrief for RC/HC and OCHA Country Office)
- (2) Draft report (including solicitation of comments from all stakeholders)
- (3) Final report in English to the ERC, through the CERF secretariat, in an electronic version, plus an Executive Summary.

The final report will be structured in the form of short observations and conclusions around the different assurance concerns linked to the review. Country specific analysis and observations will be included in the report in support of the strategic questions outlined above. The report will also include, as appropriate, a set of specific, well-targeted and action-oriented recommendations whose purpose should be to improve the performance of the CERF within the country or raising any policy issues. The annexes will include a brief description of the methods used and the analysis performed, and a list of persons interviewed.

### 9. Process

Phase 1: Preparation

Phase 2: Data collection and analysis

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Phase 3: Synthesis, report writing and review

Phase 4: Submission, dissemination and follow up

**Annex A**

	UNHCR appeal	IOM plan	CERF regional allocation
Argentina		x	
Aruba	x	x	
Bonaire		x	
Brazil	x	x	IOM; UNHCR
Chile		x	
Colombia	x	x	IOM; UNHCR
Costa Rica	x	x	
Curacao	x	x	
Dominica Republic		x	
Ecuador	x	x	IOM; UNHCR
Guyana	x	x	IOM
Mexico	x	x	
Panama	x	x	
Peru	x	x	IOM; UNHCR
T&T	x	x	IOM; UNHCR
Uruguay		x	
Venezuela	x	x	

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**CERF allocations that form part of the review**

Country	Month (last funds were allocated)	Window	Application Title	Agency	Amount allocated	Grant expiry date	RC/HC Report Due
Venezuela regional response (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago)	May 2018	Rapid Response	Venezuela regional crisis	UNHCR, IOM	\$6,203,340	29 Nov 2018	28 February 2019
Colombia	July 2018	Rapid Response	Population influx from Venezuela	IOM, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNWomen FAO, WFP	\$5,929,493	9 Jan 2019	10 April 2019
Ecuador	September 2018 (pending ERC's approval)	Rapid Response	Venezuela regional emergency	WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP	TBC	TBC	TBC
Peru	September 2018 (pending ERC's approval)	Rapid Response	Venezuela regional emergency	IOM, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF	TBC	TBC	TBC
Brazil	October 2018 (pending ERC's approval)	Rapid Response	Venezuela regional emergency	IOM, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women	TBC	TBC	TBC
<b>Total</b>					<b>\$12,132,833</b> <b>(pending approved amounts for Ecuador, Peru and Brazil)</b>		

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## 8.2 Data on selected PAF indicators

### Funding Available to UN Agencies

#### 1. Funding allocated by country<sup>52</sup>

	<b>% of Total CERF Funding Allocated in 2018 (\$500.5 million)</b>	<b>CERF funding as % of Overall Funding Requirements presented in application</b>
Regional	1.30%	7.95%
Colombia	1.24%	5.78%
Ecuador	0.31%	8.61%
Peru	0.41%	14.76%
Brazil	0.31%	16.25%

#### Escalation of the Crisis

UNHCR increased preparedness and operational activities in the region in May 2017, to respond to the increased arrivals. The number of arrivals increased to 5,000 a day in early 2018. Asylum claims by Venezuelans tripled between 2016 and 2017 (UNHCR supplementary appeal). The original Colombia HRP (Dec 2017) estimated the population of Venezuelans intending to stay in Colombia at 700,000. The addendum to the HRP states the number of Venezuelans in Colombia doubled from 300,000 to 600,000 between July 2017 and Jan 2018. Additionally, approximately 230,000 Venezuelans have crossed Colombia to enter Ecuador in the second half of 2017 (620% increase). Additional information provided in the timeline of response to the Venezuela situation.

#### Venezuela Regional CERF Application

- UNHCR Supplementary appeal: March 2018
- IOM regional action plan appeal: 10/4/18
- CERF email of funding available for regional response: 20/4/18
- Date of submission of application for regional response: 09/5/18
- Funding disbursed for regional response: 30-31/5/18

#### Colombia CERF Application

- Addendum to Colombia HRP: 27/4/18
- Endorsement by the ERC for Colombia application concept note: 25/5/18
- Date of submission of application for Colombia: 18/06/2018
- Date of CERF applications for Colombia submitted: 26/6/18 – 7/7/18
- Funding for Colombia allocation disbursed: 5-13/7/18

#### 2. Analysis of funding undertaken to inform prioritisation process and facilitate appropriate direction of funds

At the country level, in all countries funding analysis contributed to prioritization. For example, WFP received less funding in Colombia than other agencies as a result of US funding covering part of their programme. In Peru, IOM

<sup>52</sup> Data accurate as of 5 December 2018

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was allocated over a quarter of the overall grant given sectoral needs and the imbalance of resources between UNHCR and IOM.

3. **Agencies have the sub-contracting procedures suited for emergency situations (i.e. sufficient agency staff, access, clearance received for inputs to be imported, etc.)**

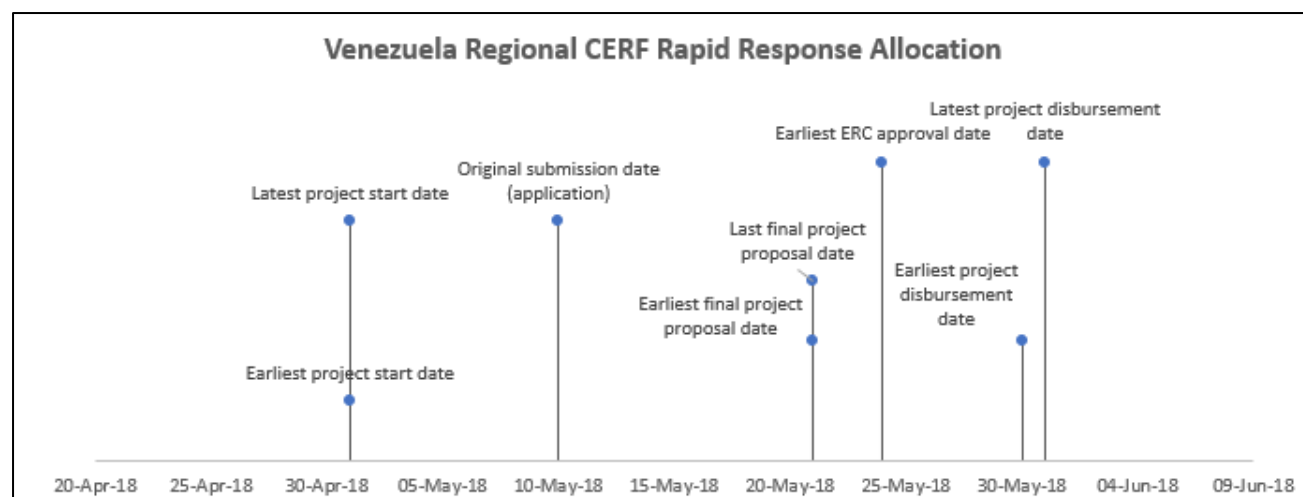
Some of the concept notes included proposals for agencies that did not initially have operational field presence in the target locations. Of particular concern were Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago and the remote border area in Brazil.

### Streamlined Review, Allocation and Distribution

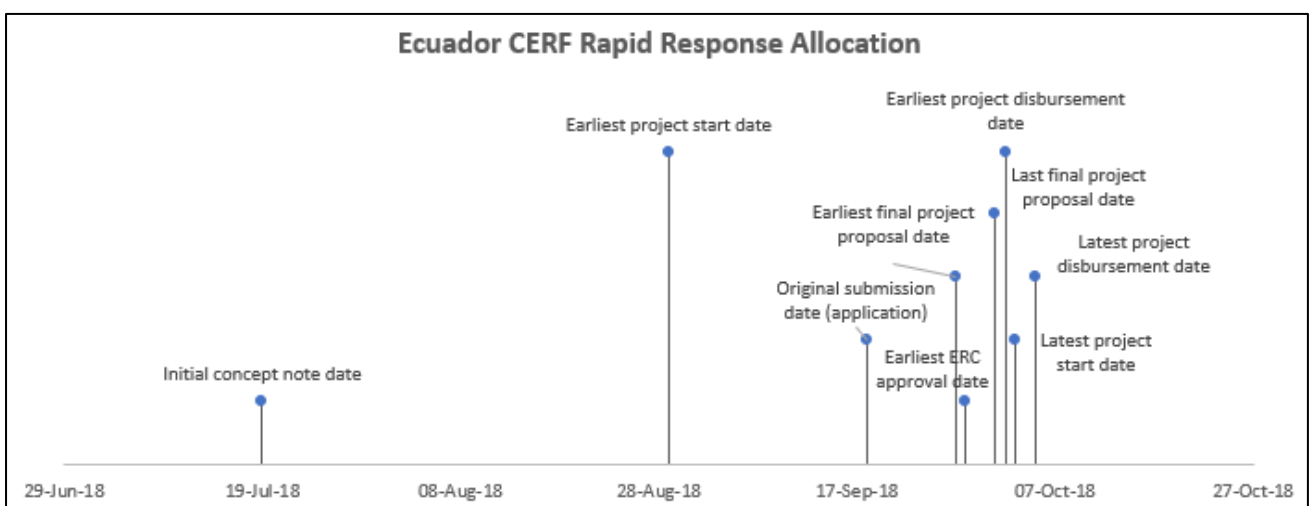
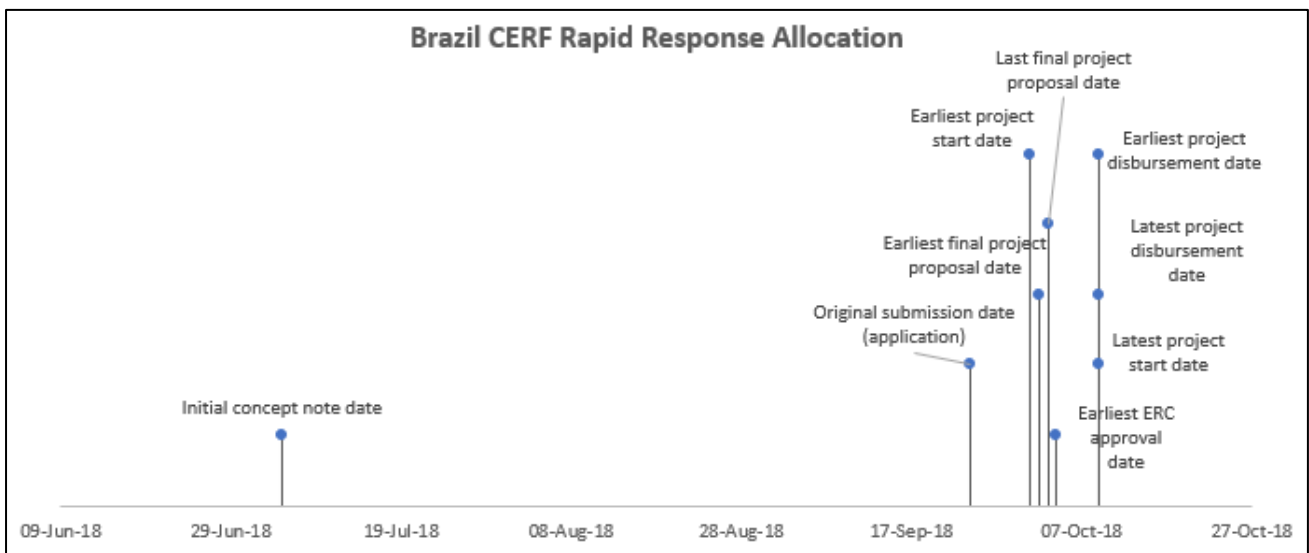
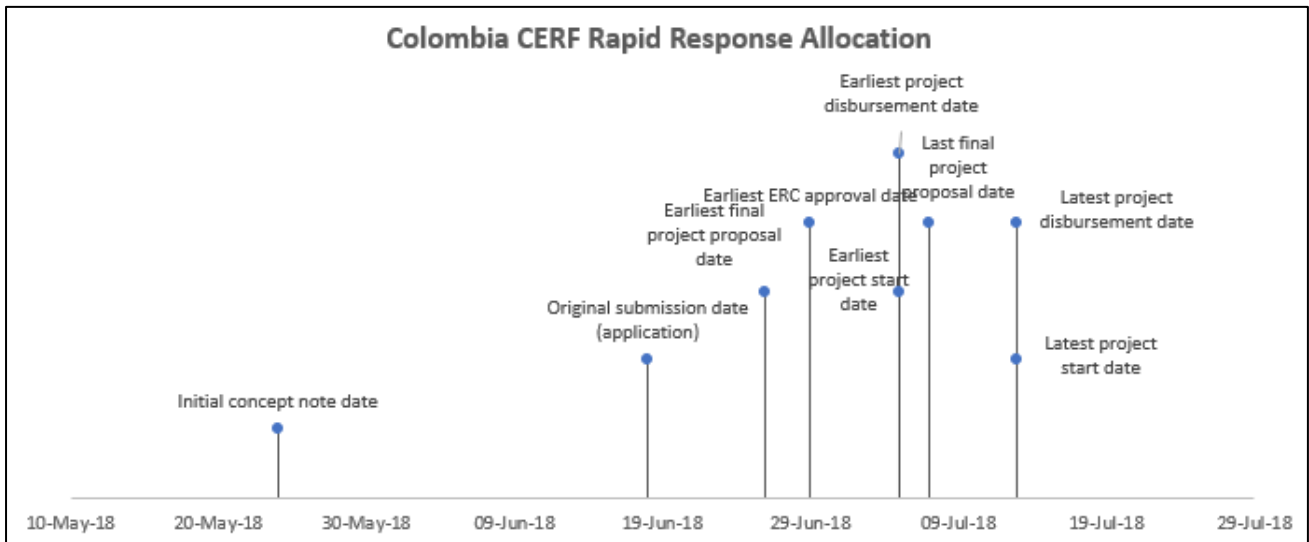
4. **Average number of working days between final submission of a CERF grant request package from RC/HC and fund disbursement by OPPBA to UN HQ:**

	<b>Average Working Days</b>
<b>Regional</b>	7.5
<b>Colombia</b>	5
<b>Ecuador</b>	5.3
<b>Peru</b>	6.3
<b>Brazil</b>	6

### Timely Response

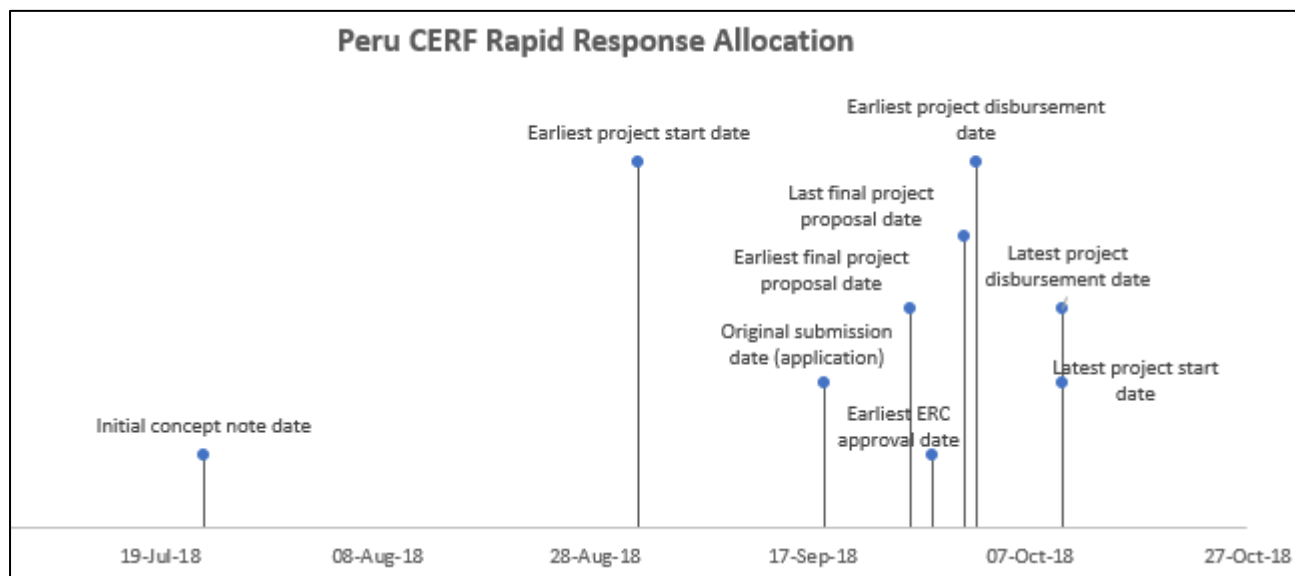


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### 5. Number of No-Cost Extensions requested. Duration of the Extension and Justification

As of May 2019, two No-Cost Extensions (NCEs) had been approved by the ERC for the CERF Colombia RR allocation. The first was requested by IOM for their programming under the CCCM/Shelter cluster, received by the CERF secretariat on 18 December 2018. The NCE requested the project be extended by one month, until 11 February 2019, to ensure the distribution of NFI kits under output 1 is fulfilled due to possible delays over the holiday period. In addition, a request was made to re-programme funds under output 3, “Affected people receive contribution for temporary shelter solutions by cash to meet their basic needs and enjoy physical protection”, which has reached 24% completion as of the request date. This output was targeted towards persons intending to remain in Colombia. Reprogramming is required due to the intended shelter improvements not being required, as housing conditions were better than expected. The implementing partner, NRC, has identified the need to address overcrowding in shelters by providing cash disbursements for rent to 100 families or 400 persons (160 men, 240 women). The revised output 3 proposed is “Affected people receive cash for rent contribution for temporary shelter”, which will see \$357 conditional and restricted cash assistance provided to 100 families to cover two months’ rent.

The NCE for WFP’s Food Assistance project was requested on 19 December 2018 and sought a one-month extension until 12 February 2019. This is due to the project having remaining funds in the approved CERF budget, despite reaching all intended beneficiaries, as a result of currency fluctuations between the Colombian Peso (COP) and US Dollar (USD). The NCE will be used to ensure that reconciliation of beneficiaries for cash-based transfers for retailers is completed.

In addition, 4 of the 7 projects in Peru required extensions (IOM’s shelter project, UNFPA’s health and protection projects and UNICEF’s nutrition); and 2 of the 4 projects in Brazil required extensions (UN Women Protection and UNFPA Protection). None of the Ecuador projects required extensions.

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